

Promoting democracy : a theoretical impasse ?

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Ronald Reagan, in a speech to the British Parliament in June 1982, placed the defense of democracy at the heart of the Cold War; a war that he said would only end when democracy won the ideological battle opposing it to totalitarianism. *The Journal of Democracy* attests to the fact that democratization studies are not external to this battle. Created and financed by the National Endowment for Democracy¹, the journal hopes to play an important role in exporting the democratic model. The journal also bears witness to the difficulties that democracy promotion has faced over the course of the last twenty years.

No less than three reasons invite the study of *The Journal of Democracy*:

1) This journal has been and continues to be one of the places where the major figures of democratization studies have published and debated: including Larry Diamond and Mark Plattner (who founded and have always edited the journal), Francis Fukuyama, Samuel Huntington, Philipp Schmitter, Juan Linz, Alfred Stepan, Robert Dahl, Seymour Lipset, Guillermo O'Donnell, Thomas Carothers and Laurence Whitehead. In addition, there are occasional contributions from thinkers such as Amartya Sen and Adam Przeworski. The numerous debates that have taken place on the pages of this journal and the discussions in which these authors have opposed one another bring to light the

¹ This organization, which is neither a state agency nor a private foundation is destined in general to organize programs that support democratization. For example, help with financing the opposition forces in an authoritarian state or to export Western theories of democracy through the translation of major texts of political thought, by organizing colloquia on these questions or through assistance for publication of books or collections of articles. On the origins of the *National Endowment for Democracy* and its missions, see Nicolas Guilhot, *The Democracy Makers. Human Rights and the Politics of Global Order*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 83 and following pages and “Les professionnels de la démocratie. Logiques militantes et logiques savantes dans le nouvel internationalisme américain”, *Actes de la Recherche en sciences sociales*, n°139, September 2001, p. 53-65.

difficulties, tensions and obstacles that the project of promoting democracy encounters—in particular in the definition of the concepts that determine its theoretical justification.

2°) The *Journal of Democracy* focuses on the evolution of democratization processes, the conditions of which have changed rather dramatically over the course of the past 15-20 years. Following the transformations in the questions debated in this journal therefore permits us to gauge changes at the heart of the democratization process.

3°) The third reason is linked less to the content or the history of this journal than to its status; at least that to which its two directors and founders, Mark Plattner and Larry Diamond, attribute to it. Both belong to the neo-conservative movement—Plattner directed *The Public Interest*, around which the movement was organized² and Diamond is linked to the *Hoover Institution*. At the beginning of the first issue, when discussing the principles of the journal³, the two directors insist on the necessity for democracy defenders to unify and solidify their discourse in the face of anti-democratic ideologies. That is what the journal should serve for: to oppose authoritarian and totalitarian ideologies with a *militant defense of democracy* that consists in showing that democracy is the only legitimate regime—a point to which we will return.

The analysis of the most important contributions to the journal reveals that the theoretical difficulties encountered in democracy promotion do not only arise from the complex history of the democratization process; difficulties that one struggles to understand and anticipate. In my eyes, the analysis [J&G] is more dependent upon *the collapse of the models and paradigms around which democracy promotion was structured*. This collapse has several causes: the impossibility in which the enterprise of democracy promotion found itself in terms of separating scientific from normative discourse; the obstacles encountered in the justification of a universalist discourse, and also, perhaps, to the questionable work undertaken from at least the early 1990s on an equally debatable notion—that of ideology.

² On this point, see F. Fukuyama, *D'où viennent les néo-conservateurs ?*, trad. D. A. Canal, Paris, Grasset, 2006, p. 47 and following pages.

³ “Why the *Journal of Democracy* ?”, *Journal of Democracy* (hereafter JOD), vol 1, n°1, January 1990, p. 3-5.

Plattner, taking stock in 2005 of the fifteen years of the journal's existence, distinguished three periods in the history of the journal:⁴

- a first period during which debates were constructed around the idea of democratic *transition*; which is, according to Plattner, the principal objective of the first five years of the journal's existence;
- in the next period, the debates of the following years related more to the question of the *consolidation* of new democracies;
- finally, the study of democracies shifts after September 11 and begins to question most of the models upon which it had been founded.

We will follow this same categorization of the three phases in our own analysis here below.

