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### Organic Intellectuals and the Discourse on Democracy: Academia, Foreign Policy Makers, and Third World Intervention

Christopher I. Clement <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Virginia Tech

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## Organic Intellectuals and the Discourse on Democracy: Academia, Foreign Policy Makers, and Third World Intervention

Christopher I. Clement  
*Virginia Tech*

**Abstract** *Since the mid-20th century, discourse on democracy in academia has been dominated by a conception that privileges the US and Western European democracies and capitalist markets. In this paper, I refer to Gramsci's concept of "organic intellectuals" to argue that the dominant discourse on democracy is related to the emergence of the US as a global power after World War II. I further propose that changes and continuity within the discourse require a broader discussion of how intellectual articulation reflected and justified US intervention in the Third World during and after the cold war. Two key periods are identified in this paper: the late 1950s to early 1970s, when the US backed anticommunist dictatorships in the Third World under the guise of safeguarding democracy, and the mid-1980s to the 1990s, when US foreign policy makers attempted to influence political transitions in the Third World by promoting civilian-elected regimes.*

### Introduction: Development Theory and American Foreign Policy

Antonio Gramsci thought that dominant modes of thought are not simply a reflection of crude ruling class efforts to recruit groups of intellectuals to speak on their behalf. Intellectuals form thoughts in a material context, but there is a range of experiences and interpretations that form multiple modes of evaluating and valuing society. A mode of thought becomes dominant in society when it expresses the particular experiences and practical dilemmas of the dominant class or group. Gramsci introduces the concept of "organic intellectuals," those who provide the means by which the dominant class advances its particular experiences and interests as a general and objective conception of all society to explain this. Organic intellectuals provide the link between dominant and subordinate groups by articulating the former's experiences and interests as common values, taken for granted assumptions, and shared interests.<sup>1</sup> Through the education and socialization of mass society, the dominant mode of thought then appears as an objective and value-free evaluation of society.<sup>2</sup> This process of "masking" dominant interests positions intellectuals as permanent fixtures who continuously develop and reinforce a network of supportive ideas under the guise of "true philosophy."

<sup>1</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), pp. 5–6, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Benedetto Fontana, *Hegemony and Power: On the Relations between Gramsci and Machiavelli* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 140–141.

In line with Gramsci's ideas, I propose that demystifying and exposing the "organic" relationship between the dominant discourse on democracy and American foreign policy in the Third World should include an account of how shared assumptions, particular experiences, and narrow interests (which are generalized as universal truths and common sense) framed the environment in which democratization in the Third World has been problematized. The production of ideology takes place in a dynamic matrix of material circumstances and historical events. My objective is to provide an illustration of how organic intellectuals manufacture an ideology supportive of the concerns and interests of the US foreign policy makers by examining the literature on democracy and democratization in its historical context.

The perspective I advance holds that a dialectical relationship exists between academic scholars and foreign policy makers. I do not argue that government funding corrupted scholars into creating a narrow definition of democracy, nor do I suggest that foreign policy strategies are entirely influenced by academic theories. Foreign policy makers would obviously be drawn to those academic theories that best justify their efforts in the Third World. Academic scholars searching for empirically-based models of development would, of course, be influenced by the actual responses of foreign policy makers. In this article, I show how the institutional relationships at the numerous think tanks and universities reflected highly compatible perspectives and interests between the two communities.

### Modernization Theory on Democracy in the Third World

From the start, modernization scholars limited their models of modernity and democracy to the experience of the United States and Western Europe. Specific incremental changes in social institutions and political culture (e.g. the institutionalization of political parties and the expansion of suffrage) coupled with the rapid expansion of technology associated with capitalism were identified as necessary elements for the emergence and establishment of democracy in these areas. Modernization scholars extrapolated the limited experiences of a handful of countries and proposed that the advent of democracy in the Third World would not be an effortless or short process. In their view, it would take years to first implant the economic, institutional, and cultural prerequisites of democracy; "underdeveloped countries" would first have to become "modern."<sup>3</sup>

Modernization scholars such as Samuel Huntington and Seymour Martin Lipset first constructed a narrative based on the absence of feudal social relations in the United States. Europe had been besieged by recurrent social crises which sometimes resulted in authoritarianism, but the US was believed to be more stable and less prone to political "extremes" of the left (communism) and the right (fascism). The transitions from feudal social relations to capitalist social relations were assumed to be a major factor contributing to political turbulence in Europe. Conversely, the absence of feudal social relations in the US was a major advantage for the development of democracy in that country. This narrative is commonly referred to as "American Exceptionalism." To then

<sup>3</sup> Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

explain the emergence of democracy in Western Europe, both authors focused on centuries of political crises that culminated during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in international conflicts and finally led to World War II.

