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Christopher Hobson

Abstract

The extreme optimism that shaped the nascent democracy promotion community in the 1980s and early 1990s has been strongly tempered by an increasing number of setbacks to the global expansion of democracy. Zakaria's influential 'illiberal democracies' argument was an early example of this trend towards a more uncertain outlook about democracy's prospects. His argument was useful in focusing attention on the conceptual underpinnings of these practices. Despite the promising starting point, Zakaria reached limited and conservative conclusions, essentially calling for the revival of a Whig approach: liberalism first, democracy later. Furthermore, his conceptual analysis was overly restricted: democracies are liberal or they are illiberal. This article challenges, revises, and extends Zakaria's arguments, by examining alternative models of democracy that lie both within and beyond liberalism. It is argued that in contrast to Zakaria's suggestion that democracy promotion may need to be delayed or deferred, considering different democratic models offers a more optimistic prognosis, as the way forward is not through abandoning the support of democracy, but, instead, potentially through advancing a different form of democracy, one more suitable to a precise local context.

Keywords

democratization, liberalism, illiberal democracy, sequencing, democracy promotion

Introduction

Merely two decades after the end of the cold war, the 'victory' of liberal democracy appears far more fragile and incomplete than many had first thought. The promise of the third wave has materialized only in a partial and incomplete manner, with a large number of attempted democratizations stalling, reversing, or failing to consolidate. Likewise, the initial excitement generated by the 'Colour Revolutions' has quickly dampened, as these dramatic events have yet to lay the foundations for stable democracies. Indeed, the basic democratic transitions paradigm has been called

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into question, as the linear, progressive trajectory it suggested has been disproven by the growth of hybrid regimes occupying a 'grey zone' between autocracy and liberal democracy (Carothers, 2002). The more ambiguous results of recent attempts at democratization have combined with other trends that do not bode well for the development of democracy across the globe. There has been a growing 'backlash' against democracy assistance, a trend that is more likely to develop further than to subside (Carothers, 2010). This shift has been fuelled by the reappearance of major authoritarian powers, such as an increasingly confident China and a resurgent Russia. At the same time, the deeply contentious 'freedom agenda' of the Bush presidency caused serious collateral damage for democracy promotion efforts.

The sense of uncertainty, if not pessimism, presently found in thought on democratization and democracy assistance is not new; already by the middle of the 1990s influential scholars were suggesting the third wave was not progressing as hoped, and that it had probably reached an end (Diamond, 1996). O'Donnell (1994) proposed that many of the new democracies were not developing into the liberal, representative form found in most established democracies, but instead a new type was emerging that lacks the vital political institutions necessary for a functioning, healthy democracy: 'delegative democracy'. Observing the same phenomenon, Zakaria (1997, 2003) reached a somewhat similar conclusion, albeit put more provocatively: what has occurred is a rise in 'illiberal democracy'. These are just two notable examples of an explosion in terminology used to come to terms with the regimes that have emerged from a large number of inconclusive transitions (Collier and Levitsky, 1997). These initial observations have developed further and in a number of different directions. There has been work on assessing the 'quality' of democracies and identifying ones that could be considered 'defective' (Diamond and Morlino, 2005; Møller and Skaaning, 2010). The limits and deficiencies of the democratic transitions and consolidations paradigms have been interrogated (Carothers, 2002; O'Donnell, 1996; Whitehead, 2009a). Partly in response to this scholarship, as well as to the initial forays of Zakaria, there has also been an important debate over whether it is possible to sequence the process of democratization by first building up liberal institutions (Carothers, 2007).

Empirical observations about the ambiguous 'hybrid' nature of many recent attempted democratizations have been the basis for theoretical and conceptual reflection on the nature of these new regimes. While providing important insights, the ensuing discussion has remained limited in significant ways. Specifically, the opportunity has not been taken to interrogate one of the most fundamental concepts in this sub-field – democracy. Different subtypes of democracy are considered, which includes the identification of illiberal democracies, but the liberal democratic model against which these are judged continues to be unquestioningly accepted. Responding to the limitations of this consensus, the argument here builds on calls by C. Hobson (2009a) and Kurki (2010) to examine further how democracy is conceived of in work on democratization and democracy promotion. In particular, it is proposed that Zakaria's work is a useful entry point for expanding present discussion on this topic. His 'illiberal democracy' thesis is based on a conceptual analysis about the way liberalism and democracy relate, and the manner in which Zakaria views liberal democracy as a composite form creates space for considering alternative versions of democracy both *within* and *beyond* liberalism. In this regard, liberal democracy may be the most prominent model, but it is certainly not the only kind. There are a range of alternatives that have been excluded from consideration in relation to democracy promotion and democratization, such as social democracy, participatory democracy, radical democracy, deliberative democracy, and cosmopolitan democracy (Kurki, 2010). This article is an attempt to begin exploring how the existing discourse can be expanded, and whether some of these alternative models of democracy can be incorporated. It does so by commencing from Zakaria's analysis and then considering

how it can be broadened, first, by incorporating other elements of the liberal tradition and, second, by engaging with other democratic models outside of liberalism.

