



Bill Clinton's 'Democratic Enlargement' and the Securitisation of Democracy Promotion

Rasmus Sinding Søndergaard

To cite this article: Rasmus Sinding Søndergaard (2015) Bill Clinton's 'Democratic Enlargement' and the Securitisation of Democracy Promotion, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 26:3, 534-551, DOI: [10.1080/09592296.2015.1067529](https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2015.1067529)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2015.1067529>



Published online: 15 Sep 2015.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 231



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Bill Clinton's 'Democratic Enlargement' and the Securitisation of Democracy Promotion

RASMUS SINDING SØNDERGAARD

Faced with creating a grand strategy for American foreign policy in the post–Cold War world, the Clinton Administration launched the strategy of 'Democratic Enlargement.' This analysis makes two contributions to the existing literature on the topic. First, it investigates the role of Wilsonianism and the 'Democratic Peace Thesis' in the discourse of the strategy of 'Democratic Enlargement' based on public speeches with a focus on the relationship between democracy and security. Second, it utilises securitisation theory to analyse how Clinton's Administration used the linkage of democracy and security to legitimise humanitarian interventions in Haiti and Kosovo. By addressing 'Democratic Enlargement' in security terms, the Administration securitised democracy promotion and, thereby, created a discourse that helped legitimise a gradual move towards a more militaristic foreign policy during Clinton's presidency. This discourse offered arguments later utilised by the George W. Bush Administration.

Ultimately, the best strategy to ensure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere. Democracies don't attack each other.

Clinton, January 1994¹

These words from Bill Clinton's State of the Union Address in 1994 express a central viewpoint of his foreign policy: the existence of a democratic peace means that democracy promotion should be the core national security strategy of the United States. It lay at the heart of Clinton's bid for a new American grand strategy for the post–Cold War world dubbed 'Democratic Enlargement.' The strategy centred on three mutually re-enforcing goals: sustain national security, bolster the American economy, and promote democracy.²

The notion that promoting democracy abroad is beneficial to American security has been in various forms an influential current of thought in American political theory since the presidency of Woodrow Wilson (1913–1921) and has roots extending further back.³ It has become part of the influential political tradition known as Wilsonianism—promoting open market economies and international organisations to create an international order under American leadership.⁴ Clinton's 'Democratic Enlargement' coupled with Wilsonianism to affirm confidence in an academically based 'Democratic Peace Thesis.'⁵ This research claimed to offer scientific validation for the theoretical proposition of a democratic peace originally conceived by the German enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant in 1795.⁶

Several scholars have noted the influence of Wilsonianism on 'Democratic Enlargement' and Clinton's foreign policy in general.⁷ However, only a few explore the influence of the 'Democratic Peace Thesis.' General accounts of Clinton's foreign policy have dealt with the topic in passing and communications scholars have contributed rhetorical analyses.⁸ This existing literature shows that Clinton's motivation to make democracy promotion the centrepiece of his foreign policy entailed a belief in the need for it to reflect American core values, the integration of domestic and foreign policy, and the superiority of democracy and its positive effect on international peace and stability. It has evaluated the influence of Wilsonianism and assessed Clinton Administration efforts to implement democracy promotion.⁹ Michael Cox cites the 'Democratic Peace Thesis' as possibly the most influential academic idea in the Clinton White House.¹⁰ However, little existing research has explored its security implications in detail. The only major study to do so is George MacLean's *Clinton's Foreign Policy in Russia*, which links the Administration's adherence of the 'Thesis' to American–Russian agreements on defence conversion.¹¹ Other scholars have argued that Clinton's foreign policy remained committed to democracy promotion but gradually moved from an assertive humanitarianism in the president's first term (1993–1997) to a more militaristic unilateralism in the second (1997–2001).¹² Yet others have noted that Clinton managed to present global chaos as America's new enemy and use 'Democratic Enlargement' to justify military interventions in Haiti in 1994 and Kosovo in 1999.¹³

This exegesis makes two contributions to the existing literature. First, it investigates the role of Wilsonianism and the 'Democratic Peace Thesis' in the discourse of 'Democratic Enlargement' based on key public speeches with a focus on the relationship between democracy and security. Second, it uses securitisation theory to analyse how the Administration used the link between democracy and security to legitimise the use of force for humanitarian interventions.¹⁴ By addressing 'Democratic Enlargement' in security terms, the Clinton Administration securitised democracy promotion. Hence, it created a discourse that helped legitimise a gradual move towards a more militaristic foreign policy during Clinton's presidency. This discourse offered

arguments about democracy promotion later utilised by the subsequent George W. Bush Administration.

The so-called Copenhagen school in international relations developed the theoretical concept of securitisation.¹⁵ The theory holds a broad understanding of the concept of security, which includes a wide range of threats rather than traditional military ones.¹⁶ It is fundamentally concerned with security as a speech act and therefore focuses on analysing discourses that address issues in security terms.¹⁷ According to securitisation theory, an actor can attempt to move an issue from political perception to one perceived as a security threat by addressing it in security terms and hereby legitimise the use of extraordinary means. What matters is not the existence of an actual threat but the representation of a security threat. Success requires that the securitising actor get an audience to accept the issue as a security threat to obtain the legitimacy to use extraordinary means.¹⁸ Securitisation theory is therefore well suited to analyse the representation of the relationship between democracy and security in 'Democratic Enlargement' and the implications that ensue.