I. The third wave and the project of a democratic ideology

When Plattner and Diamond set the objective of the *Journal of Democracy* in its first pages, they underline two proposals that legitimize, in their eyes, their endeavor. First, an anthropological given, there exists, quite evidently, a universal desire for liberty. This is manifested through an *historical fact*, which then becomes the second proposition; the resurgence of democracy since the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s. This historical movement of peoples towards democracy is presented as the foundation of what can be called an enterprise of *democratic ideology* of which the journal aims to be the command center. This moment is what Samuel Huntington called the “third wave” in a famous work⁵ from which he distills the main points in the *Journal of Democracy*.⁶ Between 1974 and 1990, thirty countries experience a transition to democracy. This wave succeeds two previous ones; the first from the 1820s to 1926 when 29 democracies are born. The birth of authoritarian regimes at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s disrupted this period. The second wave takes place after World War II: in 1962, one can count 36 democracies.

⁴ “Building Democracy after Conflict. Introduction”, JOD, vol 16, n°1, January 2005, p. 5-8.

⁵ *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

⁶ “Democracy's Third Wave”, JOD, vol. 2, n°2, Spring 1991, p. 12-34.

This third wave of democratization corresponds to the collapse of a certain number of authoritarian regimes in Western Europe: (Portugal and Greece in 1974 and Spain in 1975) in Latin America (Peru in 1980, Argentina starting in 1982 with the Falklands war, Uruguay in 1983 and Brazil in 1984), in Southeast Asia (the Philippines in 1986 and South Korea in 1987 and, to a certain extent, Taiwan in 1988). This wave is also linked to the collapse of the Soviet totalitarian system in Eastern Europe starting in the late 1980s.

To group and associate all of these democratic transformations into what Huntington and the large majority of the contributors of the *Journal of Democracy* call a “wave” is not without significance.

First, if there is a “wave”, it is because we can see in this historic movement a chain reaction or what Huntington calls “snowballing”: democratization leads to more democratization—the transition to democracy in one nation inspires the transition to democracy of another.

Next, if we can group these transitions to democracy as one ensemble (which decidedly opens the age of democracy according to Huntington⁷), it is because one sole causality is in operation. If these authoritarian regimes collapsed, it is because they *ended by not having legitimacy in the eyes of their populations* and, above all, in the eyes of the elite. Of course, there are other factors as well: the unprecedented economic growth of the 1960s, the evolution of the Catholic Church that became a force opposing authoritarianism, particularly following Vatican II, and, finally, the changes in American and European Community foreign policies. However, the lack of legitimacy appears as a primary cause.⁸

It is necessary to distinguish *authoritarian* from *totalitarian* regimes. If the lack of legitimacy of the former is no surprise—as such a regime relies, as a rule, on a minority putting institutions and armed services at its disposal—the weakness of totalitarian socialism is more surprising. What seemed to characterize this second type of regime was the massive adhesion of the population to a system of socialist values and institutions. At least, this is how it appeared to most Western analysts: a regime capable of perpetuating

⁷ “After Twenty Years: the Future of the Third Wave”, JOD, vol. 8, n°4, October 1997, p. 3-12.

⁸ See F. Fukuyama, “The Primacy of Culture”, JOD, vol. 6, n°1, January 1995, p. 8 ; S. Huntington, “Democracy’s Third Wave”, art.cit., p. 13 ; Ph. Schmitter, “Dangers and Dilemmas of Democracy”, JOD, vol. 5, n°2, April 1994, p. 57-58.

itself indefinitely because control of citizen's lives was so complete, a regime capable of propagating itself to other states.⁹ In other words, the de-legitimization of the socialist regime in the eyes of the population ended up placing back into the center of politics what had only been treated marginally in modern political thought according to the founders of the *Journal of Democracy*: politics is, above all, the adhesion of the population to a given regime.

The *Journal of Democracy* encourages study of the concept of ideology: to reestablish a positive sense for an ideology, understood not as a justification of domination, but as the system of ideas and values to which one can adhere consciously and rationally, thereby conferring full legitimacy upon the system. To adhere to democracy is to adhere, first, to a *democratic ideology*.¹⁰

If there is no democracy without democrats, and if there are no democrats without a rational choice of democracy, then one can understand that the aim of the *Journal of Democracy* is entirely justified in the eyes of its founders. Promoting democracy is to work to elucidate consciences (particularly of the elite), it is to work on the *science of democracy*.