Democracies: liberal and illiberal

As noted, the liberal optimism that attended the end of the cold war was quickly tempered by the inconclusive nature of many third wave transitions. One of the most prominent and influential judgements on this unfolding situation was provided by *Newsweek* editor Fareed Zakaria in his provocative piece 'The Rise of Illiberal Democracy', which was later developed into a book. His claim was simple, but powerful: 'today the two strands of liberal democracy, interwoven in the Western political fabric, are coming apart in the rest of the world. Democracy is flourishing; constitutional liberalism is not' (Zakaria, 1997: 23). Challenging contemporary wisdom, Zakaria (2003: 248) argued that what is needed 'is not more democracy but less'. His concern was that an unchecked faith in democracy was fostering an unchecked form of democracy, which was prevailing in democracy promotion practices to produce perverse results: the rise in democracy was not being matched by a rise in liberty. Zakaria (2003: 256) concluded that 'Woodrow Wilson took America into the twentieth century with a challenge to make the world safe for democracy. As we enter the twenty-first century, our task is to make democracy safe for the world.'

The conception of liberal democracy found in Zakaria's account is informed theoretically by classical liberalism, and empirically by the Anglo-American experience. It is from this standpoint that he stresses the need for a strong liberal framework to restrain and channel democratic forces, which may be damaging to basic rights if not moderated. Zakaria (2003: 246–7) defines liberal democracy as a system of government 'exercised by people interested and experienced in public affairs and still accountable to the people'. Zakaria emphasizes the delegative nature of this version of democracy, in which representation operates to limit the direct involvement of the people, thereby guarding against the danger of democratic excesses. Representation is crucial as it facilitates individual freedom by allowing individuals to pursue their private interests (Constant, 1988). Constitutionalism and the rule of law are core elements of the liberal tradition that work to moderate the potentially destructive tendencies of democracy. Put another way, in the model of democracy that Zakaria advocates, a fundamental feature is that liberalism shapes and restrains democracy. His ideal type of democracy is the 'mixed regime' that America's founding fathers sought to institute, in which popular power is heavily checked and mediated (Zakaria, 2003: 25–7).

Zakaria's words of caution resonated, offering a powerful explanation for the third wave not being matched by the extension of the usual freedoms associated with democracy. Unsurprisingly, Zakaria's polemic also drew considerable criticism, with a range of commentators attacking the argument on theoretical and empirical grounds. The historical and theoretical separation Zakaria made between democracy and liberalism was generally accepted, but whether this distinction remains valid has been strongly questioned. Carothers (2007), Diamond (2003), Kupchan (1998), and Plattner (1998) all deny that it is possible or desirable for sequencing to occur in contemporary circumstances. Liberalism and democracy may have been previously distinct, but they are now effectively joined at the hip. For such commentators, Zakaria unhelpfully overplays this separation, with Plattner (1998) cautioning against going too far in this process of "'unpacking" the component elements of modern liberal democracy'.

There is undoubtedly disagreement over Zakaria's conceptualization of liberal democracy as a composite form, yet there is little dispute over the actual model of liberal democracy he calls for. The definition of democracy he adopts corresponds with that found in most scholarship on

democratization and democracy promotion, whereby there is considerable consensus on democracy meaning *liberal* democracy (Burnell, 2010: 2; Smith, 1994: 13). For Zakaria, like most others, the starting point for thinking about democracy (the ideal type that academics and practitioners subsequently work from) is a model of liberal democracy in which liberalism is the dominant influence. Macpherson (1977: 22–43) and Held (2006: 78) have both usefully termed this a ‘protective’ model of liberal democracy. This is limited in its aims and actions, based on the liberal belief that individuals best know their own interests and what they want (Held, 2006: 79). In this formulation, liberal democracy is not meant to be so much about empowering people, as it is about protecting their liberties and allowing them to pursue their own interests unimpeded. As such, core civil and political rights are prioritized. The state should intervene as little as possible, ideally being little more than a ‘night-watchman’, with a professionalized ruling class tasked to represent the people. This approach to democracy corresponds with Schumpeter’s seminal definition of democracy as an ‘institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote’ (1942: 269). Either directly, or mediated through Dahl (1971), this approach has long dominated analyses of democratization and democracy promotion.¹