Since this analysis concerns the articulation of a new grand strategy and the development of supportive arguments, a focus on key public speeches and National Security Strategies that outline the Administration's foreign policy is central. Moreover, congressional testimonies, academic articles, newspaper articles, and Administration reports are equally germane. The speeches analysed represent Administration attempts to sell its foreign policy to a variety of audiences including the political establishment, American public opinion, and foreign leaders and populations. And they constitute a great source about the Clinton Administration's narrative about why democracy promotion should be the guiding principle for American foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. Public speeches given by individual officials are taken as the official position of the Administration because, despite minor differences, there was a general consensus and broad support for 'Democratic Enlargement' amongst its senior officials.¹⁹

Before investigating the launch of 'Democratic Enlargement,' a few words about the historical setting are necessary. Clinton took office at a time of both profound change in the international system and wide-ranging consequences for America's role in the world. The end of the Cold War had left the United States as the world's only superpower, accompanied by increased globalisation and growth in the number of democratic states since the late 1970s—the 'third wave of democratization.'²⁰ These developments all contributed to an increased American confidence in the superiority of the country's institutions and values, but they also fostered uncertainty about the purpose of American foreign policy. Clinton's predecessor, the Republican George H.W. Bush, had employed the phrase 'New World Order' to describe this new situation; but he had offered no new guiding principle to replace

the strategy of containment, the overarching principle of American foreign policy since 1947.

This strategic uncertainty mirrored a divided foreign policy elite of commentators, pundits, and academics. Traditional conservatives and libertarians argued that with the disappearance of the Soviet threat, the United States should restrain its international commitment and only use its power when national interests were directly threatened.²¹ Neo-conservatives initially shared this view but, gradually, moved to favour a much more active foreign policy centred on unilateral promotion of democracy.²² Liberals argued for an internationalist line that promoted American values and sought to preserve peace through humanitarian interventions.²³ Unlike the neo-conservatives, however, liberals argued that the promotion of American values should fall to multilateral co-operation, notably through the United Nations (UN). The far Left generally supported the ambitions of the liberals but had strong reservations about the risk of American imperialism and the role of the military and business interests.²⁴

Attempts to predict the future of the international system and American power in the post-Cold War world were legion. In his seminal 'The End of History?' Francis Fukuyama argued that the defeat of communism had resulted in the inexorable victory of liberal democracy and capitalism.²⁵ The American model had won the struggle of political ideas dating back to the French Revolution, leaving the United States to assist the continuous advance of liberal democracy. Others such as John Mearsheimer painted a more pessimistic picture. In 'Back to the Future,' he argued that the end of the Cold War was likely to result in a return to the nationalist power struggles that had dominated the world from the 17th century until 1945.²⁶ Samuel Huntington offered yet another prediction in his influential 'The Clash of Civilizations?'.²⁷ Rejecting previous predictions, Huntington argued that future conflicts would be between or amongst different civilisations with the main battle likely to be between the so-called Western and Islamic civilisations.

These diverging forecasts illustrate the uncertain waters that Clinton and his advisors had to navigate. It looked first like the Administration was most inclined to subscribe to Fukuyama's prediction, displaying a similar optimism in America's ability to shape a new international order and a stern belief in the universal appeal liberal democracy. However, the Administration did not take democracy's victory and the end of history for granted. On the contrary, for the first term secretary of state, Warren Christopher, the world was experiencing 'history fast forward.'²⁸ Referring to Fukuyama and Huntington, Director of Policy Planning James Steinberg argued that the world was too complicated to for description by grand theories.²⁹ The national security advisor, Anthony Lake, agreed: 'Thus, we have arrived at neither the end of history nor the clash of civilizations, but at a moment of immense democratic and entrepreneurial opportunity.'³⁰ The Administration thus officially rejected grand theories, but it certainly shared Fukuyama's optimism about

liberal democracy; and it made a direct connexion between the advance of democratic government abroad and American national security.

Nowhere was this more evident than in Clinton's attempt to make 'Democratic Enlargement' the new grand strategy for American foreign policy. Articulation of the core of the strategy came in a series of events that set the precedent for Administration rhetoric on democracy and security: speeches given by Clinton and his key foreign policy officials in autumn 1993 and Clinton's circulation of the first 'National Security Strategy' in July 1994.³¹ Lake summarised the situation at Johns Hopkins University on 21 September 1993:

First, we should strengthen the community of major market democracies—including our own—which constitutes the core from which enlargement is proceeding. Second, we should help foster and consolidate new democracies and market economies, where possible, especially in states of special significance and opportunity. Third, we must counter the aggression—and support the liberalization—of states hostile to democracy and markets. Fourth, we need to pursue our humanitarian agenda not only by providing aid, but also by working to help democracy and market economics take root in regions of greatest humanitarian concern.³²

Lake then made observations about the world confronting 'Democracy Enlargement.' Democracy and markets founded on capitalism were ascendant and more broadly accepted than ever before. The United States had emerged from the Cold War as the only superpower with unparalleled opportunities to lead in a world without major threats to its national security. The number of interstate ethnic conflicts had exploded; and globalisation had accelerated the speed of world events and called for the United States to embrace change.³³

Clinton voiced the same sentiments about international change and opportunity at the UN General Assembly on 27 September 1993, when he declared, 'It is clear that we live at a turning point in human history.'³⁴ He went on to emphasise that the overriding purpose of the new era had to be to expand and strengthen the world's community of market democracies. Clinton generally struck a multilateral tone and lauded the UN's potential as a peacekeeper.³⁵ Christopher and, then, the American UN ambassador, Madeleine Albright, echoed these statements in, respectively, a speech on peace building at Columbia University and a talk on the use of force at the National Defense University.³⁶ In all these public statements, the rhetoric was rather broad and unspecific about how to implement 'Democratic Enlargement,'³⁷ and Washington gave a number of caveats calling for pragmatism, patience with democratisation, and the need to consider other interests.³⁸ Nevertheless, the Administration clearly established

and articulated 'Democratic Enlargement' as the catchphrase for its foreign policy.