Both narratives are related to how modernization scholars celebrated the mid-20th century as a “post-politics” era in which ideologically driven policies had come to an end. Seymour Martin Lipset’s assessment of the period is illustrative:

The characteristic pattern of stable Western democracies in the mid-twentieth century is that they are in a “post-politics” phase—that is, there is relatively little difference between the democratic left and right, the socialists are moderates and the conservatives accept the welfare state. The basic political issue of the industrial revolution, the incorporation of the workers into the legitimate body politic, has been settled. The key domestic issue today is collective bargaining over differences in the division of total product within the framework of a Keynesian welfare state, and such issues do not require or precipitate extremism on either side.<sup>4</sup>

For Lipset, upward economic mobility produced demands for inclusion into the political system. The “nationalization of politics”—the refocus on national issues rather than parochial ones—under the New Deal facilitated mass inclusion of new participants while the productive capabilities of industrialization provided the structural conditions to facilitate economic well-being.<sup>5</sup>

In a somewhat similar vein, Samuel Huntington proposed that American exceptionalism was due to the pre-existence of a powerful government, composed of institutions that were “sufficiently variegated at the local, state, and national levels so as to provide many avenues for political participation.”<sup>6</sup> The complexity and adaptability of national and subnational political institutions ensured that political activists would opt for inclusion into the system rather than its overthrow. These attributes meant that rapid socioeconomic growth and demands for political inclusion could be channeled into existing institutions, thus enabling simultaneous change and stability.

These narratives show how modernization theorists problematized the question of democracy and shed light on how their limited historical observations blinded them to other possibilities emerging in the Third World. As Carole Pateman noted in her critique of Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba’s *The Civic Culture*, the adherence to a liberal theory of democracy meant that their models were unable to recognize the fundamental questions raised by their empirical findings.<sup>7</sup> Modernization scholars assumed that the problems of development and democracy in the Third World could be addressed through a comparative analysis that privileged the US and Western Europe.

For example, Almond and Verba asserted that the US and British political

<sup>4</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 82.

<sup>5</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man*, pp. 82–85.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 128.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Pateman argued that although Verba and Almond found that positive attitudes towards the political system partially depended on gender and ethnicity, the authors did not account for sexism or racism as factors influencing political satisfaction. See Carole Pateman, “The Civic Culture: A Philosophical Critique,” in Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba (eds), *The Civic Culture Revisited* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989), p. 60.

culture exemplified a mixture of passive and active roles among individual citizens. In the US and British experience, individuals voted but left decision making up to elected elites. Almond and Verba advanced these experiences as an empirically proven form of democracy that is sustainable in modern capitalist society. As Pateman noted:

The civic culture rests not on the participation of the people, but on their nonparticipation. ... The balance of the civic culture is one that allows these elites "to get on with governing" in the absence of politically active people. ... The approach of *The Civic Culture* obscures the need to ask important questions concerning not just the stable maintenance of the balance of the civic culture, but whether the implicit liberal model of the civic culture is the only feasible model of civic political life, and the possibility of democratic development of the civic culture.<sup>8</sup>

The narrowness of democracy studies meant that Huntington, Lipset, and Almond and Verba drew pessimistic conclusions about the possibilities of establishing enduring democracies in the Third World. Both Lipset and Huntington believed that the absence of a pre-existing, strong government was a serious handicap for "modernizing" countries in the periphery. The dual tasks of creating effective governments and promoting economic development were far different than the gradual, even-paced socioeconomic and political modernization of the US and Western Europe. As Huntington asserted, while modernization in the West was spread over centuries, multiple transformations associated with modernization were taking place at the same time in the Third World. For Lipset, integration into the system, especially working class inclusion, was beset by the limitations of undeveloped economies which lacked a middle class and an industrial society.<sup>9</sup> The likely and frequent outcome was dictatorship rather than civilian-elected governments. According to Huntington and Lipset, however, the US experience did not have much to offer modernizing countries since the latter's governmental structures precluded modernity.