2. Democracy and capitalism

However, a first difficulty quickly arises: what is the place of economic development in this wave of transition? Samuel Huntington, when he theorizes the “third wave”, mentions the economic growth of the 1960s but without reflecting on the relevance and status of such a factor. Is it a necessary condition? A necessary and sufficient condition? An occasional cause? The question is decisive for the general aim of the *Journal of Democracy*. We can formulate it in this way: is the desire for democracy strictly political or is it only the consequence of the aspirations of *homo economicus*? Is it necessary to credit the developmentalist model, which triumphed in the 1960s, that

⁹ F. Fukuyama, *La fin de l'histoire et le dernier homme*, trad. D-A. Canal, Paris, Flammarion, 1992, p. 48 and following pages.

¹⁰ “*Ideology* (...) is the level of *normative beliefs* about the rightness or wrongness of democratic institutions and their supporting market structures (...). [This level] is the sphere of rational self-consciousness, in which changes in perceptions of legitimacy can occur virtually overnight ” (F. Fukuyama, “The Primacy of Culture ”, art.cit., p. 7.

subordinated democracy promotion to the establishment of a market economy and a significant level of development?

The manner of conceiving democracy promotion depends on the resolution of this dilemma and it is discussed at great length in the first volume of the journal dedicated to the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the publication of *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* by Joseph Schumpeter.¹¹ In this work, Schumpeter advances two fundamental hypotheses.

First, the decomposition of capitalist society is inevitable, notably because the ethics of the bourgeois entrepreneur does not cease to weaken when confronted with growing hostility on the part of the elite.

Secondly, even though capitalism created democracy, there is no incompatibility between democracy and socialism.

The crux of the debate in this volume of the *Journal of Democracy* is organized around the second of Schumpeter's hypotheses—the question of the link between democracy and capitalism. While the contributions to this volume are both numerous and diverse, three main arguments nonetheless emerge.

1) The relationship between democracy and capitalism is considered *asymmetric*. There is certainly no democracy without capitalism, but history shows that capitalism can triumph without a democratic regime. Numerous contributions cite the four Asian dragons (South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong) where political authoritarianism seemed to favor economic dynamism.¹² If democracy serves a purpose for capitalism, notably because it gives civil society its place or because it guarantees individual rights, the inverse is not at all evident.

2) The reciprocal statement is even less evident as we can reasonably think that a market economy contains a certain number of threats to democracy; about which Robert Dahl illustrates the logic. If corruption is the primary and most visible of these threats, it is not the only one. The market inevitably creates inequalities. Consequently, democracy is preserved only if one can call on public virtue in favor of the most disadvantaged. If

¹¹ JOD, vol. 3, n°3, July 1992.

¹² See in particular Peter L. Berger, "The uncertain triumph of democratic capitalism", *ibid.*, p. 11 ; F. Fukutama, "Capitalism and democracy : the missing link", *ibid.*, p. 105. See also in another volume but on the same subject: Seymour Martin Lipset, "Reflections on capitalism, socialism and democracy", *ibid.*, p. 52.

this virtue is lacking, there is no other solution than to impose the freedom of the market on those who do not benefit from it; this imposition being contrary to the principles of liberal democracy.¹³

3) If there is an undeniable empirical and historical link between democracy and capitalism, it remains that one can consider the reasons for such a link to be external to the economic domain itself. This is the thesis that Francis Fukuyama defends: economic development frees men from material concerns and gives free reign to the expression of a profound and integral desire for recognition that only liberal democracy can satisfy.¹⁴

The desire for democracy being fundamentally political and not economic, the mission of the *Journal of Democracy* seems fully justified: promoting democracy is to *promote the idea of democracy*, particularly among the elite whose role was decisive in the transitions of the third wave. The essential task that a militant science of democracy can fix for itself is to prevent the possible disillusionment that threatens new democracies.¹⁵ Without satisfying the hopes of an enthusiastic population, wanting the new regime to guarantee prosperity, order, justice and security, new democracies can find themselves de-legitimized and consequently weakened.¹⁶ What is important then is to prevent the illusions that surround the idea of democracy during the transition period, above all by working on its *definition*. The task of a revue such as *Journal of Democracy* is to go against the general enthusiasm *for* democracy, which works *against* democracy.¹⁷ In other words, the task consists of limiting the contours of democracy, to restrict it to a minimalist or procedural definition (of Schumpeterian inspiration).¹⁸ What characterizes democracy is the competition for power through free and competitive elections. Consequently, of equal importance is the responsibility of elected officials in the eyes of

¹³ Robert Dahl, "Why free markets are not enough", JOD, vol. 3, n°3, July 1992, p. 84 and following pages

¹⁴ F. Fukuyama, "Capitalism and democracy: the missing link", art. cit., p. 106 and following pages.