The foreign policy objectives presented in the September 1993 speeches were both elaborated and incorporated in the 'National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement' in July 1994.³⁹ This document presented three central strategic goals for American foreign policy: 'To sustain our security with military forces that are ready to fight. To bolster America's economic revitalization. To promote democracy abroad.'⁴⁰ The Administration vowed to do so by combining a strong national defence with a focus on co-operative, multinational solutions to handle transnational issues such as terrorism, drug trafficking, nuclear non-proliferation, and peacekeeping operations.⁴¹ It went on to explain that domestic prosperity depended on an active engagement abroad and that American foreign policy should serve domestic economic interests.⁴²

According to the 'National Security Strategy,' one aspect integrated and furthered all other interests: the promotion of democracy. This objective was not some idealistic or moral crusade; rather, it entailed a pragmatic commitment to see democracy take hold where it best served American interests. The strategy advocated a targeted interest-based approach that focused on aiding people already pushing for democracy. To do so, Washington would mobilise international resources, take public positions, integrate democracies into foreign markets, advance human rights, and help strengthen civil society, market institutions, and good governance—all in close co-operation with private businesses and non-governmental organisations.⁴³ Except for minor changes, subsequent Clinton 'National Security Strategies' generally stuck to the same line.⁴⁴ Consequently, the Administration established democracy promotion as the integrating element of foreign policy strategy.

Justification for this priority emerged through a number of arguments, including idealist sentiments about the need for American foreign policy to reflect American values and the sense of having embarked on a Wilsonian mission. In addressing in the French National Assembly in 1994, Clinton described democracy as the 'heart of our mission.'⁴⁵ Lake stated elsewhere, 'Now, as then, our special role in the world is to defend, enlarge, and strengthen the community of democratic nations.'⁴⁶ The deputy secretary of state, Strobe Talbott, echoed this message: 'Democracy in short is the one big thing that we must defend, sustain, and promote wherever possible even as we deal with the many other tasks that face us.'⁴⁷

Such idealism, however, always accompanied more realist arguments that underscored that the advancement of democracy abroad had direct positive implications for American national interests.⁴⁸ Chief amongst these was national security. The sheer number of speeches linking democracy and national security is telling. The fundamental claim of the 'Democratic Peace Thesis' that democracies do not go to war with each other was repeatedly evoked to justify 'Democratic Enlargement.'⁴⁹ Clinton had declared his belief

in the principle of democratic peace as early as a speech at Georgetown University in 1991.⁵⁰ Talbott explicitly praised Kant and his *Perpetual Peace* as a benchmark for international relations and went on to argue that the utopia of a world consisting of peaceful democracies was closer to fulfilment than ever before.⁵¹ Clinton's Administration thus clearly placed itself in line with the Wilsonian tradition of democracy promotion and the notion of a democratic peace.

It also concluded that non-democracies were a threat to international peace. This was clearly Albright's reading of twentieth century history, not surprising as she was born in Czechoslovakia and her family fled to London after Munich: 'In this century, virtually every major act of international aggression has been perpetrated by a regime that repressed political rights.'⁵² Lake presented the overthrow of democracy in Haiti and the conflict in Bosnia as threats to international peace, prescribing the promotion of democracy as the best way to neutralise them.⁵³ The Administration argued that if the United States ignored such conflicts and returned to isolationism as in the inter-war period, it would have dangerous consequences for American national security.⁵⁴

Active engagement through 'Democratic Enlargement' offered a long list of benefits to national security. For Clinton and his advisors, democracies were more likely to co-operate with the United States on a range of security issues such as arms control and non-proliferation.⁵⁵ Democracies were less likely to cause trouble for the United States by upsetting international stability through war or internal conflict, all rendered even more important in an increasingly globalised world:

democracies are less likely than non-democracies to go to war with each other, to persecute their citizens, to unleash tidal waves of refugees, to create environmental catastrophes, or to engage in terrorism. And democracies are more likely to be reliable partners in trade and diplomacy. That proposition holds with particular force in the increasingly interdependent world in which we now live.⁵⁶

Another hailed aspect of democracy was its perceived positive impact on the respect for human rights. John Shattuck, the assistant secretary of state for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, described democracy as the best safeguard against human rights violations.⁵⁷ In a similar vein, Christopher argued that without democracy, respect for human rights lacked guarantees.⁵⁸ The advance of democracy seemed a cost-efficient remedy to conflicts and human rights violations, which could threaten American security and force the United States into costly and unpopular interventions overseas.⁵⁹ This way, promoting democracy as the best means to secure respect for human rights and thereby help to prevent situations that might threaten international peace and force the United States to intervene were avoidable

The successful promotion of democracy in key states might even lead to what can best be described as a positive 'democratic domino theory,' where one state's successful transition to democracy could lead other countries down the same road. The Administration looked hopefully to achieve this end by supporting the advancement of democracy in places like the new Russia and post-apartheid South Africa.⁶⁰ Accusations of Western imperialism or cultural insensitivity when imposing democracy were rejected by referring to the supposedly universal appeal of democracy.⁶¹ The resemblance to George W. Bush's belief that a democratic Iraq could serve as a catalyst for democratisation in the Middle East is striking.

The 1994 'National Security Strategy' illustrates that the Clinton Administration did not think of national security in strictly traditional military terms. In line with Wilsonianism, it saw a close link amongst democracy, free markets, and security. Democracy and market economies were mutually re-enforcing, and promoting them tied directly to American national security.⁶² This nexus was evident in the term 'market democracy' that united liberal democracy and free market capitalism and figured prominently in Administration rhetoric. Just as reckoning that democracy would benefit economic development and prosperity, an open economic system with free trade would contribute measurably to democratisation⁶³—both processes presented as smoothly furthering each other and in the process directly benefiting American national security.

