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The Price of Democracy: Pakistan, India, and the United States

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Title: The Price of Democracy: Pakistan, India, and the United States

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Abstract. This article explores some likely consequences of a United States (US) foreign policy that emphasizes the spreading of democracies throughout the world.

One can make a very strong case that representative democracies (in comparison with other governmental systems) can best help foster a utilitarian consequence--e.g., the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Perhaps it is for this reason that the United States publicly declares that spreading democracies worldwide is a cardinal foreign policy objective.

Yet one would be hard pressed to advocate that representative democracies always lead to a utilitarian consequence--or other consequence generally perceived as desired. Instead, it would seem that for various situations, eras, and peoples, a variety of governmental systems might best help foster a desired consequence. Thus, one might conclude that US foreign policy might embrace a heterogeneous combination of governmental systems for these situations, eras, and peoples.

However, a US foreign policy leader--e.g., the President--attempting to match desired governmental systems with desired consequences for specific countries can face much opprobrium from a number of predictable sources. First, the very act of conceiving and effecting a foreign policy can be viewed as imperialist and hegemonic. A utilitarian goal for others or the US and others can be viewed as ineluctably subverted by a utilitarian goal solely defined as what's best for the US. Utilitarian consequences for others--when such consequences indeed occur--are viewed as unintended or as minimal compared to the magnitude of the consequences for the US. A variant of this source of opprobrium is that the US quest for democracies worldwide is blatantly hypocritical and venal.

Second, the attempt to match desired governmental systems with desired consequences for specific countries can be viewed as weak, inconsistent, and confused. The rationales here are that all countries should be viewed and treated equally, that one cannot support both a democracy and a non-democracy (even if each is in a different part of the world), and that supporting a non-democracy demands the conclusion that attempting to support democracy elsewhere is a bogus enterprise. (One rarely hears the argument that supporting a democracy demands the conclusion that attempting to support a non-democracy elsewhere is a bogus enterprise.)

Third, the attempt to match desired governmental systems with desired consequences for specific countries can be viewed as reinforcing the notion that democracy is only for some people and not for others. Such opprobrium borders on racist and ethnocentric attack. Moreover, it mirrors an argument advanced by some of democracy's enemies who view democracy as a threat to their political and material power.

These (and other) sources of opprobrium often reinforce a conceptual straitjacket that is exemplified by a pro-democratic mantra regardless of the direct consequences for the lucky desired recipient. Thus, the US demand for an explicit timetable for a democratic process and regime regardless of potential downsides of political instability, economic deterioration, and possible war for Pakistan. Thus, the US

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benign stance towards India which bears the epithet of the most populous (if not parlous) democracy. The epithet seems to undo India's refusal to accept an interlocutor over Kashmir and be more amenable about nuclear weapons issues. The epithet also seems to undo India's Cold War and post-Cold War history of being an impediment to other US foreign policy objectives—even if all the undone are India's own sovereign choices.

Does the price of democracy comprise not only the costs of arriving in the Promised Land but also the costs of living in Eden? (See Boehnke, K., et al. (1998). Reflecting the world "out there": A cross-cultural perspective on worries, values and well-being. *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology*, 17, 227-247; Kaplan, R.D. (March 19, 2000). A nation's high price for success. *The New York Times*, p. 15; Kendler, H. (1999). The role of value in the world of psychology. *American Psychologist*, 54, 828-835; Reichenbach, R. (1998). The postmodern self and the problem of developing a democratic mind. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 26, 226-237; Warwick, P.V. (1998). Disputed cause, disputed effect: The postmaterialist thesis re-examined. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 62, 583-609.) (Keywords: Democracy, India, Pakistan, United States.)