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US Democracy Promotion During the Age of Trump: The Case of Latin America

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US Democracy Promotion During the Age of Trump: The case of Latin America

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Abstract

This research looks at how the United States promotes democracy in its foreign policy, and investigates whether Trump made a difference to this policy during his presidency. It looks at the case of Latin America, how the US has promoted democracy there in the past few decades, and the foreign policy Trump adopted towards the region. This thesis argues that US foreign policy contributed to the current fragility of democracy in Latin America, by working against its governments during the previous decades and regimes to protect its interests as opposed to strengthening democracy and democratic governance in the region. Furthermore, Trump damaged the reputation of the US' democracy promotion efforts especially by his often anti-democratic narrative and his focus on immigration and the US border as opposed to protecting US interests in Latin America. However, the current situation in Latin America highlights a contrast between weak democratic governance and strong civil society, challenging the justification of US foreign policy of democracy promotion as its focus on stability in Latin America resulted in weak democratic governance, yet independent civil societies emerged in several states.

Word log: Democracy Promotion- DP

Latin America- LATAM

Chapter 1. Introduction

It would not be outlandish to say that events of the last decade has left many of us across the Atlantic with feelings of disbelief, regarding the change in attitudes in American politics. The United States of America has seen unprecedented political developments, changing the way the rest of the world views it. The Trump presidency was a unique occurrence charting a different course for America's dealings with its allies. In a country that often tries to portray itself as a desirable model of democracy, the past few years has seen democracy itself put under strain. At the time of writing, the presidency is back in the hands of a more traditional administration led by Joe Biden, attempting to reinstate the order which existed before Trump. However, the effects of the Trump administration on America's place in the world continues to dominate. Not much has been written yet concerning the effects of Trumps foreign policy on the US' standing in the world and its interactions with other regions, but one of the topics of analysis is how it has changed democracy.

The US has used democracy promotion (DP) in its foreign policy historically as a means to ensure stability in the wake of the threat of communist expansion and to preserve American power. Never has this been more apparent than the case of Latin America and the Caribbean (labelled in this thesis as LATAM). The last decade brought unique challenges to both the US and LATAM, most notably to democracy. Trumps foreign policy would turn out to be very different than previous US presidents. Analysts made predictions at the start of his presidency that his FP towards LATAM would be shaped around the old factors such as security, democracy/governance and free trade, the old characteristics of US foreign policy towards LATAM since the 80s (De la Fuente 2017, 3). In reality, his policy is defined by its opacity.

There are many reasons why the US sees DP as a reliable foreign policy tool. It is a way to secure stability, security and global prosperity, allowing the US to pursue national interests (U.S. Department of State Archive 2001). What's more, democratic regimes are seen as more likely to maintain peace, uphold workers and human rights, promote economic development, protect human health and tackle crime and international terrorism (ibid.). Lawson and Epstein state that funding for democracy promotion (DP) efforts are rooted at the core of U.S. foreign policy institutions, with at least 2 billion dollars per year given by funds from foreign assistance (Lawson and Epstein 2019, 2). These funds have been managed by government institutions such as the US Agency for In-

ternational Development, the State Department, and the National Endowment for Democracy (ibid.). Furthermore, some elements of democracy can help to contribute to global stability, for example, restraining foreign Government's ability to use force through the separation of powers, accountability and the rule of law (Saunders 2017, 76-77).

Research question and argument

This thesis will investigate how the US has promoted democracy, and if Trump made a difference to this policy. It will first provide an historical introduction on democracy promotion in US foreign policy, before looking at the existing literature on the topic: how DP is used, its aims and instruments. It will then look at the case of Latin America, and research the US use of democracy promotion in the region. Following this, it will explore the effect of the Trump administration on this policy, in the context of Latin America (LATAM), investigate his stance on democracy promotion, and finally look at the impact this had on the state of democracy in the region. The objective of this work is to: 1) Understand how the US has tried to promote democracy, 2) Investigate whether Trump made a difference to this practice, and finally 3) Look at the state of democracy in LATAM and the consequences of US democracy promotion/Trump's foreign policy in the region, where there is a contrast between weak democracies and strong civil societies. This will highlight the connection between civil society and governance, and the importance of both components in consolidating democracy, something the case of LATAM highlights.

This thesis will argue that US interests and drive for stability have contributed to the fragility of democracy in Latin America, by working against its governments during the previous decades and regimes as opposed to strengthening civil society and democracy in the region, and that Trump damaged the reputation of the US' democracy promotion efforts, especially by his often anti-democratic narrative. However, this thesis will also argue that despite the weakening of its democracies in Latin America, civil societies have emerged strong and independent, highlighting the importance of aid assistance and opening civic space in democracy promotion. As a result of US foreign policy and the Trump administrations change in policy, there exists a growing division between government and civil society in Latin America where democratic governance is fragile, and where civil society and NSAs have (independently) emerged as increasingly strong actors. This is further highlighted by the lack of a coherent policy by the Trump administration during the recent unrest and tensions between society and government in several Latin American states. The Trump administration had no clear effect on the practice of democracy promotion. This contributed to the rising divi-

sions between civil society and governments in Latin America with freedom levels lower in many Latin American countries but sustainability of civil society stronger on average. This thesis highlights the growing strength of civil society in Latin America, and the changing nature of the US relationship with it.

Case Selection

LATAM is a good example of where DP has been practiced, in the Cold War and Post Cold War period. It has also recently seen civil unrest in states such as Chile, Colombia and Peru, and is the direct neighbours of the United States, an important region for them in terms of security. This is arguably the most suitable region to study how the US promoted democracy, especially with the focus of the Trump administration. Relations between the United States and LATAM are deeply intertwined, as explained in Livingstone's book *America's Backyard: The United States and Latin America from the Monroe Doctrine to the War on Terror*, in which she discusses how the US has shaped LATAM's history while exposing it to deep inequality and poverty through preserving the wealthy and powerful (Livingstone 2009).

This thesis will be a qualitative assessment of DP in US foreign policy, and will look at scholarly articles, newspaper articles and data from websites linked to American democracy. It is relevant as it looks into existing arguments on its effectiveness as a policy and questions its relevance in a changing era, where the global order may be moving away from the dominant US liberal hegemony. It also questions the effectiveness of Trump's foreign policy, which scholars are beginning to analyse now his presidency has concluded and its impact on US relations with the rest of the world is becoming clearer. It also investigates the links between DP and stability, including whether DP is more important for the US, or whether stability and protecting interests is more significant.