Modernization theory constructed a vexing dilemma: Third World countries should aspire to meet the standards of political modernity set by the United States and Western Europe, but presumed internal conditions that made it almost impossible to accomplish this task. Modernization scholars identified traditionalism and communism as specific obstacles to development. In the former case, particularistic identities tied to the family, village, tribe, linguistic group, or religion were seen as traditional solidarities that impeded the formation of a broader, national identity—a necessity for development.<sup>10</sup> This tendency towards traditional attitudes was further complicated by a vulnerability to communist rule. Communism in the Third World was treated as a deviation from the normal course of development. As Daniel Lerner would have it, discontent in the periphery was conditioned by conflict between

<sup>8</sup> Carole Pateman, "The Civic Culture," p. 79; emphasis added.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Huntington, *Political Order*, p. 46; Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man*, pp. 83–84.

<sup>10</sup> For an analysis of the obstacles to development, see Karl Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," *American Political Science Review* 55:3 (1961); and Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press and Collier–Macmillan, 1958).

“Communists” and the “Free World”; movements towards the former represented “bolshevizing,” a deviation from the normal course of development.<sup>11</sup>

### US Foreign Policy Makers and Modernization Scholars Meet

In 1953 and 1954, US intervention in Iran and Guatemala led to the respective overthrow of Mohammed Mossadegh and Jacobo Arbenz. Both men—who had come to power through elections—raised the suspicion and ire of the US government by moving to nationalize foreign-owned resources. Foreign policy officials did not necessarily believe that either Mossadegh or Arbenz were communists, but the actions of both men were seen as having irresponsible behavior that encouraged communist agitation in Iran and Guatemala.<sup>12</sup> Both interventions led to dictatorships backed by the Eisenhower administration, which awarded them with military assistance and economic aid. For the next 30 years, this model of intervention would be used throughout the Third World (e.g. the Dominican Republic—1963, Brazil—1964, and Chile—1973).

By the Johnson administration, this orientation had become central to US imperial operations in the Third World. Thomas Mann, Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, made it clear that the US would reach out to the military and allied elites in the Third World to “protect” democracy against communism. The Johnson administration restored and increased military aid (suspended by the Kennedy administration) to the Dominican military and also applauded the Brazilian military junta government that overthrew the democratically elected President Joao Goulart.<sup>13</sup> In 1973, the Nixon administration openly worked to undermine the elected leftist government of Salvador Allende because the Chilean people had apparently demonstrated immaturity and irresponsibility in voting for a Marxist. Such sentiment was explicitly articulated by National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger: “I don’t see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist because of the irresponsibility of its own people.”<sup>14</sup>

Given the similarities between the objectives of US foreign policy makers and the conclusions drawn by modernization scholars, it is not surprising that there was a working relationship between the two groups. Immediately following World War II, the US government saw the academic community as a vital intellectual and technological repository for crafting foreign policy. A prime example of this relationship was the Center for International Studies (CENIS) at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology. CENIS was underwritten by the CIA and consisted of some of the most prominent scholars in the social sciences at the

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Lerner, *The Passing*, pp. 85, 374.

<sup>12</sup> For more on US intervention in Iran, see William Blum, *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1995), pp. 81–83. For more on Guatemala, see Blanche Wiesen Cook, *The Declassified Eisenhower* (New York: Doubleday, 1981), pp. 286–288.

<sup>13</sup> For more on US intervention in Brazil, see Phyliss Parker, *Brazil and the Quiet Intervention, 1964* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979).

<sup>14</sup> Seymour Hersh, “The Price of Power: Kissinger, Nixon, and Chile,” *Atlantic Monthly*, December, 1982, p. 27.

time, including Daniel Lerner and W. W. Rostow.<sup>15</sup> The Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) was also created at MIT under the direction of the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Its explicit purpose was to attract highly qualified scientists to assist in national security concerns.<sup>16</sup> In 1961, Samuel Huntington wrote an IDA report that first advanced a thesis on turbulence and instability in the Third World which would later be expanded in his seminal work, *Political Order in Changing Societies*.<sup>17</sup>

In December of 1964, the US Army's Special Operations Research Office (SORO) based at the American University established Project Camelot. SORO's description of the project stated:

Project CAMELOT is a study whose objective is to determine the feasibility of developing a general social systems model which would make it possible to predict and influence politically significant aspects of social change in the developing nations of the world. ... Project CAMELOT will be a multidisciplinary effort. It will be conducted both within the SORO organization and in close collaboration with universities and other research institutions within the United States and overseas.<sup>18</sup>

The project further reflected a growing foreign policy preoccupation with developing counterinsurgency missions in the Third World. Among the countries considered for study were Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Iran.<sup>19</sup> All had experienced the overthrow of their governments through US intervention by 1964.