Zakaria’s argument was geared towards rethinking the nature of US democracy promotion, and his basic proposal was that greater emphasis should be on promoting liberalism (the rule of law, constitutionalism, and so on) rather than democracy (elections, parties, and so on). There is a tension in Zakaria’s work, however, between the specific protective model of liberal democracy he advocates and the manner in which he makes his case. By emphasizing the composite nature of liberal democracy, Zakaria opens the way to a much broader set of conclusions than his own Whig predilections might allow for. If liberal democracy is a composite form, it is likely that the Anglo-American version is not the only way that liberalism and democracy can be combined.

Cluster concepts

If one accepts the basic point that liberalism and democracy were historically separate traditions that have been joined together, it is difficult to argue for limiting discussion to Zakaria’s overly binary perspective, whereby democracies are either liberal or illiberal. Theoretically and empirically the situation is much more complex than this. Zakaria’s argument about the composite nature of liberal democracy can be strengthened and extended through viewing it as a ‘cluster concept’. A cluster concept is a composite made up of different concepts or theories (Connolly, 1993: 14–21; Freedon, 1996: 60–67). The manner in which the component parts are interpreted and internally related determines its overall meaning. Liberal democracy is a cluster concept composed primarily of the distinct doctrines of liberalism and democracy. The way liberalism and democracy are understood (both complex concepts in themselves) helps determine the overall shape of liberal democracy. Given that it is theoretically possible for liberalism and democracy to be related in multiple ways (Bobbio, 2005: 48–9), different sets of relationships will influence the way liberal democracy is conceived. For example, historically liberalism has been the dominant partner, and as such, the theory of liberalism present will likely be more influential in the overall character of liberal democracy. This still leaves room for a plurality of liberal democratic forms, but these will be differentiated primarily by the way liberalism is conceived of and subsequently related to democracy. Likewise, from the perspective of cluster concepts, it is possible to identify other models of democracy that are related to liberal democracy, but distinct from it, such as social democracy. While liberal and social democracy may share certain commonalities, their internal conceptual structure differs significantly on a number of key points, such as the way freedom is

understood, to generate alternative meanings of democracy. Even then, however, the divide is not as great as it seems at first. For instance, the distance between social and liberal democracy may be quite far if one understands liberalism in a classical or neo-classical fashion. If, however, one subscribes to new liberalism or welfare liberalism, the gap is closed considerably.

Conceiving of liberal democracy as a cluster concept offers a helpful way of developing Zakaria's premise in another direction. Admittedly, Zakaria (2003: 257) makes no claims about the comprehensiveness of his historical and theoretical sketch. Furthermore, he openly subscribes to a Whig interpretation of democracy's development, a deeply problematic position to maintain (C. Hobson, 2009b). Yet Zakaria's provocations represent an opportunity to expand further conceptual and theoretical reflection on the way democracy is understood in existing practice and the literature on democracy promotion. As such, this article seeks to take a path that Zakaria chose not to, using the insight of liberal democracy's composite nature as a way of opening up and exploring different possible forms of democracy, both within and beyond liberalism. In doing so, it creates the possibility of an alternative response to the rise of 'illiberal democracies' and other varieties of 'hybrid regimes'. Existing scholarship continues to be handicapped by a liberal bias that limits our understanding of democracy promotion and democratization. By developing a much broader conception of what democracy is, and can be, it can help lay the foundations for a more open and reflexive form of democracy support.

Rethinking liberal democracy

One can accept the limited parameters Zakaria consciously establishes and still recognize that there is much greater diversity than he allows for. Notably, the account of liberalism he provides, and its relationship to democracy, is incomplete, as it fails to incorporate developments that took place in the latter part of the 19th century and the start of the 20th century. At this time, liberalism had defeated its great rivals (the church and the court), but the victory had been too complete, leading to a doctrine of individual liberty and *laissez faire* reigning unchecked. Reflecting on this problematic state of affairs, J.A. Hobson (1909: 92–3) chided his predecessors for placing 'an excessive emphasis upon the aspect of liberty which consists in absence of restraint', arguing that instead 'a more constructive and a more evolutionary idea of liberty is needed'. J. A. Hobson and his colleagues argued that the classical liberal conception of freedom as non-interference was overly reductive, as many people lacked the socio-economic resources for this kind of freedom to be real. For freedom and democracy to be possible, the state needed to be more active in creating a socio-economic environment which increased the 'positive freedom of opportunity' for individuals (Hobson, J.A. 1902: 10).