¹⁵ Ph. Schmitter, "Dangers and dilemmas of democracy", art. cit., p. 72.

¹⁶ S. Huntington, "Democracy's third wave", art. cit., p. 19.

¹⁷ J. J. Linz et A. Stepan define very well the nature of such a project: "We are (...) convinced that if democratic theorists conceptualize what such obstacles mean and do not mean, this may lessen the dangers of democratic disenchantment and help to identify obstacle-reducing path" ("Toward consolidated democracies", JOD, vol. 7, n°2, April 1996, p. 23).

¹⁸ See *Capitalisme, socialisme et démocratie*, trad. G. Fain, Paris, Payot, 1990, p. 354 and following pages

voters.¹⁹ But one should not expect great economic efficiency nor a more developed social justice from a democracy.²⁰

II. From transition to consolidation : a critical return to the Third Wave.

1. Democratic universalism and local particularities

Democracy promotion thus conceived can only be put into action on a universalist foundation. It is possible to abstract from local and historical conditions because democracy is understood, above all, as the expression of rational choice—even more than the expression of an achieved rationalism (only democracy permits the full and entire adhesion to a regime, because only democracy guarantees individual autonomy.) Such a position leads to making elections (the process of choice) the very essence of democracy.

However, it quickly appears that a democratic ideology thus conceived rests on several hypotheses with significant consequences. Such it is with the minimalist definition of democracy: what is gained through *expansion* (a definition that permits the regrouping of different experiences of democratic transitions) is inevitably lost in terms of *comprehension*. As Diamond stresses, the evolution of the third wave requires that one may distinguish between true democracies (*liberal* democracies) and pseudo-democracies (democracies that are only *electoral*).²¹ Certain democracies are only facades, it is therefore important not to identify democratic governments with democratic regimes.²² It is necessary to convoke other criteria in order to determine which, among the new democracies, merit the designation. All the contributors considering this question seem to

¹⁹ See Ph. Schmitter et T. L. Karl, “What democracy is ... and is not”, JOD, vol. 2, n°3, Summer 1991, p. 76.

²⁰ “Democratic governments everywhere (...) are thus constantly tempted to trim their policies with an eye on the next election. This may make good political sense in the short run, but it does not make for good *economic* policy.” (L. Diamond, “Three paradoxes on democracy”, JOD, vol. 1, n°3, Summer 1990) ; “Democratization will not necessarily bring in its wake economic growth, social peace, administrative efficiency, political harmony, free markets (...)”, Ph. Schmitter and T. L. Karl, “What democracy is ... and is not”, art. cit., p. 87).

²¹ L. Diamond, “Is the third wave over ?”, JOD, vol. 7, n°3, July 1996, p. 21 and following pages. See also on this point Ph. Schmitter, “Dangers and dilemmas of democracy”, art. cit., p. 59.

²² G. O'Donnell, “Delegative democracy”, JOD, vol. 5, n°1, January 1994, p. 56.

agree on one point: a democracy is fully established when the entire population recognizes democratic rule as the “only game in town”.²³

All of these remarks suggest the need to put aside the notion of *transition* for one of *consolidation*; which seems more adapted to understanding how a democracy succeeds in establishing itself in the culture and in political mores.²⁴ The reflection on democracy therefore doubly changes perspective: conceptually, it is a *deepening* of democracy and not an *extension* that should be the goal; historically, the idea of a *wave* gives way to that of *stasis*.²⁵

Nevertheless, this change of object should not hide that it is accompanied by important theoretical shifts.

— First, if the concept of transition, as it was shown above, derived its validity from its *universality*, on the other hand, the concept of consolidation seems to be, of necessity, particularized. There are, in effect, different paths towards consolidation.²⁶ In other words, democratization is not able to be comprised only of free and competitive elections. Electoral monism tends to hide a plurality of paths.