Anticommunist dictatorships were seen by foreign policy makers as an abhorrent but necessary form of government which would eventually become obsolete when countries had developed enough to be "ready" for democracy. Despite the obvious proliferation of US-backed dictatorships in the periphery, these operations were constantly sold as making the world safe for democracy. As Walter Lafeber argued:

... whether a nation was ruled by "the will of the majority" and enjoyed "freedom from political oppression" turned out to be much less important to US officials (and the public) than whether that nation supported Washington in conflicts with the Soviets—and whether that nation integrated its economy into the postwar multilateral capitalist trading system that the US leaders so carefully and painfully constructed.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Bruce Cumings, "Boundary Displacement: Area Studies and International Studies During and After the Cold War," in Christopher Simpson (ed.), *Universities and Empire: Money and Politics in the Social Sciences During the Cold War* (New York: The New Press, 1998), pp. 170–172, 186.

<sup>16</sup> The Institute for Defense Analyses website contains a brief summary of its history. See < [www.ida.org/IDAnew/Welcome/index.html](http://www.ida.org/IDAnew/Welcome/index.html) > .

<sup>17</sup> Irene Gendzier, "Play It Again, Sam: The Practice and Apology of Development," in Christopher Simpson (ed.), *Universities and Empire: Money and Politics in the Social Sciences during the Cold War* (New York: The New Press, 1998), pp. 80–81.

<sup>18</sup> The full text is available in Irving Louis Horowitz (ed.), *The Rise and Fall of Project Camelot: Studies in the Relationship between Social Sciences and Practical Politics* (Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1967), pp. 47–49.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>20</sup> Walter Lafeber, "Tensions between Democracy and Capitalism during the American Century," *Diplomatic History* 23:2 (1999), p. 274.

### The Decline of the American State and the “Crisis of Democracy”

Whereas modernization theory had risen with the might of the United States, neomodernization surfaced as political crises erupted throughout the late 1960s and 1970s. The political impact of these crises on the US was severe. National liberation movements that questioned asymmetries in international power and wealth were a major source of confrontation. While adversaries in Ghana, the Congo, Guatemala, and Chile were successfully ousted, defeats in Cuba and Vietnam thwarted covert and military operations by the US. The culmination of these movements occurred between 1978 and 1979 when US-backed dictatorships in Iran and Nicaragua were overthrown by popular revolutions. The domestic popularity of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions partly hinged on widespread nationalist and anti-imperialist sentiment bred through years of repression under US-backed dictatorships.

In overthrowing those dictatorships, countries in the Third World attempted to conceptualize democracy in radically different terms. Leaders in revolutionary Cuba, Grenada, and Nicaragua declared that their countries would embark on political projects that corrected existing socioeconomic inequalities that they saw as a result of a long legacy of colonialism and imperialism.<sup>21</sup> By the early 1980s, armed insurrection in countries like El Salvador and Guatemala also sought to dislodge US-backed military rule. Events in Chile—where US covert operations had influenced the overthrow of an elected president a decade earlier—also indicated that mass mobilization might overthrow the Pinochet dictatorship. Even in the United States, the types of mobilization during the 1960s and 1970s—such as the Civil Rights Movement—often espoused a vision of democracy that was contrary to the dominant conception of democracy sanctioned by the US government.<sup>22</sup> Within academia, dependency theory emerged as a school of thought that rejected modernization theory’s assumptions of capitalist development and democracy. Instead, dependency theory placed emphasis on the role of imperialist expansion in the subjugation and exploitation of the Third World.<sup>23</sup>

These events in the Third World, the United States, and academia were described as a “crisis of democracy.” In a report to the Trilateral Commission by that name, Samuel Huntington argued that the rapid emergence of groups with diverse and contentious demands placed immense pressure on governments and made it difficult to maintain a distance between those who govern and the general populace. The problem was due to the “intrinsic value” of democracy in which political liberties allowed the “uncontrolled” mobilization of groups which pressed for demands. These demands, according to Huntington, frequently reflected an outlook that democracy had to confront existing socioeco-

<sup>21</sup> For examples, see Maurice Bishop, *Maurice Bishop Speaks* (New York: Pathfinder, 1986); Fidel Castro, *In Defense of Socialism* (New York: Pathfinder, 1990).