What new liberals in Great Britain, and also the progressive movement in the USA, envisaged was a different conception of liberal democracy. New liberalism, growing partly out of the more socialist-oriented aspects of J.S. Mill's oeuvre, developed into an outlook that was much more conscious than classical liberalism of the role structural forces played in providing for, and preventing, freedom. Individuals were no longer regarded as solely responsible for their fortunes, as society (manifested through the state) also had a central role to play. New liberals argued that the night-watchman state of classical liberalism was insufficient. Instead, the state needs to be more active in creating a socio-economic environment within which real freedom can be more fully realized and, where necessary, intervene to level the playing field and protect the vulnerable.² It is important to realize that new liberals saw a more interventionist state as a way of achieving the same goals as their predecessors. As Green explained, 'it is the business of the state, not indeed directly to promote moral goodness ... but to maintain the *conditions* without which a free exercise of the human faculties is impossible [sic]' (1986: 201–2; see also Hobhouse, 1994: 76–7).

New liberalism helped to theorize the foundations for the welfare state, which proved to be a necessary reaction to the excesses of classical liberalism, and was crucial in the institutionalization of liberal democracy in the twentieth century (Polanyi, 2001). Notably, in the case of Great Britain (the supposed 'ideal type' of the model Zakaria advocates) new liberalism theorized and advocated a much more expansive notion of liberal democracy. Meanwhile, in the USA a similar role was performed by the progressive movement and later by the New Deal thinkers. Liberal democracy was moderated and adjusted by a more interventionist, socially oriented form of liberal thinking. It helped to make capitalism's rise somewhat more bearable for many citizens, and rescued the democratic principle of equality from being completely overridden. Put differently, what Zakaria missed is that the successful emergence *and consolidation* of Anglo-American liberal democracy was a story not only about democracy being limited by liberalism, but also about liberalism itself being restrained by democratic forces.

In contrast to the protective model of liberal democracy found in the work of Zakaria (and indeed many of his critics), new liberalism and welfare liberalism offer a different version, what could be called a 'developmental model of liberal democracy' (Held, 2006: 92; Macpherson, 1977: 44–76). This form of liberal democracy seeks to contribute to the development of the capacities of the individual and offer a more positive form of liberty through focusing more on the provision of social and economic rights, which give meaning and value to civil and political rights. While acknowledging this, given the considerable rolling back of the welfare state with the ascendancy of neo-liberalism and the Washington Consensus, it must be asked whether there is value in considering a more developmental form of liberal democracy.

Without wanting to overextend the comparison, in thinking about the global historical moment within which democratization is now occurring, there are parallels between contemporary developments and the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Patomaki, 2008). At that time, classical liberalism had overextended itself, 'intoxicated by the exuberant vigour of its individualism, which stifled any pangs of conscience it may have felt' (Ruggiero, 1981: 134). This resulted in what Polanyi (2001) famously described as a 'double movement' that led to the development of welfare and social protection policies within the liberal democratic state. By finishing his account earlier in the 19th century, Zakaria misses this dialectical aspect of the relationship between liberalism and democracy. It is not simply a matter of the former restraining the latter; at certain moments the opposite situation has held. This misreading has a direct impact on Zakaria's contemporary analysis. The trajectory of neo-liberalism and its crystallization in the Washington Consensus has mirrored the earlier extremes of classical liberalism, which suggests there may be potential for another double movement to occur. The ascendancy of neo-liberalism has had severe consequences for democracy, as the political sphere has been further restricted due to the prioritization of the economic. The excesses of neo-liberalism (in policies such as shock therapy and structural adjustment programmes) have been heavily felt in transitional countries, undermining attempts to democratize. Latin America in the 1980s and former communist Europe in the 1990s are particularly clear cases of this. Yet Zakaria's analysis cannot fully consider the alternative, namely, that democratic forces may again work to limit the excesses of liberalism.