— Next, in the reflections on *consolidation*, the accent is placed not on the extension of democracy but on its *preservation*. From a reflection on space or geopolitical areas, we move on to an examination of duration. This displacement leads to a difficulty that is both classic and significant: to preserve democracy, is it not necessary to call upon undemocratic measures? Is there not a major contradiction between ends and means, between the imperatives of legitimacy and the necessities of preservation?²⁷ This contradiction seems to be an obstacle in studies on consolidation. Thus, one can either

²³ See J. Linz et A. Stepan, “Toward consolidated democracies”, art. cit., p. 15 ; Ph. Schmitter, “Dangers and dilemmas of democracy ”, art. cit., p. 58. On the interpretation and the status of such an expression see G. O’Donnell, “Illusions about consolidation”, JOD, vol. 7, n°2, April 1996, p. 41.

²⁴ See L. Diamond, “Toward democratic consolidation”, JOD, vol. 5, n°3, July 1994. On the passage from this concept of transition to that of consolidation, see N. Guilhot et Ph. Schmitter, “De la transition à la consolidation. Une lecture rétrospective des *democratization studies* ”, *Revue française de sciences politiques*, vol. 50, n°4-5, août-October 2000, p. 615-631.

²⁵ L. Diamond, “Is the third wave over ? ”, art. cit., p. 31 and following pages

²⁶ J. Linz et A. Stepan insist on this necessary particularization. See “Toward consolidated democracies ”, art. cit., p. 16 ; and, in *Problems of democratic transition and consolidation* (Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 6 and following pages

²⁷ See Ph. Schmitter, “Dangers and dilemmas of democracy ”, art. cit., p. 63 ; J. Linz et A. Stepan, “Toward consolidated democracies ”, art. cit., p. 15 ; S. Huntington, “Democracy for the long haul ”, JOD, vol. 7, n°2, April 1996, p. 9 and following pages

accept in new democracies the state of necessity, such as was done in Latin America²⁸, to concentrate executive powers and govern by decree, but in so doing one risks the reversal of the process of democratization. Alternatively, one avoids all recourse to any state of exception, considering new democracies to be insufficiently established to control them; but in so doing one leaves open the possibility that certain undemocratic forces can take power through elections.

— Finally, if it seemed necessary to set aside economic considerations from considerations of democratic transition, because they can lead us astray regarding the causes that encourage escape from authoritarian regimes²⁹, on the other hand, it appears necessary to reintegrate these considerations when examining new democracies. In other words, if economic development is not a precondition for democratization, it is a condition of a sustainable democracy. This is what Adam Przeworski's important contribution illustrates: that if a democracy can be installed in a poor country, experience shows that the level of economic development, accompanied by the desire to reduce inequalities, is essential to the consolidation of these new democracies.³⁰

2. The transitology model in question

This set of difficulties contributes to the rather clear questioning of democracy promotion as it was theorized in the early 1990s. The reexamination at this time was first focused on the concept of globalization, object of a certain number of dissatisfactions, before shifting and taking in the concept of transitology itself.

The first series of criticisms (notably formulated by Guillermo O'Donnell) were organized around two major arguments.³¹ The first underlines the *uncertainty* that surrounds the concept of consolidation: when can we say that a new democracy is

²⁸ In Argentina, Peru and Venezuela notably. See S. Huntington, "Democracy for the long haul", art. cit., p. 9-10.

²⁹ See G. O'Donnell, "Do economists know best?", JOD, vol. 6, n°1, January 1995, p. 23-24; F. Fukuyama, "Confucianism and democracy", JOD, vol. 6, n°2, April 1995, p. 21-22.

³⁰ A. Przeworski, M. Alvarez, J. A. Cheibub, F. Limongi, "What makes democracies endure?", JOD, vol. 7, n°1, 1996. See also Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, "The challenges of consolidation", JOD, vol. 5, n°4, October 1994, p. 6.