Relevance of study

This research is relevant for the global order as it looks at how the effects of US DP in LATAM are still being felt today. The view of democracy is no longer one which focuses on a bilateral struggle for hegemony between east and west. The cases shown in LATAM reveal the focus on social issues in democracies, and what characterises a weak democracy: weak electoral processes, corruption, lack of independence for civil societies. It also questions the justification of DP in US foreign policy and draws attention to how the long term benefits to a states institutions can only be felt if DP is

used in an intelligent way, emphasising social factors in a state, as opposed to anti-democratic state actors, or state actors that are not really democratic but are pro-US. It is argued that the issue of civic space that is open and vibrant is a “crucial component of a stable democracy protecting diversity, cultivating tolerance and guaranteeing respect of human and citizenship rights and liberties” (Deželan and Yurttagüler n.d., 3). This is a possible area for future study.

Jahn argues that the discipline of International Relations has not given much systematic focus on DP, despite it being a significant element of liberal foreign policies (Jahn 2012, 685). One may disagree with this claim, as there were several arguments in my research on DP in IR theory: particularly interpreting variants of realism and liberalism. Indeed, the promotion of democracy can be difficult to comprehend without understanding the context and resources used in its process, but this thesis will illuminate the different complexities and understandings of DP in IR theory and will contribute to the debate through a look at the state of democracy in LATAM (partly caused by US foreign policy) and how the US has practiced DP beyond the beliefs of the democratic peace theory.

Cold War

The history of DP in US foreign policy goes back to the Cold War era. Lawson and Epstein discuss how it became an important subject in the 1970s along with human rights promotion, and the resources and attention it received which varied among the different Congresses and administrations, competing with other interests, for example security concerns (Lawson and Epstein 2019, 4). Reagan had a singular stance on democracy promotion in foreign policy, different to other US presidents like Jimmy Carter, as he distanced democracy from human rights and decided to use it as a primary tool in foreign affairs, promoting it in the form of an anticommunist agenda (ibid., 5). In his famous speech in the UK parliament, he said: “No, democracy is not a fragile flower. Still it needs cultivating. If the rest of this century is to witness the gradual growth of freedom and democratic ideals, we must take actions to assist the campaign for democracy” (Reagan 1982).

When the Cold War ended, the attention of DP changed from Latin America to Eastern Europe from the early 90s, with the US intending to promote stability in this zone, as it was close to European allies and held nuclear stock (Lawson and Epstein 2019, 5). This presented a chance to the George H.W. Bush government to encourage a transition to free markets and democratic governance and halt communist expansion (ibid.). There was a big increase in DP activities in the 1990s, which experts believe was caused by a global wave of democratic transitions, no big ideological challenger to western liberal democracy and a low threat perception (ibid., 6). President Clinton introduced a Democracy and Governance Office at USAID, along with an Office of Transition Initiatives, in order to exploit the opportunities for democracy in transitional countries (ibid.). The focus of DP however would soon change.

Post 9/11

DP was for the US rooted in an ideological enthusiasm for democratic governance, which was seen to be an invaluable and necessary component of regional security and the free market in the post-cold war order (Clement 2005, 62). Following 9/11, The George W. Bush Administration believed the Arab world’s lack of democracy was the reason it had become a breeding ground for terrorism, asserting that DP was a solution to scaling back Islamist extremism like it did with Communists (Pee 2014). To that end, the administration facilitated vast resources towards creating democratic institutions and processes in both Afghanistan and Iraq, in harmony with the ongoing military efforts in these states (Lawson and Epstein 2019, 6). However, the lack of success provoked an analy-

sis on the legitimacy of DP activities in foreign policy and the use of Tax payers money on this practice (ibid.). There are differences between the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, and previous efforts of DP; merely the scale of the military efforts preceding them. For one, the threat of nuclear war was not as prominent in the Middle East as it was in a US-Soviet showdown for influence, meaning there was bigger space for military action.

Obama

During the 2011 ‘Arab Spring’, the Obama administration tackled the threat to US economic and security interests by providing democracy assistance to the countries where democratisation was promising, as well as maintaining relations with authoritarian regimes, despite the question mark over human rights in some states (Carothers 2012). In 2012, the US Agency for International Development strengthened its efforts in governance and democracy, in particular which forms of DP activities are the strongest and the context of such (Lawson and Epstein 2019, 7). Finally, the Trump administration had clear intentions to avoid the policy that Reagan and previous US presidents had pursued at least partly, steering the US away from the support of democracy’s expansion around the globe (Carothers 2017). Trump’s actions, as President conveyed someone who was not committed to democracy, given his attempts to overturn the 2020 election, leading to an attempted armed rebellion on the Capitol and his warmth towards authoritarian figures like Kim Jong Un and Vladimir Putin. In this, he inflicted what has been described as “a body blow to U.S. democracy promotion” (ibid.), through his attacking of the media and judges, the call for his electoral opponent to be prosecuted and claiming that substantial fraud existed in the presidential election (ibid.). His impact on US practice of democracy promotion therefore would be damaging.

Structure

Much of the work towards DP by the US is designated to two specific groups: the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and the International Republican Institute (IRI), both of whom are closely aligned with the two main political parties (Wolffe 2020). They are funded by tax payer money, and have clear-cut mandates to avoid domestic politics, meaning they can both work “around the mine-field of the state of American democracy” (ibid.). According to Fowler, the methods and ways in which DP has been carried out, in areas such as military intervention, hyperbole and economic aid, has interchanged over the years when presidential administrations have been different and objectives of national security have contrasted (Fowler 2015, 227). This was dependent on the context and risk of current geopolitical relations. Fowler mentions past US presidents variation on specific

connections between security and democracy, resulting in differing technical approaches and policy applications (ibid., 227). This connection between security and democracy is a specific feature of US foreign policy, particularly in LATAM's case. Before turning to the influence of the Trump administration, one will investigate the ways in which the US promotes democracy, its different aims and ideas, and the arguments of existing literature.

The chapter reviews literature on the topic of democracy promotion, to understand it better and how it is used in the foreign policy of the United States. Some cases see it attempt to be planted in the regime itself, while other attempts have seen assistance or aid given to non-state actors in civil society. This chapter will explain the current arguments around how DP is carried out in foreign policy, for example the different ideas of DP, not just in the US, but in Europe, understanding it as a tool to ensure stability and protection of interests by the US government, and its role in the advancement of human rights, civil society and aid assistance. It also looks at the debate around whether the US is able to promote democracy in other countries, for example arguments concerning its legitimacy and effectiveness. It will not only see the arguments around DP, but help to comprehend how it is used and in what forms, which will be important in analysing its effect on our case selection in subsequent chapters.

Ideas of democracy promotion

Carothers believes there are two different approaches to assistance in international democracy, which have sprung up in recent years: the developmental approach- broad view of democracy, and the political approach- narrow view of democracy (Carothers 2009, 5). Contrasts have been made between the American and European approaches to democracy aid by policy makers, with the US approach being seen as political while the European approach as developmental (ibid., 6). Carothers states that the developmental approach “values democracy as a contributing factor in the larger process of national development” (ibid., 8). The political approach (adopted by the US) views democracy as “the political system most likely to ensure respect for basic political and civil rights, and for political dignity generally” (ibid., 7). One could argue that the developmental approach is the healthier method. It focuses on areas which affect people directly, in socioeconomic terms.