Zakaria's limited account leads him to the conclusion that what has been lacking in transitional democracy has been an insufficient development of liberal precepts. This basic claim has some value, but arguably it misses the point. Contra Zakaria, the problem may not necessarily be insufficient liberalism, but too much of a certain kind of liberalism: a debased version that promotes what Hobhouse (1994: 44) once described as 'unsocial freedom'. This reflects the deeply complex, and at times contradictory, nature of liberalism. Liberalism has within it competing, and not necessarily compatible, strands that understand the tradition in different ways, and prioritize different aspects of

it. Neo-liberalism strongly emphasizes individual liberty, competition, and the self-correcting nature of the market, and prioritizes the economic realm over and above the political sphere. Not only does it differ from other versions of the tradition, it may actually operate to undermine other liberal values and interests. Put differently, neo-liberalism can work to weaken or undermine the foundations that enable the state to uphold the rule of law and protect basic rights. Many third wave democratizations also involved moves towards a minimal state, in line with neo-liberal thinking, but this was often taken too far. As Linz and Stepan (1996: 17) have emphasized, a functioning and effective state is a necessary condition for the consolidation of democracy. As such, it might not simply be a case that some transitional states lack liberalism, but that they suffer from the wrong *kind* of liberalism, which distorts and limits their democratic potential.

In response to the rise of 'illiberal democracies', Zakaria's solution is to return to Montesquieu and the American founders: he proposes that what is needed is a mixed regime, in which liberalism balances and restrains democracy. In contrast, it is suggested here that the problem is not necessarily one of a deficit of liberalism, but an erroneous understanding of it. To put it crudely, the problem may be one of 'illiberal liberalism'. Thus, to respond to the challenges facing many newly democratizing states, perhaps what is needed is less neo-liberalism and more of a different strand of liberalism, an alternative way of combining liberalism and democracy, or to look beyond liberal democracy altogether.

From liberal democracy to social democracy

It is tempting, and perhaps easy, to argue that the problem is simply that the USA, the EU, and other western actors promote an incomplete form of liberal democracy, one that serves their own economic interests at the expense of local aspirations. This is approximately what neo-Gramscian critics have argued: the model fostered in the global South is 'low intensity democracy' (Gills et al., 1993). While this position can suffer from being somewhat overstated (Guilhot, 2005: 15–17), there is value in the core argument that many third wave democratizations have been derailed or distorted by excessive neo-liberal reforms, notably in the form of structural adjustment programmes or shock therapy, all as part of an overriding emphasis on pursuing free-market policies. Here Zakaria's arguments do not hold much weight: more liberalism, at least of the dominant neo-liberal variety, is certainly not what is needed. Thus, neo-Gramscians reach a different conclusion: more liberalism is not the answer; what is needed is a participatory form of democracy (Robinson, 1996).

A more participatory and socially oriented version of democracy sounds intuitively attractive, and potentially well suited to the context which many newly democratizing states face. Zakaria's solution of promoting constitutional liberalism is not enough, as this would strengthen civil and political rights, but offer limited assistance in developing greater 'positive liberty'. Unfortunately, neo-Gramscian scholars are much more persuasive in their critique than in their prescriptions, which remain sketchy and underdeveloped. The value of the alternative is seen as self-evident when compared with the stylized form of liberal democracy they see as having prevailed. In this regard, much more helpful is the work of Sheri Berman (2006, 2010), who strongly argues for social democracy to be supported and promoted. Contra the arguments of Fukuyama and like-minded liberals, Berman suggests that the success of democracy in Western Europe since World War Two has been misattributed to liberalism. The consolidation of democracy in Europe was due to the protection of economic and social rights through the welfare state. What has prevailed is not liberal democracy, but social democracy. This is more challenging to build, but it is also more likely to develop into something stable and permanent (Berman, 2011).

The obvious question that arises concerns how possible it is to promote and institute social democracy. Is this kind of resource-intensive form of democracy still viable? Given that many western states continue to roll back the welfare state at home, it seems unlikely they are going to be promoting it elsewhere. The global financial crisis may have challenged free-market orthodoxy, but early suggestions that it would engender a swing back to a social-welfare-oriented, Keynesian approach have largely failed to materialize. Furthermore, it is important to appreciate the context in which social democracy has flourished (that is, industrialized, wealthy European states) and the reality of most democratizing states, which are likely to lack the kind of economic and communal resources necessary.³ Social democracy is more demanding and resource intensive compared with a minimalist, procedural model of democracy. At first glance, it is unclear how social democracy could be viable in states that lack the wealth to provide for greater welfare and the state infrastructure to provide such goods.