<sup>22</sup> For example, Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).

<sup>23</sup> Examples of seminal works are Samir Amin, *Accumulation on the World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974) and Andre Gunder Frank, “The Development of Underdevelopment,” *Monthly Review* 18 (1966), pp. 17–31.



conomic inequalities by promoting active political participation by citizens.<sup>24</sup> Hence, the report argued that the movements demanding the expansion of political participation and decision making were not compatible with the dispassionate and deferential conception of democracy advanced by modernization scholars.

### Neomodernization Theory and “Democracy Promotion”

Given modernization theory’s often pessimistic conclusions on democratic governance in the Third World, how then could US foreign policy reorient its policies? Could the sources of anti-authoritarianism be located, sections of it hived off, and steered towards political outcomes favorable to the US? During the 1980s, a subtle revision of the discourse on democracy and US intervention would take place to address these concerns. The theoretical and normative groundwork for doing so can actually be found as early as 1972. William Douglas—who assisted the Reagan administration develop its democracy promotion programs—asserted that US-sanctioned democracies had a better chance than dictatorships at providing the political stability necessary for economic growth. Although acknowledging previous scholars who believed democracy was a slow, incremental process, he added that the “mechanisms of democracy” could be transplanted.<sup>25</sup> It was far better to promote political programs which could appeal to mass audiences in the periphery rather than to continue economic development aid and covert security operations which had repeatedly failed.<sup>26</sup>

Douglas’ reasoning was relatively moderate when compared to the positions of modernization scholars like Samuel Huntington and foreign policy makers like Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs Thomas Mann. The latter two had failed to see a middle ground between the purported necessity of military-backed dictatorships and the apparent danger of leftist takeover of Third World governments. Douglas, however, envisioned civilian-elected regimes that would be occupied by pro-free market elites allied with the US. Like his academic predecessors, Douglas saw popular revolutions, national liberation, and armed struggles as adverse to democracy and attributable to traditional impulses or communist pathology.<sup>27</sup> However, Douglas drew very different conclusions from modernization scholars. He believed that political aid could be just as effective in carefully crafting political systems that contained the presumably harmful elements but also consolidated democracy.

Following the crisis of democracy, a line similar to Douglas’ would become central to reworking the discourse on democracy and US intervention in the Third World. By the 1980s, scholars wanted to locate a fit between capitalist development and civilian-elected regimes that the US could tolerate. The problem now (as neomodernization scholars asserted) was how to orient political transitions to civilian-elected governments around acceptance of the free market

<sup>24</sup> Michael Crozier, Samuel Huntington and Joji Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), pp. 6–7, 13.

<sup>25</sup> William Douglas, *Developing Democracy* (Washington, DC: Heldref, 1972), p. 42.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

when the two frequently seem at odds with one another. Nevertheless, scholars felt that the two *ought* to occur if democracy were to take hold. As Joan Nelson—a Senior Fellow at the Overseas Development Council (ODC), a policy research institution which received funding from US governmental agencies and multinational corporations—stated:

Both democratic politics and market-oriented economic systems are important for liberty and prosperity. We want to understand how processes of moving toward these goals—from authoritarian to more open politics, and from heavily state-controlled toward freer markets—affect each other. *Each of the two processes compliments the other in some crucial respects and circumstances. But they also conflict, not just in short-run hitches, but more fundamentally.*<sup>28</sup>

In the 1980s, authoritarianism became an all-purpose term to describe self-appointed rightwing regimes which were resistant to political change and also leftist mass mobilization that questioned free market policies. Democracy was conceived in contradistinction to authoritarianism and revolution. As Guillermo O’Donnell and Philip Schmitter stated in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*,

Transitions are delimited, on the one side, by the launching of the process of dissolution of an authoritarian regime and, on the other, by the installation of some form of democracy, the return to some form of authoritarian rule, or the emergence of a revolutionary alternative.<sup>29</sup>

From this false trichotomy, the authors concluded:

In the contemporary world these two transitions—to political democracy and to socialism (sic)—are simultaneously on the agenda. There will always be “radicals” advocating the desirability of leaping to the latter without pausing for the former, as well as “reactionaries” arguing that, by transition to the former, societies are starting inevitably on a slippery slope toward the latter.<sup>30</sup>