³¹ See G. O'Donnell, "Illusions about consolidation", art. cit.; Andreas Schedler, "What is democratic consolidation?", vol. 9, n°2, April 1998.

consolidated? When can mores be said to be democratic? Nothing permits us to think that there are solid criteria on these points (since the existence of free and fair elections does not suffice to characterize a consolidated democracy). The second argument emphasizes the *ethnocentric* dimension of the concept³², which tends to make Western democracy the model for all democratization, as well as the *teleological* dimension that tends to assimilate the process of democratization as a natural process towards the only regime capable of satisfying the universal desire for liberty.³³

The second series of criticisms is even more radical and makes a significant impact at the heart of democratization studies. These come from Thomas Carothers, Vice President for Studies at *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* and question the transitology paradigm itself—that is to say the very ideas of transition *and* that of consolidation that is closely tied to it. This paradigm establishes that a state that exits from an authoritarian regime moves, ipso facto, towards a democratic regime marked by certain steps. This paradigm also establishes that elections are the essence of democracy and socio-cultural conditions are not of major importance. According to Carothers, the wave of democratization in the 1980s and 1990s refutes all of these propositions because there is a “grey zone”: many states included in the Third Wave can be qualified neither as authoritarian nor as democratic regimes.³⁴ The transitology paradigm distorts the experiment: veiling the singularity of histories and democratic conditions. In other words, *the transitology paradigm disserves the promotion of democracy more than it serves it.*

If this series of criticisms is significant, it is because the responses that will be presented are going to clearly impact not democracy promotion itself but its theorization. The responses to O’Donnell and Carothers emphasize two dimensions that are, according to them, constitutive of democracy promotion as practiced since the 1990s. First, according to its ideal-typical dimension: the notions of *democracy* and *consolidation* do not pretend to be in precise agreement with the historical experience of peoples, but are

³² “These are polyarchies, but they are neither the ones that the theory of democracy had in mind as it grew out of reflection on the political regimes of the global Northwest, nor what many studies of democratization assume that a democracy should be or become” (G. O’Donnell, art. cit., p. 43).

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³⁴ T. Carothers, “The end of the transition paradigm”, JOD, vol. 13, n°1, January 2002, p. 9.

only models that allow theoreticians to apprehend this experience.³⁵ Next and above all, on the *normative* dimension of these notions: the transitology paradigm is not in any way *descriptive*, but rather *prescriptive*. This is what a certain number of democracy promotion practitioners respond to the objections of Carrothers³⁶ : that certain states are in a “grey zone” puts into question the idea that the path towards democracy is a natural process, but that does not prevent considering it a process defining *the only acceptable regime*. The perspective that democracy professionals adopt is not positivist: the paradigm serves to fix the right path. It determines the principles that establish not what is done, but what should be done.

From all these commentaries, two conclusions emerge. The transitology paradigm is no longer based on the minimal and universal definition of democracy *but on the universality granted by normative principles that should serve not to interpret history but to drive it*. Consequently, democracy promotion seems to have changed direction: conceived at the beginning as a reflection on the third wave which was meant to prevent the eventual disillusionment of peoples, it seems from this point to consider itself rather in militant terms—or at least to assume more clearly its normative dimension, without looking to universal history for justification.

III. Democratization after September 11: historical pessimism and theoretical uncertainty

Starting in 2000, democracy promotion is confronted with two types of problems. The first are *theoretical*. Does the growing gap between the analysis of democracy promotion and the desire to export a political regime based on liberty (that we suppose to be founded on a universal desire), tend to make democracy promotion an *ideology* not in the sense that the founders meant it, but in the pejorative sense that they were precisely trying to avoid? The second, more *historical*, set of problems is linked to the

³⁵ See R. Gunther, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros et H.-J. Puhle, “O’Donnell’s “illusions ” : a rejoinder ”, JOD, vol. 7, n°4, October 1996, p. 152.

³⁶ Ghia Nodia (du *Caucasian Institute of Peace*), “The democratic path”, JOD, vol. 13, n°3, July 2002; Kenneth Wollack (président du *National Democratic Institute*), “Retaining the human dimension”, *ibid.*; Gerald Hyman (directeur du bureau européen de l’*U. S. Agency for International Development*), “Tilting at straw men”, *ibid.*

consequences of September 11 which place front and center partly new forms of democratization which arise, not from the revolt of internal populations but from external intervention by international coalitions. Afghanistan and Iraq thus join Namibia, Nicaragua, Haiti, Cambodia, Mozambique, Bosnia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, and East Timor to create a new category of state where democratization encounters a certain number of specific obstacles.³⁷

These two sets of problems will lead to new theoretical shifts in the studies of democracy promotion evident in the *Journal of Democracy*. It is no longer a question of considering the process of democratization as the fruit, in civil society, of a rational adhesion of elites to a regime, nor as a result of a snow-ball effect at the heart of a wave. The new goal leads to a renewal of the interrogation on the necessary conditions of the installation of a democratization process (in particular on the need of a culture in tune with the values of liberal democracy and well-developed state structures, guaranteeing the rule of law.)