Many transitional states may lack the economic resources and the extractive capacity necessary to support a more extensive welfare system, but this does not mean that a social democratic model is irrelevant. The philosophy that shapes this model is one that differs in important ways from liberal democracy and provides a different outlook on politics. On a fundamental level, a defining feature of liberal democracy is the way the political and economic realms are related, whereby the former occupies a subordinate position to the latter. Plattner (2002: 61) candidly admits this: 'at its very foundations, liberal democracy is bound up with a view that, while insisting on the indispensability of the political, in some sense puts it in the service of the economic'. The economic is largely removed and detached from the political, and thus placed beyond democratic control. This significantly restricts the kind of democracy possible. The deleterious consequences of this prioritization of the economic sphere have clearly been seen in the global financial crisis, partly caused by free-market capitalism being insufficiently regulated and governed. More specifically, in many cases of third wave transitions, by promoting a model of democracy limited to the political sphere, democratization has actually served to reinforce economic inequalities and social hierarchies, as the underlying socio-economic order is placed beyond the scope of democratic decision-making (Robinson, 1996). Put differently, a liberal democratic model (based on the prioritization of the economic over the political) may not be appropriate for transitional states where socio-economic issues represent a serious challenge to the viability of democracy.

In the context of democratic transitions being undermined or challenged by difficult socio-economic questions, a social democratic approach inverts the way the political and the economic spheres relate. Rather than the economic dominating, it is placed at the service of the political. As Berman (2006: 211) explains, 'one of the core principles of social democracy has always been a belief in the primacy of politics and a commitment to using democratically acquired power to direct economic forces in the service of the collective good'. If one thinks less about specific policies, and more about the basic priorities and values of a democratic society, the difference between social and liberal forms of democracy becomes more evident. Each provides a different framework for where politics should take place, and how it should relate to the economic realm. This suggests that even if a transitional state does not have the resources to develop an extensive welfare system, a democracy founded on social democratic principles will have an alternative set of priorities, which would result in resources being allocated differently compared with a liberal democracy.

Liberal and social models of democracy also differ in the way that the relationship between the individual and society is understood. Liberal democracy, especially the Anglo-American variant that Zakaria champions, is strongly individualist, essentially built on an atomistic conception of society. In this regard, it is helpful to recall Hartz's seminal argument (1955) that the thought of

John Locke encapsulated and informed (even if unconsciously) the American experience of democracy. This point can be extended to the practice of democratization and democracy promotion: Locke is seen as an ideal type of the kind of liberalism that shapes the consensus model of liberal democracy instituted and promoted in contemporary international politics (Jahn, 2007). Locke commenced from the hypothetical scenario of individuals pre-existing in a state of nature with already formed rights, who subsequently come together to form a society. This helps generate an atomistic conception of individuals and society. In contrast, the social democratic position is communitarian in nature (Berman, 2006: 214), and sees the relationship between the individual and society as being much stronger. In this sense, a social democratic model may have potential to address a criticism commonly levelled at the applicability of liberal democracy outside of the West. Whereas the strong individualism of liberal democracy may be in tension with local cultures that are more communal in nature, a social democratic approach, more communitarian in outlook, would potentially be a better match. One of the major lessons learnt in the past 30 years of democracy promotion is the need to adapt to local contexts. It could be the case that a social democratic model may be better suited to many of the environments within which democratic transitions are now being attempted.

In the context of contemporary democracy promotion and democratization practices, social democracy may not be a fully fledged alternative, but there is still value in engaging with this model. Social democracy is an intriguing alternative to the dominant liberal approach, as the two models share many core values and principles, but relate and prioritize different aspects. In this regard, it is important to stress that key values (such as protecting and promoting basic human rights, ensuring accountable rule, and government tempered by the rule of law) are not unique to liberal democracy. Such ideals are also supported and valued by a social democratic approach, but it differs in its ordering of priorities and the means used to achieve these shared goals. A social democratic model places greater emphasis on the political sphere and on community cohesion. In contrast, liberal democracy is more individualist and the economic realm is privileged. Meanwhile, the kind of welfare liberalism promoted by new liberals and New Dealers suggests a form of democracy that is midway between the liberal and socialist versions of democracy. Given these points of overlap between the two models, it is a logical starting point for expanding discussion on different kinds of democracy. There is no reason to stop at this point, however. In the penultimate section, two other democratic models are considered, each of which are potentially very relevant to contemporary democratization and democracy promotion practices: deliberative democracy and cosmopolitan democracy.