Saunders states that democracy is promoted for morality: Westerners believe it will give people better lives (Saunders 2017, 76). What’s more, the US promotes democracy for strategic means: while it may not ensure security, some of the instruments of democracy (power separation, rule of law, and accountability) can reduce the chance for use of force by foreign states which will add to global stability (Saunders 2017, 76-77). Using democracy as a means to facilitate a state’s development is an effective way of shaping its democratic institutions in a way in which the public sees the benefits on society directly. As a result, the public’s view of democracy would be positive. Carothers mentions this: that the developmental approach looks beyond the procedures for politics to real out-

comes, for example welfare, justice and equality (Carothers 2009, 8). One may argue that this points out a fundamental gap in the way DP is done by the US. According to Carother's definition, as democratic governance and the success of its features add to socioeconomic development, socioeconomic success will also enrich democratisation (ibid., 8). However, this is dependent on having state actors that are democratic. This would only be achieved if state actors gave the freedom for this development, which is unlikely if the state is authoritarian.

Democracy Promotion as a tool to ensure stability in US foreign policy

The United States has used DP to advance their interests and ensure the security of US citizens. The arguments in literature give a revealing light into the context of DP as a way to ensure stability for the US. When faced with a foreign regime which opposes its interests, the US government faces a security dilemma. Clement notes that the US does not push democracy simply for moral reasons, but to ensure US interests are protected by using the electoral system within a country to achieve a change in regime (Clement 2005, 74). For example, the influence of US foreign policy in Venezuela shows it to be driven more by threats to US security than a desire to impose a new democratic system. Clement notes that the "parallel between intellectual discourse and foreign-policy rhetoric becomes especially visible when rifts occur between foreign leaders and U.S.-defined global security interests" (Clement 2005, 61). While this seems pessimistic, it is true that stability is a central objective of most states foreign policy. LATAM especially saw dangerous developments during the Cold War with implications affecting the US as a neighbour. Therefore, it is predicable that they would work to guarantee security with its southern neighbours in the same way Europe attempts to with Russia. The Cuban Missile Crisis is an example of such.

Green and Twinning argue that "democracy promotion and security cooperation among like-minded democracies will remain a central objective of American foreign policy in Asia because those elements magnify American power and facilitate US goals" (Green and Twinning 2008, 3-4). This suggests that not only stability, but American power motivates its foreign policy. Powel discusses US and EU efforts in Tunisia and the link between democracy and security, in which the mutual unease towards instability in the region forced the EU and US to support the status quo in Tunisia (Powel 2009, 58). Powel argues that "some actors actively seek to promote democracy in other states, with democracy being either a goal in itself, or a means of achieving a separate objective" (ibid., 59). In the case of the Middle East, it was all about American security, but they were willing to create instability in the region to ensure that American security was guaranteed.

Other scholars have dismissed the relevance of democracy promotion entirely. Steve Smith argues that it has been more appropriate for the US to occasionally support authoritarian regimes instead of movements in favour of democracy due to the opposition the regime may hold towards American enemies (Smith 2000). Subsequently, the promotion of democracy around the globe is, according to Saunders, not effective nor necessary for US security and freedom and that DP efforts would deem more successful if American officials do not link security and democracy too tightly (Saunders 2017, 75). One would say that while democracies are not perfect, they do have the credentials of being more peaceful than authoritarian societies, so linking democracy with security is more effective than linking security with authoritarianism.

Human Rights

Another way in which DP is used is for the advancement of human rights. The US Department of State archives notes how the encouragement of democracy not only promotes workers' rights and religious freedom (important American values), but also contributes towards creating a more stable, secure and flourishing global arena, providing the US the opportunity to push forward its national interests (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). It also argues that democracy is a national interest, contributing to the achievement of others, and a government that was democratic would be more likely to halt aggression, establish peace, protect citizens as well as promote economic development, protect human health, tackle crime and international terrorism, defend worker and human rights (ibid.). Democracy can ensure international security as different democratic actors tend to share similar interests. However, the reality of international governance advocates that a way of co-existing peacefully with authoritarian states is significant to ensure regional stability. In terms of promoting democracy to other states, vocalising human rights is essential in persuading the public of the need for a democratic system.

Civil Society

Another area of research on DP and foreign policy is in civil society. Jamal discusses how since 1991, multilateral and bilateral assistance in democracy promotion, particularly for the development of civil society, has increased substantially (Jamal 2012, 3). He argues that the inclusivity of political settlements, comprehended as the political agreements (formal and informal) which determine post conflict political relations, outlines the efficacy of DP endeavours plus the impact on civil soci-

ety of donor assistance explicitly (ibid., 5). He looks at the case of El Salvador and Palestine, revealing how Western donor assistance gave a positive contribution to El Salvador's civil society, while there was division in Palestine, as only a certain number were able to access funding due to a non-inclusive political settlement, meaning a hierarchical relationship between the access and non-access groups developed in civil society (ibid., 24-25). This case investigates the link between DP and funding, plus its effects on the process of DP. It also highlights the growing attention of civil society and its significance as an actor in democratic institutions. Civil society is important in shaping the view of the public and in non-state engagement with the government.

It is also an element in LATAM which has earned focus from analysts but deserves more attention given the current challenges in LATAM and the state of democracy in the region. In the 21st century, the target for DP efforts has been most notably the Middle East. One of the ways the US' has promoted democracy there is through a number of policy initiatives consisting of projects supporting civil society and a desire to encourage democratic change in reforming state institutions (Dalcoura 2005, 963). Furthermore, they used traditional and public diplomacy, and DP became a core element of an interventionist policy by the US characterised through the Iraqi occupation and invasion (ibid., 964-965). One may argue that the democratic change in the Middle East could not happen unless this interventionist policy was limited, and there was an understanding of the long term implications of such interventions.

Theoretical research

There is debate about the contribution of the democratic peace theory. It is an important part of international relations theories contribution towards understanding DP. Wolff and Wurm highlight how academia began to catch up with the increase of development and foreign policies directed at the international protection and promotion of democratic regimes (Wolff and Wurm 2011, 77). They highlight how research on the democratic peace theory, which is largely associated with democratic foreign policy, is used to determine the potential intentions behind DP (ibid., 77). They also attempt to provide a theorised definition of DP in democratic foreign policy, outlining the starting points such as: the materialist, normative, critical and cultural theories of DP (ibid., 89). This is a very interesting contribution to the literature which helps to place DP in IR theory. The one theory which arguably most accurately defines US foreign policy was the critical theory of DP, based on neo-Gramscian inference, defining DP as part of a hegemonic plan where DP is an important tool, but one which needs its normative importance to be successful (ibid., 89). The reason for reflecting US'

foreign policy well is its use of democracy as a tool for foreign legitimacy, but also to protect the US' status as a global power.