The use of Wilsonianism was evident by frequent direct references to Woodrow Wilson as a source of inspiration. Talbott expressed a great deal of admiration for Wilsonian democracy promotion, arguing that Wilson's ambition to 'make the world safe for democracy' when understood correctly 'stands up pretty well.' In his view, the United States had a laudable tradition for supporting liberal democracy and defeating anti-democratic regimes when necessary.⁶⁴ Talbott believed the Administration adhered to this tradition by bringing peace and democracy to the Balkans: 'in Wilsonian terms, we have an opportunity to make the entire continent safe for democracy'⁶⁵ Lake concurred. Wilson had been right to argue that democracies were more peaceful than non-democracies and, hence, that democracy promotion enhanced American security.

Yet, Clinton's Administration was not uncritical of Wilson. To Lake, Wilson's 'lofty moralism and scepticism of power' had been the main reason for his failure to obtain congressional support for the League of Nations. Lake declared that whilst animated by Wilsonian principles, the Administration strove to follow a more pragmatic course to achieve them.⁶⁶ In an interview with the *New York Times*, he labelled Clinton's foreign policy 'pragmatic neo-Wilsonian' and moved on to explain that democracy promotion needed implementation with determined pragmatism rather than absolute doctrines.⁶⁷ In Lake's opinion, Wilsonian principles needed moderation by the realist concerns that had guided American foreign policy

in the Cold War years. The Clinton Administration thus clearly used both the concept of Wilsonianism and the notion of a 'Democratic Peace' to justify making 'Democratic Enlargement' its grand strategy, linking democracy to security and arguing that the promotion of democracy was a pragmatic national security interest not a moral crusade.

Existing research has shown that Clinton's foreign policy made a gradual transition from multilateralism and diplomatic initiatives to greater unilateralism and a stronger reliance on military power. This shift was evident in a number of ways, none more telling than the gradual downgrading of the UN in favour of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation [NATO] as the primary forum for American international co-operation. Describing this development as a move from 'assertive humanitarianism' to 'remilitarized unilateralism,' John Dumbrell cites Republican control of Congress after 1994, growing Administration international confidence, and lessons from the Balkans as its main facilitators.⁶⁸

The presentation of democracy promotion as a vital national security interest by linking democracy and security in the discourse of 'Democratic Enlargement' was a crucial element to help justify this development. By addressing 'Democratic Enlargement' in security terms, the Clinton Administration securitised democracy promotion. Securitising democracy promotion created a discourse that helped legitimise the use of force for humanitarian interventions. Unsurprisingly, the securitisation of democracy promotion helped rationalise the move towards a more militaristic foreign policy towards the end of Clinton's presidency.

The assumption that promoting democracy abroad strengthened American national security had been lurking the halls of American foreign policy-making since Wilson's presidency. In the early 1990s, some scholars claimed to offer scientific proof for the Kantian notion of a democratic peace through the 'Democratic Peace Thesis.' Thereby they provided validation for the security benefits of Wilsonian democracy promotion, which could be used to give democracy promotion a stronger imperative. During the Clinton era, the 'Democratic Peace Thesis' successfully 'transferred' from academics into politics, as the idea gained influence in the White House as evident in the strategy of 'Democratic Enlargement.' The Administration subscribed to the ideas of the 'Democratic Peace Thesis' and used it to argue for democracy promotion in the name of international peace and American national security. By addressing democracy in security terms, the Administration effectively securitised the protection of democracy, using it to legitimise the use of force to promote and defend democratic government abroad. Promoting democracy went from being a political choice to an essential security interest, allowing Clinton to argue that democracy promotion was based on rationality as well as idealism.

In their study of NATO, Christian Büger and Trine Villumsen make a similar argument, showing how peace researchers and foreign policy-makers

securitised democracy as the 'Democratic Peace Thesis' translated into strategy in the 1990s.⁶⁹ When the strategy transformed into a military expression, they argue, it moved from an issue of policy to an objectified practice. Democracy promotion, thus, moved from a political ideal to a top security priority that could legitimise the use of force.⁷⁰ Through evoking the 'Democratic Peace Thesis,' Clinton's Administration similarly postulated academic scientific credibility to the security implications of promoting democracy and thereby justified extraordinary means for the strategy of 'Democratic Enlargement.' This was most evident in military interventions conducted under the rubrics of protecting and promoting democracy and averting humanitarian crisis.

The military intervention in Haiti in 1994–1995 represents an early example of the Clinton Administration's securitisation of democracy. In 1991, the Haitian Army staged a coup against the democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. After American pressure, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 940 on 31 July 1994, which authorised the international community to use military force to restore Haitian democracy. To execute this UN mandate, the United States led an international coalition, 'Operation Uphold Hope.' The imminent threat of a military intervention led the Haitian military regime to back down, restoring Aristide to power.

The Administration believed during the crisis, according to Lake, that continued non-democratic rule would lead to gross human rights violations and bring with it waves of refugees.⁷¹ The only way to solve Haiti's problems, Christopher argued, was to restore democracy.⁷² However, Christopher's desire to see democracy return did not simply stem from a concern for the wellbeing of Haitians. The overthrow of democracy in Haiti, he argued in 1994, posed a threat to regional security as well as international norms.⁷³ The statements by Lake and Christopher linked the form of Haitian government directly to the security of the entire region. Arguing that the absence of democratic government in Haiti would threaten regional security, they made the restoration of democracy a security issue, thereby effectively securitising democracy promotion.