Promoting other forms of democracy

Social democracy is certainly not the only alternative to the liberal version. Indeed, it could be argued that it is no longer even the most relevant. A remarkable trend has been the rapid ascent of deliberative democracy, to the extent that it is now arguably the dominant approach in political theory. Nonetheless, a recent article by John Dryzek (2009) is perhaps the only publication to have explicitly addressed the relevance of this model for democratization and democracy promotion. The case Dryzek makes for considering deliberative democracy is convincing. Deliberation is a core feature of democracy, but in work on democratization this has been largely overlooked due to the hegemony of the procedural liberal democratic model. Moving from a liberal to a deliberative approach does not involve abandoning the former, but changing focus: 'talk-centric democratic theory replaces voting-centric democratic-theory' (Chambers, 2003: 308). This shift in emphasis means that there is less reliance on procedural and institutional elements of democracy. As such,

Dryzek (2009: 1385–7) argues that as deliberation is not necessarily dependent upon elections or institutions, it offers an alternative (and potentially more flexible) route to developing democracy.

Given that deliberation can take place in a range of formal and informal settings, and can work to influence decision-making directly and indirectly, it considerably broadens how democratization can be furthered. A deliberative framework may be particularly useful in states that are yet to transition to democracy, as well as in Zakaria's 'illiberal democracies', where constitutional and rule-of-law measures are not working effectively. As Dryzek (2009: 1399–400) observes, developing deliberative capacity 'does not require specifying any well-defined beginning or end, and so it can apply in all kinds of political settings: under authoritarian regimes, in new and old democratic states'. Considering the very ambiguous results of many third wave and colour transitions, as well as the continuing 'backlash' against democracy promotion, a deliberative approach may have great potential as a viable alternative. A further advantage of drawing on deliberative democracy is that it would build on existing practice. There is already a considerable amount of resources devoted to funding participatory and civil society initiatives, and these could be further extended through a deliberative framework. In this regard, it is necessary to acknowledge that deliberative democracy scholarship has been by no means exclusively theoretical; it has been exploring how it can be applied in practice. Extending it to the contexts of democratization and democracy promotion would be a logical and fruitful development.

Another strand of democratic theory that has become increasingly prominent is work on global democracy. As with deliberative democracy, there have been only a few attempts directly to connect this literature with work on democratization and democracy promotion (but see Patomaki, 2011). The lack of consideration of global democracy could also reflect the tendency for democratization scholarship to be more empirical and policy-oriented. From this perspective, cosmopolitan approaches may seem utopian and of little use in dealing with the realities of contemporary attempts to advance democracy. Such a position would be mistaken, however. There are a considerable range of outlines of what global democracy could be, and some are practical and pragmatic (Patomaki and Teivainen, 2004). What these approaches share is a common concern with exploring how democracy can be extended beyond the state to the international and global levels. Existing democratic models (be they liberal, socialist, participatory, and so on) are largely based on operating within the confines of states. As globalization has led to the movement of power beyond the state, democracy should also be extended to include decision-making at the international level. Marchetti (2010: 105) summarizes the basic argument:

Either democracy is global or it is not democracy ... The ideal of democracy requires the creation of a system in which all citizens have a voice in the formulation of norms and decisions that have a public scope ... Vast sections of the world's population have, in fact, no say in trans-border decisions that (often profoundly) affect their lives. From a democratic perspective this lack of voice is not acceptable.

Cosmopolitan democratic theory raises two significant and challenging issues for work on democracy promotion and democratization. The first is whether current practice is based on an outdated model of democracy. Democracy promotion is premised on a traditional distinction between the state and the international level, and democracy is understood exclusively as something that exists within the state. If, however, the considerable deepening of globalization has left state-level democracy incomplete, it must be asked whether existing state-based models of democracy are the right kind to be supporting. Arguably, contemporary democratization should be working with a cosmopolitan model of democracy that seeks simultaneously to promote democratization at the state *and* international levels. This relates to a second issue, namely, how can cosmopolitan

democracy be applied to democratization and democracy promotion efforts? This certainly would not be an easy task. For starters, it would involve a change in the kind of relationships that have prevailed in the democracy-assistance community. The regularly coercive and frankly non-democratic behaviour of democracy promoters (Teivainen, 2009; Whitehead, 2009b) is a prime example of the distinct lack of democracy at the international level. A cosmopolitan approach would propose a more dialogical, reciprocal, and non-hierarchical form of democracy promotion (Archibugi, 2008: ch. 8; Hobson, C. 2009a: 400). It would also strongly argue for the simultaneous democratization of international governance structures. Democratizing international organizations, most notably institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank, would be essential, given that they regularly play a significant role in many democratizing states. For supporters of global democracy, such as Patomaki (2011), it is only through this kind of more encompassing approach that genuine democratization can occur.