The third world (or the global south depending on regional definition) has always been an arena for bigger powers to strive for influence or legitimacy. Robinson analyses from a globalisation viewpoint a change in US foreign policy towards the third world, not properly understood, but described by policy makers and scholars as a move towards “democracy promotion” (Robinson 1996, 615). This change, Robinson argues, is conceived in the Gramscian sense, as implying new modes of transnational control in conjunction with the rise of global capitalism (ibid., 616). The US is deemed the leader of this transnational hegemonic configuration where coercive means of social control are replaced with consensual ones in the South within a laminated international system (ibid., 616). While this is not a recent argument, and does not incorporate the context of IR today, it does have similarities with Wolff and Wurm's definition of critical theory of DP, in which DP is defined as a vital tool and part of a hegemonic plan (Wolff and Wurm 2011, 89). However, the global order has changed and new hegemonic actors have emerged, showing this argument to be outdated and needing to be understood from recent perspectives.

Aid assistance

The literature also focuses on the allocation of aid for pro-democracy campaigns. Scott analyses the patterns and rise of democracy assistance by the US through the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to the continent as an issue of change in foreign policy (Scott 2016, 299). His analysis highlights the contribution and significance of international factors and brings into view the context and timing of the flow of democracy assistance (ibid., 317). This assistance proceeded opportunities and events in the continent, as the changing local conditions hinted the materialisation of the region for aid (ibid., 317). This suggests that the situation and context of the foreign country are the mitigating factors for the allocation of democracy aid. However, another factor worth mentioning is power struggle. This is a broad concept but a factor worth considering when investigating views of the local populations of the bigger power, and their willingness/request for assistance from countries like the US. Furthermore, Scott's research highlights the importance of macro and micro level factors in the extraneous foreign policy context as vital for comprehending the patterns and rise of democracy assistance (ibid., 316).

Of course, there are limitations to the effectiveness of the use of aid for democracy assistance. One such issue regards the monitoring of the implementation of aid distribution and ensuring it meets the goals of the foreign government. Pinto-Duschinsky states that aid is only one tool in foreign policy (Pinto-Duschinsky 1991, 131). One of the weaknesses of US democracy efforts, according to him, is the inability to sustain those efforts, and the specification of what constitutes a program of “democracy-building” is fundamental, with the comparison and inspection of the effectiveness of different forms of projects (ibid., 131). One may argue that sufficient aid distribution for non-state actors is also essential in a democracy. These organisations form the backbone of civil society and their ability to advocate and inform the public of their rights/values is invaluable for democracy efforts. For the US, the use of incentives is highlighted in the economic side of DP.

Collins investigates the practice of economic statecraft by the US to produce democratisation, arguing that while democratic change can be accelerated by top-down incentive approaches, this only works effectively when the trade and aid benefits attached are conditional, for example when the benefits are restrained until the states receiving them meet meticulous democratic benchmarks (Collins 2009, 367). Collins makes two important points regarding the success of democracy assistance programs. Firstly, he argues that the technical and aid assistance granted to judicial, law and legislative enforcement institutions (inside DP) has not been successful in moving the balance away from executive dominance and has not achieved much on enhancing professionalism and reducing corruption (Collins 2009, 384). It is important to target public opinion as much as the courts in producing change. Indeed, Collins second point reflects this, stating that “support to civil society and to elections- democracy promotion from the bottom up- has demonstrated to be the most effective approach to fostering democratic change” (ibid., 384). The strength of public opinion can be influential in fostering societal change, and targeting civil societies. These as well as NGOs are an efficient way of informing the public.

Can the US promote Democracy?

Finally, Allison and Beschel debate the cautionary belief of most theorists that the US are barely or not able to promote democracy and pluralism (Allison and Beschel 1992, 82). They disagree, believing the US has the ability to promote democracy, and is actively promoting it (ibid., 82). They begin by listing initiatives that the US should undertake to promote democracy, and the most striking was: “promote pluralization of societies and the development of civil society” (ibid., 94). This reinforces Collins argument about supporting civil society and elections to cause democratic change

(Collins 2009, 384). One example of this is aiding and abetting voluntary organisations, independent groups, along with civil society: businesses, trade unions, churches etc (Allison and Beschel 1992, 94). Overall, they are critical of the scepticism from scholars over the US ability to promote democracy, saying that “prescription has not been the focus of most social scientists studying democracy” (ibid., 98). Civil society should be a prime target for democracy establishment, as it has the potential to produce a back bone of democracy independent of state actors.

They assert that the respect for democratic values seems to bolster reserve over external manipulation and the wish to avert improper interference in the internal actions of other countries (ibid., 98). One may agree with their criticism of scholars on this issue, and find it unnecessarily pessimistic. Following the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the response of the West has been resolute in their commitment to defending democratic ideals. Indeed, the sharing of democratic ideals by the US’ allies is the ground for legitimacy that it needs in advocating for democracy in other countries. The simple communication of democratic ideals/ defence of democracy can be a powerful advocacy. The definition of DP should not solely be external interference in other Countries’ affairs but should include the communication and coordination in an international network. In contrast to this, the US involvement with governments in LATAM was a calculated risk in trying to achieve stability, which was arguably damaging considering the democratic instability during the last few years in several states in the region.

What then was the costs of this manipulation on governance in LATAM? Saunders argues that DP would be successful if it targets efforts where it is most likely to achieve success, as such action can be justified if it produces results or is unlikely to cause damage (Saunders 2017, 77). Another point is that DP without the national Governments’ active involvement in the target country is less likely to be a success, and should have lower priority than the cases where American intervention is welcomed (Saunders 2017, 77). This is also recognisable in the case of LATAM, where the relevance of DP faces scrutiny. Carothers discusses the challenges to DP in this era, as many countries who were democratised have found themselves “in a gray zone between consolidated democracy and full dictatorship” (Carothers et al. 2007, 114). This is the case in Venezuela, although important to add that there is more to global security required than achieving democracy. Indeed, one questions whether democracy is sustainable if there remains elements of authoritarianism in the state. Therefore, there is also the need to work for good relations with authoritarian societies as well as tackle issues occur-

ring within democracies themselves (pertaining to social unrest, terrorism, inequality, climate change etc.).

Conclusion

The current literature on democracy promotion reveals some questions for debate. Firstly, has US foreign policy, aiming for stability, contributed to the fragile state of democracy in LATAM? This may have worsened due to the Trump administration lacking a coherent policy towards LATAM, therefore contributing towards the recent unrest. There is literature on the link between human rights and DP, yet there is not much substance to that debate in the case of LATAM. Is human rights neglected in LATAM, or would democracy be stronger had the US been concerned about the issue of human rights there? The literature review also highlights the importance of civil society, where DP efforts are shaped around the quality of assistance and aid.