1. Cultural conditions

The examination of the compatibility between democratic values and non-Western cultures, which became a principal preoccupation after September 11, 2001, unfolds in a theoretical domain marked by the effect produced by what seemed to many as a turnaround in the thought of Samuel Huntington. In 1996, in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Huntington defends the thesis according to which Islam and Confucianism are monolithic cultures, inevitably led to conflict with the West. Two consequences of this for democracy promotion are that the West must not think that its values (among which liberal democracy figures prominently) are universal, or in so doing risk to weaken itself; and secondly, that democracy promotion, which should not be renounced, should be reconsidered, as it passes by way of the influence of Western values on non-western cultures.³⁸

³⁷ See the report *Building Democracy after Conflict*, JOD, vol. 16, n°1, 2005.

³⁸ S. Huntington, "After Twenty-Years: the Future of the Third Wave", JOD, vol. 8, n°4, October 1997.

The question of a democratic culture in such a context demands a different treatment. Reflections on transition, at least in their first form, insisted on the necessity that a democratic culture be established in countries coming out of authoritarianism: an ethic, a practice, traditions and democratic values. But it was equally to specify that such a culture could not be established except in the long term and that democracy promotion should emphasize other factors (notably, in first place, on the rational adhesion to a regime) in the moment of transition and in that of consolidation.³⁹

The question at present is to determine if cultures are substantially resistant to all processes of democratization; a problem examined at length in the pages of *Journal of Democracy*. Numerous contributions, difficult to summarize rapidly, are dedicated to Islam.⁴⁰ One theme dominates however: an enlightened, liberal tradition exists in the Islamic religion that is opposed to fundamentalism by refusing ahistorical essentialism. It recognizes, in other words, the historicity of expressions of Islam and is open to the values of modernity.⁴¹ This enlightened tradition of Islam considers that man is born free and is, notably, free to choose the practice of his faith: it also considers that it is necessary to defend individual liberties and limited government.⁴²

Such arguments permit the formulation of certain objections against Huntington: non-western civilizations are not in any way an obstacle to democratization. If there is a shock, it is not between civilizations, but in the interior of each.⁴³ The promotion of democracy can therefore preserve a universalist pretension.

2. State and democracy

³⁹ See F. Fukuyama, "The Primacy of Culture", art. cit.

⁴⁰ See the reports *Democratization in the Arab World* (vol. 13, n°4, October 2002), *What is Liberal Islam* (vol. 14, n°2, April 2003), *Getting to Arab Democracy* (vol. 17, n°1, January 2006) as well as two others dedicated to Iraq (vol. 14, n°3, July 2003 et vol. 16, n°3, July 2005). See also, among others, R. Jahanbegloo, "Pressures from below", vol. 14, n°1, January 2003 ; Larry Goodson, "Afghanistan's long road to reconstruction", vol. 14, n°1, January 2003 ; Saad-Eddin Ibrahim, "Reviving Middle Eastern Liberalism", vol. 14, n°4, October 2003 ; Vali Nasr, "The Rise of Muslim Democracy", vol. 16, n°2, April 2005 ; Anwar Ibrahim, "Universal Values and Muslim Democracy", vol. 17, n°3, July 2006.

⁴¹ See Abdou Filali-Ansary, "The Sources of Enlightened Muslim Thought", vol. 14, n°2, April 2003.

⁴² See Radwan A. Masmoudi, "The silenced majority", *ibid.*

⁴³ See the critical review by Carl Gershman, President of the *National Endowment for Democracy* of S. Huntington, "The Clash within Civilizations. On the *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* by S. Huntington", vol. 8, n°4, October 1997, p. 165-170.