Democracy is depicted as a moderate political system which is an alternative to rightwing authoritarianism and leftwing revolutions. In refashioning political crisis in the Third World, O’Donnell and Schmitter sought to reject the pessimistic conclusions of modernization scholars and also discount a revolutionary route to democracy as heralded by Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutionaries.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, neomodernization scholars sought to marginalize alternative political systems and to promote a form of civilian-elected rule that Washington could accept. This is made evident when neomodernization scholars insist that “democracy” must be the “only game in town.” As Adam Przeworski claimed, democratic consolidation occurs “when no one can imagine acting outside the democratic institutions.”<sup>31</sup> Neomodernization scholars insisted that the establishment of political procedures provides a basis for

<sup>28</sup> Joan Nelson, *Intricate Links: Democratization and Market Reforms in Latin America and Eastern Europe* (Washington, DC: Overseas Development Council, 1994), pp. 3–4; emphasis added.

<sup>29</sup> Guillermo O’Donnell and Philip Schmitter, “Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies,” in Guillermo O’Donnell, Philip Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, Vol. 4 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> Guillermo O’Donnell and Philip Schmitter, “Tentative Conclusions,” p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 26.

stability; groups must see representative institutions and procedure as the main channels for pressing claims.<sup>32</sup> Given the turbulent history of political polarization in the Third World, why then would the population be willing to participate in a system which guarantees procedures but not outcomes? Why would those without private property be willing to participate in a system which privileges the propertied classes? How are we certain that continuous losses do not result in groups exiting from that system?

The neomodernization's theory of political transitions offers some insight into why foreign policy makers were willing to shift support away from dictatorships and towards civilian-elected regimes by the 1980s. First, changes are seen as a product of elite-crafted transitions from above.<sup>33</sup> Those elites responsible for initiating transitions and new "pro-democratic" forces must establish the parameters of the transition. They must make sure that political liberalization does not encourage the mobilization of radical projects which seek to abolish capitalist property relations.<sup>34</sup> Second, elites must maintain a cordial relationship with the outgoing regime and its supportive forces in order to secure the transition itself. Myron Weiner recommended that those who wish to democratize:

Seek support from the center and, if necessary, from the conservative right, restrain the left and keep them from dominating the agenda of the movement, woo sections of the military, seek sympathetic coverage from the western media, and press the United States for support.<sup>35</sup>

Third, by allowing inclusion into the political system, the chances for exits or uncontrollable protests are greatly reduced. Participation may be largely illusory, but it can assist in meeting certain objectives where other political systems cannot. The function of civil society is to provide an intermediate layer of governance between the individual and the state in order to resolve conflict by controlling the behavior of members without the blatant use of force.<sup>36</sup> Still, as Adam Przeworski observed, "it seems as if an almost complete docility and patience on the part of organized workers is needed for a democratic transformation to succeed."<sup>37</sup>

### The Rebounding of the American State and the Creation of the NED

The shift in the literature from modernization to neomodernization corresponded with changes in the US interventions in the Third World. In an effort

<sup>32</sup> Joan Nelson, *Intricate Links*, pp. 5–6.

<sup>33</sup> Terry Lynn Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," *Comparative Politics* 23 (1990), pp. 1–21.

<sup>34</sup> Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), especially Chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>35</sup> Myron Weiner, "Empirical Democratic Theory and the Transition from Authoritarianism to Democracy," *Political Science* 20 (1987), p. 866.

<sup>36</sup> Philip Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "What Democracy Is ... and Is Not," *Journal of Democracy* 2:3 (1991), p. 80. For more on this perspective of civil society, see Philip Schmitter, "Civil Society East and West," in Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, Yun-han Chu and Hung-Mao Tien (eds), *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies: Themes and Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 240–261.

<sup>37</sup> Adam Przeworski, "Some Problems in the Study of Transitions to Democracy," in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philip Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, Vol. 2 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), p. 63.

to provide direct political aid to those seen as supportive of “democracy,” the Reagan administration backed the creation of the National Endowment of Democracy (NED). The organization was designed by the American Political Foundation (APF), a group founded in the late 1970s to locate and support allied political groups in adversarial nation-states or societies. During the Reagan administration, the APF received White House funding and initiated a study called “Project Democracy.” William Douglas and others working on Project Democracy recommended that the NED be privately incorporated, funded by Congress, and governed by a board of directors from organized labor, business groups, and the Democratic and Republican parties.<sup>38</sup> Funding of private groups overseas would be provided overtly through international organizations working under the NED umbrella. In 1983, Congress authorized the creation of the NED, which would receive public funding but exist as a non-governmental organization.