Writing about the motivations for intervening in Haiti in a 1996 article in *Foreign Affairs*, Talbott used a direct reference to research on democratic peace to justify the intervention: 'a substantial body of empirical evidence and political science scholarship supports the premise that democracies are less likely to fight wars with each other.'⁷⁴ By evoking scholarship on democratic peace, and accepting its conclusion about the peaceful nature of democracies, the Administration argued that the positive security implications of democracy promotion had scientific validation. Following this logic, the Administration presented the form of Haitian government as linked directly to international security. In a speech at George Washington University in March 1996, Lake explained the decision to intervene to restore democracy in Haiti by arguing that to 'preserve, promote and defend democracy' was

one of seven points, which by themselves or in combination could justify the use of force.⁷⁵ Speaking at the United States Institute of Peace a few months later, the deputy assistant to the president on national security affairs, Nancy Soderberg, likewise used the link between democracy and security to justify intervention in Haiti. Strengthening democracy was a key security interest in the post-Cold War world, according to Soderberg, and intervention in Haiti had represented a successful example of democracy promotion through the use of force.⁷⁶ In 1997 Albright, now secretary of state, likewise justified the Haiti intervention by referring to democracy as 'a parent of peace.' One of the key lessons of the twentieth century, Albright argued, has been that democratic states are far less likely to commit acts of aggression than dictatorships, therefore a democratic Haiti was a clear American security interest.⁷⁷

The UN Security Council Resolution 940 to use military force to restore Haitian democracy marked an important symbolic shift in international norms on sovereignty, as it was the first UN-sanctioned intervention on the grounds of 'denial-of-democracy.' This was not lost on the Clinton Administration, which hailed it as a 'landmark' and presented it as a victory for its strategy of 'Democratic Enlargement.'⁷⁸ In this way, the resolution and intervention to restore democracy exemplify how the Clinton Administration sought to securitise the lack of democracy in the international system.

During the 1990s, however, it became increasingly clear that the UN was unable to live up to the expectations placed on it as the provider of international peace and stability in the post-Cold War world. The diplomatic unity in the Security Council and political will amongst member states to intervene in conflict hotspots around the globe simply was not there. Despite an overwhelming increase in UN peacekeeping operations—from a mere 18 between 1956 and 1991 to 21 between 1991 and 1995—the UN failed to agree on the international community's response to a number of conflicts.

One was the Kosovo War in 1999. With its own Balkan interests, Russia opposed an intervention that meant the UN Security Council was unable to agree on a resolution to intervene in the conflict. As a result, the Clinton Administration decided to circumvent the UN and instead act through NATO to stop the conflict. It led to a series of NATO bombings between 24 March and 11 June 1999 of Serbia, which was using military power to keep Kosovo from breaking away—the Kosovars wanted independence. In the process, the Clinton Administration had to obtain the support of Congress as well as its European allies. At first sight, this occurred more by appealing to humanitarian concerns than democracy. Still, these concerns over ethnic violence, massive human rights violations, internally displaced people, and refugees were presented as partly rooted in the absence of democracy. The Administration framed the absence of democracy and the perils flowing from the conflict as security issues. Failing to act and restore a peaceful democracy, Washington argued, would cause grave security risks to Europe and the United States in the form of terrorism, instability, refugees, and more.

Thus, to obtain support for military action, the continuing conflict and lack of democratic government securitised Kosovo.

Addressing the United States Chamber of Commerce on 14 April 1999 during the NATO bombing of Serbia, Albright made the case that there was a direct link between American national security and the form of government in Kosovo:

[T]here is nothing foreign about foreign policy anymore. When we make innovative investments in peace, prosperity, and democracy overseas, as we now propose, we help to secure those blessings for our own citizens here at home. And when we fail to make the needed investments, we place our own future in jeopardy.⁷⁹

Albright went on to argue that the Kosovo conflict highlighted the need to integrate the Balkans into Atlantic community of democracies. Presented as another example of how the absence of democratic government had negative implications for American national security, the justification for intervention again followed the promotion of democracy.

A few months following the successful bombing campaign against Serbia, Talbott argued that the Administration had decided to use force from the proposition that 'the defense of American strategic interests requires the defense of American political values—and vice versa.'⁸⁰ Paraphrasing Wilson, he argued, that the intervention in Kosovo was a natural continuation of the United States' special interest in making the world safe for democracy.

In the post-war reconciliation process, promoting the establishment of democratic government as the guarantee against new conflicts came with clear references to the 'Democratic Peace Thesis.'⁸¹ From the perspective of international law, the Kosovo intervention differed importantly from the earlier NATO intervention in Bosnia in 1995. Unlike Bosnia, a UN mandate did not back the Kosovo intervention, and it clearly violated Serbian sovereignty, signifying a greater willingness to over-ride state sovereignty at the expense of humanitarian concerns and human rights violations. Whereas the bombing campaign against Serbia and their Bosnian Serb allies during the Bosnian War had been motivated by some of the same humanitarian concerns as the Kosovo intervention, in legalistic terms there was a clear difference. In the Bosnian case, the United States along with the majority of the international community had recognised Bosnia as an independent state and thus acted to defend its sovereignty against Serbian forces. In Kosovo, on the other hand, NATO intervened to protect a minority within a state against its own government. The Serbian crackdown in Kosovo did not constitute a military attack on a NATO-member state and, thus, did not activate the organisation's principle of collective security. Nonetheless, the Clinton Administration sought to frame the conflict as a threat to democracy and thereby a threat to NATO's members.

As the cases of Haiti and Kosovo illustrate, the Clinton Administration used the securitisation of democracy to argue in favour of humanitarian interventions at the expense of state sovereignty. Jason Edwards has argued that with his aggressive rhetoric on democracy, Clinton contributed to a significant change in American foreign policy rhetoric towards more interventions.⁸² Albright exemplified this in 1999, when she argued that intervention in intra-state affairs to stop human rights abuses had now become an accepted principle, something to which she believed the interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo testified.⁸³ Following the logic of securitised democracy, preventing human rights violations inside a state was no longer simply a moral issue for the United States. Internal conflicts in other states became a security issue because, the argument went, non-democracies posed a threat to international peace and American national security. Within this logic, intervention in the internal affairs of other states arguably became a matter of legitimate American security interests. In Kosovo, for instance, NATO was not fighting the Serbian government as such, but the lack of democracy in the country—out of the security implications this had for the United States and its European allies.⁸⁴

To be clear, the Clinton Administration's use of humanitarian intervention to promote and protect democracy was highly selective. Only employed when the discourse of securitised democracy fitted American interests, the Clinton Administration needed to bolster support for its decision to use force. Examples of the Administration's failure to intervene in the face of atrocities and denial of democracy and basic rights are legion—inaction in Rwanda in 1994 and the slow and reluctant intervention in Bosnia remain the most striking. Wanting to avoid an unpopular military intervention in the Balkans, the Clinton Administration went to great lengths to downplay the atrocities committed in Bosnia until the pressure to 'do something' became intense.⁸⁵ However, when not wanting to intervene and needing to legitimise its policy, the Administration employed the securitisation of democracy promotion.