Can democratization bypass a well-founded state, assuring order and security? A position called “*democratic sequentialism*”⁴⁴ asks this of democracy promotion. This thinking consists of affirming that democratization is only possible if a relatively impartial State can be established, capable of allowing the rule of law to reign. Democratization in this perspective is not absolutely good: it is good only if certain conditions in the state exist, it is not good if the state is weak and dominated by a faction. Therefore, such a proposition is not without consequences for democracy promotion such as that defended by the *Journal of Democracy* and reactivated after September 11 by the Bush Administration. It puts into question a certain number of the theoretical foundations, as it pushes to return to an analysis of the Third Wave and the democratization process in the 1990s.

The pessimism that has infected democratization studies since the end of the 1990s fostered the sequentialist position. A large number of thinkers have observed that the process of democratization, far from leading to the establishment of regimes in which individual liberties are guaranteed and where powers are limited, have installed illiberal democracies, such as those in Latin America. Most of these thinkers, such as Fareed Zakaria⁴⁵, do not publish in the *Journal of Democracy*. But the journal echoes their pessimism, which, in contrast with the enthusiasm set off by the third wave, threatens their overall aim⁴⁶—a threat to which the conflict in Iraq also evidently contributes.⁴⁷

The transitology paradigm, around which democracy promotion was organized, considered the state as a potential obstacle for developed democratization. It was necessary to limit its prerogatives and narrow the capacity for action, which authoritarian regimes had exhausted, in order to liberate the forces of civil society. But history requires an about-face on this argument. Have we not confused, in this analysis, the *expansion* of the state and its *power*? The authoritarian state is a state whose reach is maximized. It is thus repressive, but it is not necessarily a strong state, capable of instilling respect for the rule of law and assuring order and stability.⁴⁸ On the contrary, in most cases, autocrats weaken the state by diverting its apparatus for their own benefit. It is the opposite for a

⁴⁴ See T. Carothers, “The ‘sequencing’ fallacy”, JOD, 18, n°1, January 2007.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁶ See M. Plattner, “From liberalism to liberal democracy”, JOD, vol. 10, n°3, July 1999.

⁴⁷ See L. Diamond, “Lessons from Iraq”, JOD, vol. 16, n°1, January 2005.

⁴⁸ See F. Fukuyama, “The imperative of state-building”, JOD, vol. 15, n°2, April 2004.

minimal liberal state: it has little reach, but is powerful because it is concentrated on essential tasks and because it is legitimate in the eyes of the population. It is necessary to realize, as Fukuyama and Carothers⁴⁹ emphasize, that democratization demands a proper functioning of the state.

However, this concession to the partisans of “sequentialism” is not without a complication. It is not enough to say that a democratic transition can only succeed if the rule of law is guaranteed. It is also necessary to specify the relationships that the state and the democracy have. But, in such a way, it seems that we fall into a vicious circle. If a state is required to have a democracy, and this state must not be authoritarian (incapable of assuring the rule of law) nor the product of foreign intervention (because the institutions lack legitimacy), then there is a significant dilemma: *democratization can only succeed if the state is...fully democratic.*⁵⁰ Thus, democratization in countries where a conflict has taken place and where external forces have intervened make evident the necessity of a state as a first imperative. But, it also brings to light the insoluble contradiction in which this democratization is found—incapable of resolving the contradiction between ends (a regime of liberty with which a population can identify) and means (external intervention and the construction *ex abrupto* of state institutions that the population is forced to consider legitimate).

Following the evolution of the questions examined in the *Journal of Democracy* permits a diagnosis of difficulties to which democratization studies are confronted. The journal, in its first years, asked about the relationship between democracy and capitalism, concluding in favor of a political interpretation of democratization. After September 11, a parallel question is asked between state and democracy. But the response seems more fragile, almost paradoxical. The gap between these two debates is symptomatic of the difficulty that democracy promotion has encountered as it is led to understand how democracy can be born out of war, becoming cut off from the foundations of the thinking

⁴⁹ See T. Carothers, “The ‘sequencing’ fallacy”, art. cit., p. 18.

⁵⁰ “Before you can have a democracy, you must have a state, but to have a legitimate and therefore durable state you eventually must have democracy.” (F. Fukuyama, “‘Stateness’ first”, JOD, vol. 16, n°1, January 2005, p. 88).

from the early 1990s: the attractiveness of a democratic model that appears as legitimate to a population that adheres to it in full recognition of the situation.

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