Deliberative and global approaches to democracy are certainly not mutually exclusive; John Dryzek (2006) is a notable example of someone who combines the two. Likewise, these are certainly not the only other approaches to democracy possible. Returning to the notion of democracy as a cluster concept, certain elements of these alternative models can be incorporated: democracy is an open form and democratization is an ongoing process. Furthermore, deliberative democracy builds on existing liberal approaches: 'deliberative democracy is not usually thought of as an alternative to representative democracy. It is rather an expansion of representative democracy' (Chambers, 2003: 308). Likewise, many theories of global democracy, such as Archibugi (2008) and Held (2006: pt. 3), are strongly liberal, and in this sense, they seek to extend existing liberal democratic forms, rather than overturning them. As such, there are points of connection with the dominant conceptions of democracy in existing democracy promotion work, which can be built on and expanded. Given the depth and breadth of thought on democracy in political theory, there is potentially considerable insight to be gained from engaging with this scholarship, and exploring how it can be applied to the way democracy is conceived of in the context of democracy promotion and democratization.

Conclusion

The extreme optimism that shaped the nascent democracy promotion community in the 1980s and early 1990s has been strongly tempered by an increasing number of setbacks, reversals, and challenges to the global expansion of democracy. Zakaria's influential 'illiberal democracies' argument was an early example of this trend towards a more uncertain, even pessimistic, outlook about democracy's prospects. His argument was useful in focusing attention on the conceptual underpinnings of these practices. Despite the promising starting point, Zakaria reached limited and conservative conclusions, essentially calling for revival of a classical Whig approach: liberalism first, democracy later. Furthermore, his conceptual analysis was overly restricted: democracies are liberal or they are illiberal. What this article has sought to do is to challenge, revise, and extend Zakaria's arguments, considering alternative models of democracy that lie both within and beyond liberalism. Such an exercise opens the way to considering whether other forms of democracy may be more appropriate in certain contexts. In contrast to Zakaria's suggestion that democracy promotion may need to be delayed or deferred, examining different democratic models offers a more optimistic prognosis, as the way forward is not through abandoning the support of democracy, but, instead, potentially through advancing a different form of democracy, one more suitable to a precise local context.

Seriously engaging with other models of democracy offers a proactive and positive way of responding to the malaise that democracy promotion is increasingly suffering from. Carothers (2007) is right to suggest that Zakaria's sequencing solution is neither practically viable nor normatively desirable. Except in rare cases of external imposition, democratization is triggered and directed by local forces. External actors can assist or inhibit these processes, but what they are capable of achieving is limited. As such, Zakaria's call for a sequenced approach is misguided. Engaging with and considering alternative models of democracy offers a conceptual toolkit that may help provide a greater range of options and directions for states transiting to democracy, and for external actors seeking to support them. At a time when support for democracy is beginning to wane in many parts of the world where democratization has been taking place (Doorenspleet, 2010), and the democracy promotion community has to adjust to a more challenging set of circumstances, a more positive approach than Zakaria offers is needed. Thomas Carothers (2010: 72), a leading democracy promotion scholar, has recently argued that the western policy community must find 'new ideas and approaches to fit an international context for democracy work that has fundamentally changed from that of decades past'. It has been argued here that one response would be re-examining liberal democracy, and beginning to engage fully with democratic alternatives both within and beyond liberalism.

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Notes

1. As Moser (2009: 131) recently observed, 'the subfield of democratization remains strongly influenced by the theoretical formulations of Robert Dahl and Joseph Schumpeter'. For a slightly outdated, but particularly clear and influential example of this, see Huntington (1991: 5–13).
2. J.A. Hobson (1902: 204) suggested that 'where all economic processes tend to the advantage of the strong and the disadvantage of the weak, it may be and is desirable to mitigate some of the wrongs due to this reign of force, by provision of a social ambulance which shall take care of those wounded in the fray'.
3. Even if one accepted this argument, the social democratic model would still be relevant for oil-rich autocracies that attempt transitioning to democracy.

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