What are the long-term benefits that DP can bring to civil society, in comparison to direct state interventionism? How can IR theory make sense of the US' promotion of democracy in LATAM? The theoretical arguments highlight the hegemonic power of the US, along with the arguments over aid, and the US ability to use such resources to their advantage. IR theory may not be able to provide the answer to the effects of US foreign policy in LATAM on democracy, but it can help to understand the nature of US-LATAM relations. The literature on Trumps administration was limited on his stance towards DP specifically. One may argue that this is because there was no clear policy on DP during the Trump presidency. The next chapter will examine whether Trump made a difference to this policy.

Analysts are currently trying to make sense of Donald Trump's foreign policy after his presidency ended. His foreign policy was notably different from previous administrations. He advanced a policy of 'America first', emphasising the significance of national sovereignty for every state, and the ability of the US to look after itself as opposed to other countries' destinies or interests (Carothers 2020, 115). This 'transactional approach' as Carothers describes it, includes criticism of democratic allies and praise for authoritarian leaders, with the bipartisan dedication to promoting democracy world wide having little role in the structure (ibid., 115). This marks a drastic change in approach to relations with the rest of the world. While Landler notes the parallel of Trump's words with George W. Bush's DP agenda, especially targeting North Korea and Iran, Trump clarified that he had no wish to enforce the US' political system on other states (Landler 2017). With the contrasts from previous administrations, hidden similarities featured, such as the desire for stability. In a speech outlining his foreign policy, Trump declared his commitment to the security of the American people, that the interests and security of Americans would be prioritised above all else, and that it would be the foundation of all his decisions (Trump 2016).

He stated that the US would be "getting out of the nation-building business and instead focusing on creating stability in the world" (Trump 2016). Despite this, Trump was very critical of previous foreign policies in this speech, claiming it to be a "complete and total disaster" and arguing that resources are far over extended, allies are not paying enough towards political, human, and financial costs, and that their rivals no longer respect the US (ibid.). There was not much evidence to his claims for desire for stability. His foreign policy was full of contrasts and unpredictability, and his narrative was not factored by small details of US activities abroad, but a feeling that the US was no longer 'in control'. It was a sense that the US' position of power was not strong anymore in global affairs, and a declaration that "the world is most peaceful and most prosperous when America is strongest" (ibid.). In short, it is a cry for the re-establishment of American hegemony, putting US interests and stability at the centre of foreign engagement. However, in reality it will be remembered for Trump's personality: his desire to 'cosy up' to authoritarian leaders, and his dislike of international agreements such as the Paris Climate agreement and the Iran Nuclear Deal.

In an article in *The Guardian*, Wolffe discusses how the Trump presidency brought the consensus that DP is a part of US foreign policy to breaking point, and mentions that it is an extremely difficult time for the institutions that promote US democracy around the globe- such as the IRI and the NDI,

mentioned in the literature review (Wolffe 2020). He looks at the challenges to DP, occurring during the administration, like its proposal to cut the 2.3 billion dollar budget for DP by 40% in 2019 (which covered exercises such as human rights, judicial reform and election support) along with a 60% cut for the National Endowment for Democracy which was the body that supported DP (ibid.). Furthermore, Trump's foreign policy delivered a mixed message on democracy. Igoe notes that during the period when democracies around the world were under threat and authoritarians were on the rise, Trump showed little signs that he would take democracy's side (Igoe 2019). Trump's antics presents tough challenges for these types of organisations. The organisations funded by the US government, in charge of the DP efforts, represent a bipartisan dedication to supporting civil society and democratic institutions through funding, technical skill and monitoring elections (ibid.). Their ability to remain independent from the political sphere faces a monumental test, as American politics collapse into a battle over the very tasks they were set up to do (ibid.).

It is hard to find a report/speech where Trump discusses a clear policy of DP. The lack of sources where Trump talks about democracy itself suggests it is not a subject his foreign policy was concerned about to any great extent. Instead, evidence points towards how he damaged the policy, testing the strength of democracy within America itself. Putting the events of the 2020 election to one side, one of the ways he affected the system was through his unprecedented political spending, around his own campaign funding, but also the doubling of spending on federal elections due to small-dollar donations and from outside groups supported by billionaire donors (Hawkings 2021). This was important given the many seats on the now weakened Federal Election commission were kept empty until the final days of his presidency, when there was a stream of companies closing their check books to the Republicans who sided with Trump's effort to change the result of the election (ibid.). Trump's stance on DP was shown through action as opposed to words, and particularly towards the goal of his re-election, even at the mercy of America's democratic mechanisms. He attempted to destroy the balance of power, often invoking emergency powers for his own agenda, and using Congress money assigned for different projects on proposals- dismissed by lawmakers (ibid.).

He also constantly ordered his administration to ignore, challenge or slow-down congressional subpoenas on issues such as his impeachments (Hawkings 2021). Some adopt a more positive view of US democracy's state after Trump. Isakhan and Nwokora discuss the concerns by observers throughout the 2016 election over its divisiveness, and that Trump's rise would corrode substantially the perceptions of democracy globally along with undermining the US' DP agenda which stretched

back decades (Isakhan et al. 2019, 170). Their perception of Trump's effect on DP is more optimistic. They argue that "Trump's campaign also served as a catalyst for a discussion about the merits of democracy, revealing some admiration for its key principles, and an acknowledgement of the challenges it faces in the 21st century" (ibid., 159). However, one would suggest that just mere merit of words is not a strong counter-balance considering the divisions Trump caused in the US and the damage he tried to cause to its democratic institutions.

The overall sentiment of his view of DP is pessimistic, as Puerta Riera notes that they "generally distanced itself from traditional democracy assistance, showing interest in cultivating closer relations with foreign leaders without consideration of their democratic credentials" (Puerta Riera, 2021). Trump's efforts to undermine democratic process in the US, and his attempts to influence the business of congress may not have been successful, but it brings into question the prestige of the US as a beacon of democracy.

If a state is not seen as the perfect model of democracy, that makes it harder to promote to outsiders. It was hard to find evidence of a policy/stance on DP from the Trump administration, which suggests that it was not a priority to promote democracy outside the US in the same way as previous administrations. In LATAM he changed the US' narrative, no longer focusing on DP, but on the threat of illegal immigration which he claimed was "a tremendous problem for drugs pouring in and destroying our youth, and, really, destroying the fabric of our country" (Trump 2018). This was part of his view of LATAM, a problem for American society, but not an opportunity to strengthen US hegemony. The next chapter will look at the case of LATAM and the increasing weakness of democracy in several countries, by investigating US foreign policy in the region, how Trump changed the policy, and an interesting observation regarding its governance and civil societies.

Chapter 5. US Foreign Policy in Latin America

As neighbours, relations between the US and Latin America (LATAM) are deeply rooted. Not only is the US a provider of foreign investment for several states in LATAM; it is also a big trading partner, with free trade agreements existing with 11 countries in LATAM, strengthening economic connections (Congressional Research Service, 2022). It is also a centre for U.S. immigration, and US administrations have supported human rights and democracy in LATAM over the years (ibid.).