Over the next decade, NED activities in Third World countries dramatically increased as dictatorships either fell or seemed likely to lose power. Intellectual work was considered an important component of the NED’s mission. In addition to publishing O’Donnell *et al.’s* *Transition to Authoritarian Rule*, the NED created the International Forum for Democratic Studies, which “serves as a leading center for analysis of the theory and practice of democratic development worldwide.”<sup>39</sup> The *Journal of Democracy* is the forum’s flagship publication. Included on its editorial board are some of the most prominent scholars in comparative politics: Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, Adam Przeworski, Samuel Huntington, and Seymour Martin Lipset. The NED also hosted a series of conferences during the 1980s that brought together scholars, US foreign policy makers, and members of the “moderate” opposition in the Third World.

One such meeting held in Washington, DC in 1989 hosted figures that affiliated with organizations receiving NED funding. Several would later play major roles in bringing to power civilian-elected regimes in Nicaragua and Chile that the US could accept. Among its speakers was Violetta Chamorro, who would later win the presidency in Nicaragua against the US-maligned revolutionary government headed by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). The NED also presented Monica Jiminez an award for her work with Chile’s Crusade for Civic Participation (CIVITAS).<sup>40</sup> In this same year, CIVITAS became Education for Citizenship Participation (PARTICIPA) and received a \$40,000 NED grant.<sup>41</sup> Jiminez was a member of the Christian Democratic Party, which helped create an opposition camp that sought to replace the Pinochet dictatorship (which had fallen out of favor with Washington) through elections

<sup>38</sup> For more on the APF, Project Democracy, and William Douglas, see William Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, pp. 83–85.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted from the National Endowment for Democracy website, at: < [www.ned.org](http://www.ned.org) > .

<sup>40</sup> Transcriptions from the conference are in National Endowment for Democracy, *The Democratic Revolution* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for Democracy, 1989). A photograph of Monica Jiminez shaking hands with Secretary of State George Schultz is in the report.

<sup>41</sup> National Endowment for Democracy, *Annual Report, 1989* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for Democracy, 1990).

rather than insurrection. (The latter strategy had been largely supported and carried out by the Chilean left.)

The Reagan administration's support for the NED and its interventions in both the Nicaraguan and Chilean elections represented an attempt to influence political events where the standard practice of using covert and military operations had either proven ineffective or impractical. As discussed earlier, the US typically responded to the apparent emergence of a leftist threat in the Third World by backing the military and supporting dictatorships. The pattern began to change in the 1980s as social and political crises intensified in Latin America. The focal point of US attention was Central America, where Nicaraguan revolutionaries had overthrown one of its longest-backed dictators—Anastasio Somoza—and Guatemalan and Salvadoran armed rebels were pitted against the military. The initial reaction when the crisis first began was typical. At first, a steady flow of fresh arms sales and other military assistance to Central America began under the Carter administration and increased steadily under the Reagan administration.

By the end of the 1980s, it was clear to many in the Reagan administration that attempts to dislodge the FSLN through covert operations had failed.<sup>42</sup> Between 1986 and 1990, the NED increased its work inside Nicaragua and the United States with anti-Sandinista forces to develop a strategy that would dislodge the Sandinistas in the elections.<sup>43</sup> These forces—integrated into an electoral front called the United Nicaraguan Opposition (UNO) and headed by Chamorro—won the elections and reversed the socioeconomic and political projects that were the hallmark of the Nicaraguan revolution. In the case of Chile, members of Congress, NED field officers, and academic scholars all convinced the Reagan administration that gross human rights abuses and Pinochet's obstinate refusal to step down would increase the likelihood of revolution and produce "another Nicaragua."<sup>44</sup> The administration steadily and gradually increased diplomatic pressure to force the regime to schedule elections and honor the results.<sup>45</sup> US assistance—through NED funding—to the Democratic Alliance helped steer the movement away from mass mobilization aimed at the overthrow of the dictatorship and towards negotiations and bargaining with Pinochet, the military, and Chilean capitalists. In 1988 and 1989, the NED provided assistance to the opposition to register voters and organize an electoral defeat of the regime.<sup>46</sup>

The US model of democracy—in which organic intellectuals had discounted mass mobilization, revolution from below, and anti-imperialism—was vindi-

<sup>42</sup> For more on the failure of covert operations and the emergence of a strategy favoring electoral intervention, see Thomas Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy: US Policy Toward Latin America in the Reagan Years* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 77–110.