As mentioned, the move towards a more unilateral and militaristic foreign policy happened at a time when American power was at an all-time high with no major hostile competitor to balance it. Concurrently, increasing democratisation, globalisation, proclamations of 'the end of history,' and American Cold War triumphalism combined to create an atmosphere of high optimism about American values and power. Overall, the United States was growing increasingly disappointed with the UN as it failed to fulfil the high expectations afforded it in the immediate post-Cold War era. In such a scenario, it is not too difficult to understand the temptation for the Americans to use their military strength to get their way. All of these factors undoubtedly contributed to Clinton's turn towards a greater reliance on the use of force.

Still, the securitisation of 'Democratic Enlargement' was an important legitimising factor, often overlooked or not sufficiently recognised in the account of Clinton's foreign policy. In cases like the interventions in Haiti

and Kosovo, the securitisation of democracy contributed significantly to legitimise the use of force. As illustrated by Haiti, the securitisation of democracy did not have to conflict with multilateralism. But by securitising democracy, the Clinton Administration sought to legitimise the use of force to defend democracy with or without the support of the international community.

Tony Smith has argued that liberal internationalism moved from a hegemonic phase under Clinton to an imperialist phase under George W. Bush.⁸⁶ According to Smith, a restrained liberalism inclined to multilateralism and reluctance to use force to advance democracy characterised the first phase; the second favoured unilateral action and democracy promotion through military intervention. Similarly, Georg Sørensen has argued that American liberal internationalism from the 1980s to the 2000s moved from what he calls a liberalism of restraint towards a liberalism of imposition.⁸⁷ To Sørensen, Clinton's assertive multilateralism represented the highpoint of humanitarian interventions. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States, he argues, Bush replaced the humanitarian impulse for intervention with a national security impulse. Interventions now become undertakings to protect the United States from potential terror attacks.⁸⁸ The difference is merely one of degree. Clinton's humanitarian interventions integrated a logic that held that interventions to protect human rights and democracy linked directly to national security. Through the securitisation of democracy promotion, a national security impulse as well as a humanitarian one guided humanitarian interventions. Whilst insisting that his policy found basis on both, Clinton ultimately favoured stressing pragmatic security interests over idealistic humanitarian values.

This is not to say there were no differences between the foreign policies of Clinton and George W. Bush. There most certainly were. Bush displayed a blatant disregard for multilateralism, which Clinton never did. The scale of nation-building and democracy promotion through military intervention—and the havoc it brought about—under Bush does not bear comparison with that of his predecessor. The same goes for the severity and magnitude of human rights violations and infringements of civil liberties committed in the name of the 'War on Terror.' Nevertheless, Clinton's foreign policy of 'Democratic Enlargement' embodied a link between security and democracy, which shared some similarities with his successor. Furthermore, it contributed to a shift in norms about the use of force, state sovereignty, and humanitarian interventions. This shift later materialised in the international community's decision to adopt the UN initiative, 'Responsibility to Protect,' in 2005, but it also informed Bush's thinking about democracy promotion through military interventions.

When it comes to the relationship between democracy and security, the similarity between Clinton's 'Democratic Enlargement' rhetoric and that of Bush's 'War on Terror' is striking. In his second Inaugural Address in 2005, Bush stated, 'Now, it is the urgent requirement of our Nation's security. . . .

So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.⁸⁹ Bush's democracy promotion was most obviously visible in the large-scale military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan after 2001. However, Bush also sought to reform American diplomacy and foreign assistance to promote democracy.⁹⁰ His Administration identified democracy promotion as a key long-term antidote to terrorism.⁹¹ Clinton's increasingly unilateral neo-Wilsonianism shared some similarities with the more unilateralist neo-conservatism of the Bush Administrations.⁹²

The securitisation of democracy promotion by the Clinton Administration created a discourse, used to legitimise the move towards a more militaristic foreign policy exemplified by the use of force for humanitarian interventions. This discourse offered arguments about democracy promotion that was later utilised by the subsequent Bush Administration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Helle Porsdam, Niklas Olsen, Morten Rasmussen, and Niels Bjerre-Poulsen for insightful comments for earlier draft versions of this article.

NOTES

1. Bill Clinton, *State of the Union Address, January 25 1994* (Washington DC, 1994).

2. For discussion of alternative candidates for Clinton's strategy, see John Dumbrell, 'Was There a Clinton Doctrine? President Clinton's Foreign Policy Reconsidered,' *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 13/2 (2002), 43–56.

3. Tony Smith, *America's Mission—The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ, 1995); David Ryan, *US Foreign Policy in World History* (London, 2000); Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT, 2009); Adam Quinn, *US Foreign Policy in Context: National Ideology from the Founders to the Bush Doctrine* (London, NY, 2010); Michael Cox, Timothy J. Lynch, and Nicolas Bouchet, eds., *US Foreign Policy and Democracy Promotion* (London, NY, 2013).

4. Tony Smith, 'Making the World Safe for Democracy in the American Century,' *Diplomatic History*, 23/2 (1999), 174.

5. Steve Chan, 'In Search of Democratic Peace: Problems and Promise,' *Mershon International Studies Review*, 41/1 (1997), 59–91.

6. Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay* (Bristol, 1992 [1795]).

7. Michael Cox, 'Wilsonianism Resurgent? The Clinton Administration and the Promotion of Democracy,' in Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry, and Takashi Inoguchi, eds., *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts* (Oxford, NY, 2000), 218–39; Cox, Lynch, and Bouchet, *Democracy Promotion*; Douglas Brinkley, 'Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine,' *Foreign Policy*, 106 (1997), 110–27.

8. See John Dumbrell, *Clinton's Foreign Policy: Between the Bushes, 1992–2000* (London, NY, 2009). Then Jason A. Edwards, *Navigating the Post-Cold War World: President Clinton's Foreign Policy Rhetoric* (Lanham, MD, 2008); Kathryn M. Olson, 'Democratic Enlargement's Value Hierarchy and Rhetorical Forms: An Analysis of Clinton's Use of a Post-Cold War Symbolic Frame to Justify Military Interventions,' *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 34/2 (2004).

9. Cox, Lynch, and Bouchet, *Democracy Promotion*.
10. Cox, 'Wilsonianism Resurgent?', 218–39.
11. George A. MacLean, *Clinton's Foreign Policy in Russia: From Deterrence and Isolation to Democratization and Engagement* (Aldershot, Burlington, VT, 2006).
12. Dumbrell, *Clinton's Foreign Policy*, 123.
13. Olson, 'Value Hierarchy,' 324–31.
14. For a similar approach studying North Atlantic Treaty Organisation enlargement, see Christian Büger and Trine Villumsen, 'Beyond the Gap: Relevance, Fields of Practice and the Securitizing Consequences of (Democratic Peace) Research,' *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 10/4 (2007), 417–48.
15. Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security a New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO, 1998).
16. *Ibid.*, 1–4.
17. For the concept of 'speech act,' see John L. Austin, *How To Do Things with Words*, Second Edition (Cambridge, MA, 1975); Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 3 Volumes (Cambridge, NY, 2002), 103–27.
18. Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *New Framework*, 24.
19. Dumbrell, *Clinton's Foreign Policy*, 19–20.
20. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK, 1991).
21. For a libertarian view, see Ted Galen Carpenter, 'America's Purpose Now,' *Natioonal Interest*, 21 (Fall 1990), 26–61; For a conservative view, see Patrick J. Buchanan, *A Republic, Not An Empire: Reclaiming America's Destiny* (Washington, DC, 1999).
22. For a neo-conservative view, see William Kristol and Robert Kagan, 'Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,' *Foreign Affairs*, 75/4 (1996), 18–32.
23. See a liberal view, see Lee H. Hamilton, 'A Democrat Looks at Foreign Policy,' *Foreign Affairs*, 71/3 (1992), 32–51.
24. Warren I. Cohen, *America's Failing Empire: U.S. Foreign Relations since the Cold War* (Malden, MA, 2005), 40.
25. Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History?,' *National Interest*, 16 (1989), 3–18. It was later expanded in *idem.*, *The End of History and the Last Man* (NY, 1993).
26. John J. Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War,' *International Security*, 15/1 (1990), 5–56.
27. Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations?,' *Foreign Affairs*, 72/3 (1993), 22–49. It was later expanded in *idem.* *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (NY, 1996).
28. Warren Christopher, 'Leadership for the Next American Century,' *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 7/4 (1996), 9.
29. James Steinberg, 'Policy and Principles: The Clinton Administration's Approach,' *Ibid.*, 7/6 (1996), 27.
30. Anthony Lake, 'From Containment to Enlargement,' *Ibid.*, 4/39 (1993), 659.
31. The speeches occurred between 20 and 29 September 1993 and addressed both domestic and international audiences.
32. Lake, 'Containment to Enlargement,' 660. Lake repeated his message in before Congress eight days later; *idem.*, 'Enlarging Democracy,' *House of Representatives* (1993).
33. *Idem.*, 'Containment to Enlargement,' 659.
34. Bill Clinton, 'Confronting the Challenges of a Broader World,' *Department of State Dispatch*, 4/39 (1993), 649.
35. *Ibid.*, 650.
36. Madeleine Albright, 'Use of Force in a Post-Cold War World,' *Ibid.*, 4/39 (1993), 666; Warren Christopher, 'Building Peace in the Middle East,' *Ibid.* Christopher's speech were also read to the Senate.
37. For a contemporary critique, see David C. Hendrickson, 'The Democratist Crusade: Interventions, Economic Sanctions, and Engagement,' *World Policy Journal*, 11/4 (1994/1995), 22–29.
38. Lake, 'Enlarging Democracy.'
39. The Goldwater-Nichols *Defense Reorganization Act* (1986) requires the president to submit an annual report on 'National Security Strategy.'
40. 'A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement,' (Washington, DC, 1994), i.
41. *Ibid.*, 6–15.