However, it can be said that relations between the two are changing. Recently, the quality of democracy has weakened in various LATAM countries, in joint connection with a reduction in public satisfaction as to the functioning of democracy (ibid.). In LATAM, the last decade has brought some big changes and challenges. Concerns have been raised from human rights groups over democratic backsliding in different LATAM countries, with several experiencing social unrest in 2019, resulting from corruption, weak democratic institutions, crime and violence, and economic factors such as stagnating growth and income inequality (ibid.).

In his Honours thesis, Gilbert argues that DP in LATAM by the US has consisted of establishing pro-US governments, honouring their economic and political interests as opposed to democracy itself (Gilbert 2008, 148). He elaborates by saying that in its relations with LATAM, the US practiced DP to blanket US imperialism, and attempted to overthrow governments that deviated away from democracy, endangering US interests (ibid. 148). However, this thesis goes a step further and looks at the potential influence of the Trump administration, in seeing whether he changed US foreign policy of DP in relation to LATAM. Gilbert's article was written in 2008, and should be 'updated', to consider the events of the last five years, such as the growing instability in LATAM and Trumps recent presidency.

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) published its annual report on the current state of democracy in LATAM. It states that the region saw the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in combination with democratic fatigue and deceleration in its economies, aggravating pre-existing problems such as extensive inequality and weak governance (National Endowment for Democracy, n.d.). This dissatisfaction with democracy across the region has impacted democracies that are either functional, fragile, or consolidated, and those working in the fields of human rights, environmental activism and journalism were threatened by criminal actors and belligerent governments (ibid.). This shows the challenges facing democracies in LATAM, and it happened during a time when politics was changing, and new foreign actors in LATAM were emerging. Recently, there has been an increased presence of bigger powers in the region such as China and Russia, working to gain economic and

political leverage in the continent (*ibid.*). In spite of these challenges, 2020 saw NED supplying vital support to boost democracy in the most authoritarian states in LATAM, and Bolivia and Ecuador (two countries in transition) were presented as opportunities to turn back old authoritarian law concerning judicial independence and freedom of expression, along with spurring citizen involvement in electoral action (*ibid.*). Despite all this, the US still remains a crucial state with interests in LATAM, even if its activity there is different.

Historically, in its efforts to protect American interests in the region, the US has furiously intervened in national elections, in the hope of consolidating a pro-US administration. For example, in the Chilean election of 1964, the US were committed to preventing socialist Salvador Allende from coming to power, so the CIA spent three million dollars attempting to influence the outcome of the election (Livingstone 2009, 51-52). They not only supported middle to right wing candidates, but spending thousands of dollars on a campaign of anti-communist propaganda, and attempting to win the influence of trade unions, student and women's organisations etc (*ibid.*, 51-52). When Allende eventually won the chance to form a government in 1970, the US plotted to prevent Allende from taking the position (*ibid.*, 52-56). This occurred through the manipulation of the Chilean congress to approve his opponent instead and planning an attempted coup using groups within the Chilean military- the efforts of which failed, with arrests and Allende eventually being approved to take office in October 1970 (*ibid.*, 52-56).

This case highlights a pressing observation of US involvement: the containment of communism was the worry for the US government, as opposed to expanding democracy. In fact, Livingstone notes the US repressed dissent by working with authoritarian regimes, supported dictators and undermined legitimately elected governments, all aimed towards the containment of communism (Livingstone 2009, 23). The coup in Guatemala is another example, when the president Jacobo Arbenz (moderately left wing) was overthrown in 1954, resulting in a 36 year long civil war, and the loss of an opportunity for peaceful reform (*ibid.*, 24). The US often showed support for dictatorships in LATAM if they were tough on communism and would provide military assistance and grant diplomatic recognition to military governments (*ibid.*, 25). What's more, they were in favour of the onslaught by the authoritarian regimes against the left wing activists and communists, urging democratic governments to do the same (*ibid.*, 25). The Cuban case also reveals this tactic by the US. The Pentagon, the CIA and the State Department committed themselves to not allowing the Cuban case

to repeat itself, giving US administrations a further reason for supporting abusive militaries and authoritarian governments in LATAM (ibid., 38).

Overall, US policy has alternated over time in LATAM. Indeed, Scott and Carter argue that the practices of US democracy assistance in LATAM can be interpreted best through lens of foreign policy change, stressing the contribution of international factors (Scott and Carter 2016, 304). The case of LATAM for US foreign policy backs up the arguments in the literature review. While US discourse stresses the value of democracy and human rights, stability has been the most important objective in LATAM, even at the expense of democratic values. However, modern day relations between LATAM and the US are different. China is becoming a stronger actor in the region, with the Southern Cone countries especially seeking investment and diversifying trade more and more from China, along with Europe (Livingstone 2009, 233). It is important to evaluate whether US foreign policy has had an effect on the recent unrest in LATAM. Part of this includes investigating the DP policy from the Trump administration. The literature review made clear that not much has been written yet on the Trump administration and the practice of DP.

The same is true of LATAM, In my research, there was not a clear, coherent policy towards LATAM, nor the growing unrest, despite the potential impact that US interventionism may have had. One thing Trump did do was prioritise immigration policy in LATAM over DP. This is evident in countries like Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, where the US has generated a mitigating policy to give aid to states undergoing substantial waves of migration (Puerta Riera 2021). The Trump administration decided to cut financial assistance to Central America which worsened the problems it was facing, concerning climate change, the immigration crisis, and the effects they caused on the economies (ibid.). This resulted in a failure to provoke widespread changes and caused a recurrence of reforms in good governance in the region as well as a growth in illegal border crossings (ibid.).

The US is no longer as influential in the LATAM sphere and should engage more on the issue of shrinking civic space, through advocating for civil society through the regime. This would give societies the freedom to debate and embrace democratic values through a free exchange of ideas, a modern and effective way of strengthening democratic institutions. The use of DP through state activism is divisive, and it can potentially harm relations between two countries. Livingstone claims that as democracy expands in the continent, the strength of civil society and the goal of elected gov-

ernments will determine whether the US and its allies will be able to alter the lives of the public or subvert democracy like it had before (Livingstone 2009, 235). In my analysis, there is an observation of the growing divide between government and civil society in LATAM, and how past US foreign policy, along with the absence of action from the Trump administration has been contributing factors. Before that, it is useful to understand the perspectives of IR theory on US DP in LATAM.

The discussion then turns to what IR theory offers as regards to DP in the case of LATAM, and the different theoretical perspectives around DP in foreign policy. As stated earlier, the context of democracy in LATAM is changing with emerging challenges and new actors at play (for example the increased presence of China). So attention turns to what kind of DP foreign policy should advocate, in the case of LATAM. First the attention turns to theory. This section will challenge the realist perspective of DP foreign policy by investigating other theoretical perspectives of DP use. One will then attempt to apply these arguments to the case of LATAM, which will help us to understand the changing nature of politics in LATAM and the relevance of national interests in democracy and LATAM civil society in the last decade. It is important to add that there will be no advocacy of a particular theoretical perspective, as the goal is to explain the diversity of what theory suggests and to add a critical viewpoint.