<sup>43</sup> For more on US intervention in the 1990 Nicaraguan elections, see William Robinson, *A Faustian Bargain: US Intervention in the Nicaraguan Elections and American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992) and *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Chapter 5.

<sup>44</sup> Christopher I. Clement, "Promoting Civilian-Elected Regimes in Nicaragua and Chile: The US Imperial State, Polyarchy, and Neoliberalism, 1980–1990," doctoral dissertation, Howard University, 2001, Chapter 6.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy*, pp. 150–163.

<sup>46</sup> For more on US intervention in the 1989 Chilean elections, see William Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, Chapter 4.

cated in Nicaragua. The US could declare that its objections to leftwing revolutions did not necessarily mean it would replace them with rightwing dictatorships, and it now had a civilian-elected government in Managua to prove it. The electoral victory of the opposition in Chile demonstrated that the US was also willing to replace dictatorships it had previously backed with civilian-elected regimes. The US could now claim it had taken a stance against both leftwing revolutions from below and rightwing dictatorships from above by promoting "democracy." In both cases, however, US support and tolerance for civilian-elected regimes were predicated on assurances that those in power would respect private property and embrace the principles of free market capitalism. This desire to find a fit between civilian-elected regimes and free market principles corresponded with changes in the discourse on democratization (neomodernization) that had emerged by the 1980s. Over the next decade, the US would support transitions to civilian-elected governments throughout the Third World. The NED would provide assistance in such countries as Guatemala, Panama, and the Dominican Republic, and the literature on democratization would flourish.

### **Conclusion**

This paper's objective was to highlight how an ideological fit between scholars of democracy and US foreign policy makers influences Third World interventions. I have attempted to show how Gramsci's concept of "organic intellectuals" helps us scrutinize the mergers between scholars of democratization and foreign policy makers. The degree of cohesion between the academic scholars and the concerns and actions of foreign policy makers suggest that shared assumptions among them should not be seen as mere chance. The institutional mergers took place because those scholars enunciating a particular perspective on democracy and democratization expressed a reality compatible with the interests of US foreign policy makers.

The cold war was the international context in which foreign policy makers and academic scholars understood development and democracy in the Third World. Modernization theory supplied a moral defense of capitalist development as the sole guarantor of democracy in the Third World. By wedding democracy to narratives of American exceptionalism and Western European gradualism, scholars, such as Samuel Huntington and Seymour Martin Lipset, narrowed the range of possibilities for the emergence of democracy in the Third World. Others, such as Daniel Lerner, conveniently attributed political turbulence in the Third World to either traditionalism or communism, both of which purportedly inhibited "development" and perpetuated "underdevelopment."

These scholarly works resonated well with foreign policy makers who were concerned with containing the perceived threats posed by communism and national liberation movements. For most of the cold war, the US would not only assist in the overthrow of Third World regimes, but justify such actions as nurturing democratic governance. The shifts in the literature and foreign policy making during the 1980s were greatly enabled by the conclusion of the cold war. Similar to its predecessor, this new scholarship manufactured an ideology supportive of new forms of US intervention. The mergers of the 1980s would culminate in the creation of the NED and lead to direct intervention in Third

World elections. As others have noted, the diminishing communist threat meant that US foreign policy makers could no longer justify dictators like Pinochet as necessary for protecting democracy in the Third World.<sup>47</sup> The changing international environment also meant that those supportive of US democracy promotion (within academia and the government) could persuade foreign policy makers that open and competitive elections did not necessarily have to be regarded with pessimism and distrust. However, while shifts in both the literature and foreign policy strategies took place in the late 1980s, the overall objective of the American state remained the same: to facilitate the continual reproduction of capital accumulation across borders and to secure that process against social disruptions and political opponents.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Thomas Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy*; Abraham Lowenthal (ed.), *Exporting Democracy: The United States and Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

<sup>48</sup> James Petras and Morris Morley, "Capitalist Expansion and Class Conflict in Advanced Third World Countries," in James Petras (ed.), *Class, State, and Power in the Third World* (London: Zed Press, 1981), pp. 40–50.