42. Ibid., 15–17.
43. Ibid., 18–20.
44. Alvin Rubinstein, Albina Shayevich, and Boris Zlotnikov, eds., *The Clinton Foreign Policy Reader: Presidential Speeches with Commentary* (NY, London, 2000), 7.
45. Bill Clinton, 'Securing Peace and Prosperity in a Broader Europe,' *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 5/24 (1994), 383.
46. Anthony Lake, 'Defining Missions, Setting Deadlines: Meeting New Security Challenges In the Post-Cold War World,' Ibid., 7/12(1996), 128.
47. Strobe Talbott, 'Support for Democracy and the U.S. National Interest,' Ibid., 120.
48. Tony Smith, 'National Security Liberalism and American Foreign Policy,' in Cox, Ikenberry, and Inoguchi, *Democracy Promotion*, 85–102.
49. See amongst others Clinton, *State of the Union Address, January 25 1994*; Madeleine Albright, 'America's Support for Fundamental Human Rights,' *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 9/11 (1998), 6–10.
50. Bill Clinton, *A New Covenant for American Security* (Washington DC, 1991).
51. Strobe Talbott, 'Opening Doors and Building Bridges in the New Europe,' *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 9/1 (1998), 13.
52. Albright, 'Fundamental Human Rights,' 7.
53. Anthony Lake, 'The Purpose of American Power,' *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 5/38 (1994), 622–23.
54. Clinton, *State of the Union Address, January 25 1994*; 6; idem., *State of the Union Address, January 24 1995* (Washington DC, 1995); Madeleine Albright, 'The President's International Affairs Budget: A Small Price For Strong Leadership,' *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 10/1 (1999).
55. Anthony Lake, 'The U.S. Faces Key Foreign Policy Challenges,' *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 7/23 (1996).
56. Strobe Talbott, 'Democracy and the International Interest,' Ibid., 8/8 (1997), 12.
57. John Shattuck, 'Human Rights and Democracy In Asia,' Ibid., 6/14 (1995), 151.
58. Warren Christopher, 'U.S. Strategy To Defend Human Rights and Democracy,' Ibid., 6/15 (1995), 296.
59. Gare A. Smith, 'Civil-Military Relations in the Americas: Promoting Human Rights, Democracy, and Accountability,' Ibid., 7/9 (1996), 67.
60. Strobe Talbott, 'Promoting Democracy and Prosperity in Central Asia,' Ibid., 5/19 (1994), 280; Madeleine Albright, 'Sustaining Principled and Purposeful American Leadership,' Ibid., 8/4 (1997), 12.
61. Bill Clinton, 'The Legacy of America's Leadership as We Enter the 21st Century' (22 October 1996): http://fas.org/man/nato/offdocs/us_96/102296clinton_detroit.htm; Albright, 'Sustaining Principled and Purposeful American Leadership,' 7/43 (1996), 517.
62. See amongst others Department of State, '1994 International Affairs Budget: Promoting Peace, Prosperity, and Democracy,' Ibid., 4/Supplement 1 (1993), 39; Albright, 'Purposeful American Leadership.'
63. Bill Clinton, *State of the Union Address, February 4 1997* (Washington, DC, 1997). 4; Madeleine Albright, 'American Political and Economic Leadership: The Challenges of the Global Economy,' *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 10/3 (1999), 4.
64. Strobe Talbott, 'The Balkan Question and the European Answer,' *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 9/3 (1999), 13.
65. Ibid., 15.
66. Anthony Lake, 'The Need for Engagement,' Talbott, 'The Balkan Question and the European Answer,' 5/49 (1994), 804–05.
67. Thomas Friedman, 'Clinton's Foreign Policy: Top Advisor Speaks Up,' *New York Times* (31 October 1993).
68. Dumbrell, *Clinton's Foreign Policy*, 123.
69. Büger and Villumsen, 'Beyond the Gap.'
70. Ibid., 435.
71. Lake, 'Purpose of American Power,' 623.
72. Warren Christopher, 'The Strategic Priorities of American Foreign Policy,' *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 4/47 (1993), 798.
73. Idem., 'Restoring Democracy to Haiti,' Ibid., 5/40 (1994), 653–54.
74. Strobe Talbott, 'Democracy and the National Interest,' *Foreign Affairs*, 75/6 (1996), 49.
75. Lake, 'Defining Missions.'

76. Nancy E. Soderberg, 'U.S. Intervention in the Post-Cold War Era,' *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 7/30 (1996), 373–75.
77. Madeleine Albright, 'American Leadership for the 21st Century: Doing What's Right And Smart for America's Future,' *Ibid.*, 8/3 (1997), 2.
78. Talbott, 'Democracy and the International Interest,' 13.
79. Albright, 'Political and Economic Leadership.'
80. Talbott, 'Balkan Question.'
81. Madeleine Albright, 'Three Steps Towards Peace, Democracy, and Renewal in Kosovo,' *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 9/3 (1999), 16.
82. Edwards, *Post-Cold War World*, 142.
83. Albright expressed the same sentiment. Madeleine Albright, 'Continuing the Fight for Human Rights in the 21st Century,' *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 10/10 (1999), 3.
84. Büger and Villumsen, 'Beyond the Gap,' 438.
85. Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (NY, 2002).
86. Tony Smith, *A Pact with the Devil: Washington's Bid for World Supremacy and the Betrayal of the American Promise* (NY, 2007), 76–82.
87. Georg Sørensen, *A Liberal World Order in Crisis. Choosing Between Imposition and Restraint* (Ithaca, NY, London: 2011), 99.
88. *Ibid.*, 101–03.
89. George W. Bush, *Second Inaugural Address, January 20 2005* (Washington, DC, 2005).
90. Susan B. Epstein, Nina Serafino, and Francis T. Miko, *Democracy Promotion: Cornerstone of U.S. Foreign Policy?*, CRS Report: RL34296 (Washington, DC, 2008), 15.
91. White House, 'National Strategy for Combatting Terrorism' (Washington, D.C.: 2006).
92. Tony Smith has also noted this similarity. See Tony Smith, 'From Woodrow Wilson in 1902 to the Bush doctrine in 2002: Democracy Promotion as imperialism,' *International Politics*, 48/2/3 (2011), 247.

Rasmus Sinding Søndergaard is a PhD candidate at the University of Southern Denmark where he is writing his dissertation on American human rights policy in the 1980s with a special focus on Congress. He is the recipient of numerous research grants including the American-Scandinavian Foundation Fellowship 2014, the Danish EliteForsk PhD Stipend 2015 and the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations' Global Scholar and Diversity Grant. During the academic year 2014–2015, he was a visiting scholar at the University of California, Berkeley. He holds an MA in History from the University of Copenhagen and is a former Congressional Fellow in the US House Foreign Affairs Committee.