Democratic Peace Theory

One of the most well-known theories related to DP is that of the ‘democratic peace theory’. It is defined as the belief that countries who are democratic almost never go to war with each other (Britannica, n.d.). In international relations, scholars and practitioners tend to agree with the claim that democratic countries do not fight one another (ibid.). But while the US is historically an advocate of democracy, one notices from the literature review that the US actions do not always support the democratic peace theory. Furthermore, the peace this theory strives for could come through economic integration, or regional cooperation as opposed to regime change/assurance. Policy makers interpreting this theory should always make clear their means of achieving results.

There is debate concerning the legitimacy of the democratic peace theory in foreign policy. Some analysts are critical over its ability to produce peaceful results without finding alternatives. Czempiel, for example, argues that a democratic foreign policy, aiming to consolidate international peace and build mutual trust, also work to develop global relations of partnership and cooperation as well with the countries whose leaders are not legitimately democratic (Czempiel, 1996a: 97–8).

When tied with the foreign policy of the United States, it leads one to suggest that the democratic peace theory would only work with countries who were already democratic and does not provide a mechanism for the further democratisation of other states. Parmar does not believe citizens in a country democratised from the outside would benefit, arguing that the democratic system imposed from an external actor “can never truly be “rule of the people”, it is likely to remain a hollow shell,

form without content” (Parmar 2015, 698). This would lead to trouble between state and its people. Therefore, while the democratic peace theory may help maintain peace between countries, it will not do much to protect peace within countries between the government and its people. We see this recently in LATAM, where the weakness in democracy has provoked unrest within states. It is useful to look at alternative methods of promoting democracy without resorting to state interventionism directly by the bigger power. The economy and civil society should also be included in this regard.

Realism and Liberalism

LATAM as a region is also not suited to the hypotheses of this theory. Whilst in Europe, this theory can be applied as democracy has been present there for much longer and is deeply rooted in many European institutions, LATAM’s context is different, as democracy is still a relatively new phenomenon. So far, one can suggest that the US used DP in a way which goes against the beliefs of the democratic peace theory. This is evident in their attempts in LATAM to protect regimes that are undemocratic to preserve stability. From existing literature, one identifies the US use of DP with a rationalist perspective of IR known as ‘modified realism’, which Wolff suggests, concerns “yielding a conception of democracy promotion as an instrument in support of either security/power interests” (Wolff and Wurm 2011, 82). In the US’ case, this means using democracy to preserve security, or promote and protect their interests. However, Wolff and Wurm argue that DP can be understood as a regulative norm founded on the international level, and the differing DP policies follow from the point that international norms only constrain and enable (but do not determine) foreign policy (ibid., 85).

Miller looks at the theories of offensive and defensive liberalism, in relation to key concerns around DP in foreign policy, whether democracy can be promoted through peaceful or coercive means, and also the effects it has on stability: does democratisation bring about war or peace (Miller 2010, 561-563)? In his deeply contextual analysis of the differentiation of the four IR approaches, it is evident that offensive realism best describes US foreign policy in LATAM, as Miller points out “offensive realism is ready to engage in democracy removal in case it advances the material interests of the great power even if this power is a liberal democracy” (ibid., 591). With the cases of Chile and Cuba in mind, offensive realism believes that DP is a significant component of the big strategy, and when faced with the security threat of illiberal powers, imposed democratisation is the answer, as a change in regime would remove the threat once they became a democracy (ibid., 588). This research does not advocate offensive realism as the principle of foreign policy. It encourages a critical

discussion of all the various perspectives, but at the same time understands that it is limited to being a tool of comprehension. However, it does recognise that modern day LATAM will need to be seen through a multifarious lens. While offensive realism delivers answers for the US and LATAM during the cold war in relation to DP, today's context is different, and requires a different debate.

Offensive liberalism values DP as a significant element, since it believes it is needed for a stable and enduring peace and elimination of security dangers (Miller 2010, 588). Like offensive realism, offensive liberalism would undergo a regime change, when faced with the security dangers of illiberal forces, they suggest "imposed democratisation, as such a regime change supposedly removes the security threats coming from these regimes as soon as they become democratic" (ibid., 588). Both offensive liberalism and offensive realism have similar beliefs which reflects the US stance on LATAM. This argument suggests that the US were looking to adopt actions reflected by offensive realism in LATAM, but under the mask they were acting in a way offensive realists would justify. The way to world peace for offensive liberals is global democratisation (even by force), while offensive realism believes global hegemony is the right way (ibid., 567). In this context, the US' actions in LATAM have been to preserve its own status as a global hegemony, protecting its stability and interests in the south.

The Trump presidency damaged the reputation of the US as an example of democratic strength, in an effort to shore up his own support. Furthermore, Trump lacked a coherent stance on DP in his foreign policy, for example in LATAM where there has been recent unrest and a weakening of democracy in several states. In fact, Trump showed signs of being anti-democratic. While US foreign policy was not the causative agent of the unrest, the tradition of US interventionism in LATAM and the absence of a response by the Trump administration, coupled by his damning narrative of democracy, added fuel to the flames. This research highlights that while Trump damaged the reputation of the US' DP efforts, there is an interesting observation to discuss in relation to the LATAM states studied and the state of democracy there in conjunction with the emergence of civil societies. This section will discuss how civil societies in LATAM states are stronger in spite of the recent social issues and Trumps effect on DP. It notes the fragility of democracy in LATAM states, partly caused by US DP in the region, the recent social unrest being made worse by Trumps change in policy, but despite this, the independence of civil societies. It raises a question over the benefits DP can bring to civil societies as opposed to state interventionism.

Puerta Riera argues that "the failures in exporting American democracy calls for the reframing of democracy promotion as a strategy" (Puerta Riera 2021). One such reframing could include a choice of aid assistance and opening civic space, which could be particularly effective in assisting civil societies in LATAM, helping them to grow more powers to face down the challenges to democracy. A policy such as this would re-generate the idea of democracy expansionism that brings direct benefits to the public, moving away from the beliefs of realist theory and the democratic peace theory, and to an ideal where democracy benefits economy, society, and people, where non-state actors are heavily involved. In an article, Myers discusses an alternative to putting DP on the sidelines, which is expanding distribution of ground-level, low-profile DP programs targeted at civil society (Myers 2021). He argues that civil society (defined as beyond the NGOs to other actors and grassroots groups) is crucial in the support of democratic transitions and consolidating it- so funding for civil society and the expansion of support in societies that are backsliding can help to ensure expansion of democracy and establishment in the long term (ibid.). Civil society is a part of a state which deserves more attention by policy analysts. One could argue that if the right resources and support were given to civil society actors, there would be bigger potential for stronger democratic institutions that are independent from state actors or governments.

The reasoning for this argument comes from data around the strength of civil society compared with perceptions of democracy in LATAM. On USAID, it gives data for the levels of civil society organisation sustainability index (CSOSI), indicating the overall viability and strength of civil society sectors, for example Chile, whose overall score is not acknowledged but is included in the region average of 4.4 (1-7, lower is more sustainable) has a variety of democracy, civil society participation level of 0.86 out of 1 (USAID, n.d.). This shows a civil society which has a below average sustainability score but a high level of civil society participation. However, Chile has a variety of democracy, core civil society index score- which measures the robustness of civil society and its autonomy from the state where civilians seek their civil and political goals- giving a high score of 0.86 out of 1 (ibid.). This indicates the independence of Chilean civil society from its state institutions is high suggesting a limited damage on civil society as a result of a weak democracy. In Bolivia, its sustainability score is the same as Chile, but its variety of democracy- civil society participation index score is 0.75 out of 1, while its core civil society index score is lower at 0.65 (USAID, n.d.). Again, its civil society participation level is high, meaning civil society sectors are big actors in both countries, although its core score is lower meaning its independence from state actors is still high but not as strong.

El Salvador's data shows contrasts. Its varieties of democracy- civil society participation index score is 0.54, CSOSI score the same again as other two on region average, and its core civil society index score is 0.8 out of 1, a strong score (USAID, n.d.). One of the trends we see in the data is the sustainability of civil society organisation which is not understood within the countries themselves. However, the figures for the region average are around the same. It is hard to understand why, when the core civil society index score- the robustness of civil society, said to enjoy autonomy from the state (ibid.)- is higher on average. What it does indicate, is civil society strength as an independent actors in the presented states in LATAM, which are also democratic. If we take the case of a non-democratic state, for instance Cuba, the figures are far different. Cuba's varieties of democracy- civil society participation index score is only 0.11, its core civil society index is very low at 0.05, yet its CSOSI is also not acknowledged but is part of the region average of 4.4 (USAID, n.d.). Cuba's case is unique given the failure of the US government to promote democracy there, losing out to communist forces. However, it gives grounds to explain how DP can be used to ensure stronger civil society participation in democratic processes.

Why is this the case? Kamrava and Mora say that civil societies not only developed in several Latin American states due to the retreat, weakening, or breakdown of the state, but in spite of the state, as shown in the case of Chile (Kamrava and Mora 1998, 899). This growth is connected to the process of socioeconomic development, marked by the export sectors expansion and enhanced by the modernisation of capitalist development and industrialisation (*ibid.*). Indeed civil society grew as a component of resistance to authoritarian rule in LATAM. There is irony in that the repression caused by the military authoritarian regimes (authoritarian-bureaucratic) would result in autonomies and developed civil societies that would be crucial forces of democratisation that contributed to the downfall of authoritarianism (*ibid.*, 901). It is evident then that civil societies are important forces in DP, and their development alongside US foreign policy in LATAM highlights this.

Civil societies are important for DP efforts because: 1) they can control and restrict the states power, and 2) they can bring to light and corrupt the behaviour of public officials and campaign for reforms in good governance (Diamond 2004). What's more, Diamond lays out in a speech several reasons for the importance of civil society in developing democracy, the most important including the development of other ideals of democratic life: including respect for other points of view, compromise, tolerance, and promoting political participation, along with enhancing democratic civic education programs in schools (*ibid.*). Having a strong democratic civil society would enhance the sustainability of the democracy, when faced with anti-democratic forces at state level. Also, civil societies play important parts in reviewing the handling of elections (*ibid.*). This kind of monitoring would help regions where democracies are weaker, as it would help to ensure the fairness of these elections.

Of course, it is important to not assume that strong civil societies are not guaranteed to be democratic, as Brysk states that social forces attempted to undermine democracy in Venezuela and Ecuador (Brysk 2000, 151). However, she claims that despite a democratic civil society not being guaranteed to ensure a state that is democratic: "the latter is unlikely to be sustainable without the former" (*ibid.*, 151). But the case of LATAM and change in US foreign policy there during the Trump era, highlights how the state and civil society must have equal importance. Brysk states that civil societies must respect human rights, be accountable, pluralistic and representative in order to be classified as democratic (*ibid.*, 152). Therefore, there is a stark contrast between the weakness of democracies in LATAM, as opposed to civil societies, which data shows, is quite strong.

The correlation between past US practice of DP during the Cold War mainly based on government interventionism (and the resulting state of governments in LATAM in the last decade), and the strength of civil society as independent actors today is unusual. It is hard to find explanations for why this is the case. One may argue that DP has been more effective at civil society/NSA level, than by intervention at government level, therefore advocating the importance of DP assistance for civil societies. Trump may have damaged the narrative around democracy in the United States, but in foreign affairs, he did marginally little in the case of LATAM, and this absenteeism has weakened the dependence of LATAM on its regional neighbour due to strong, independent civil societies. To conclude, US foreign policy has been a contributing factor in the divide between civil society strength and weak democracies in LATAM.

My analysis shows that Trump changed policy around LATAM, drawing back from the traditional foreign policy practice of the US in promoting democracy. Despite the fact there is a correlation between the DP efforts by the US in LATAM during the Cold War and the current problems democracy is facing in some of its states, the last chapter showed that civil societies within El Salvador, Bolivia and Chile (democracies) are stronger and independent actors than a non-Democratic state like Cuba, reflecting the rise of civil societies in LATAM in spite of authoritarianism and US interference. The Trump administration did not focus on a clear policy of DP, but instead focused on issues such as immigration and cutting of financial assistance which made the problems of Central America worsen (Puerta Riera 2021). One cannot conclude that this was the causative agent of unrest in Latin American states, but there is a strong correlation between this and the actions of the Trump administration and change in previous DP foreign policy. On the other hand, the correlation between Trump's narrative of democracy and the US' practiced methods of DP is very weak. In fact, Trump promoting democracy was non-existent.

Tying all these factors together leads one to an observation about DP in LATAM: The interests of the states studied reveals that DP efforts contributed to the fragility of democracy in its states and Trump's change of policy in LATAM, moving away from DP and old practices of US worsened the situation due to the lack of US assistance during the unrest. The reason for this is the US' attempts to preserve its own stability and interests in the region through state interventionism, arguably going against the beliefs of the democratic peace theory. The case of LATAM and DP shows this and reflects what Parmar believes about citizens not seeing benefits in a country democratised from the outside, that an external actor imposing democracy would never truly be "rule of the people" (Parmar 2015, 698). Economic policy and military policy of the US have been inextricably linked, so it has consistently been willing to defend its own hegemony via means of force and in LATAM their interventions have been undertaken in cooperation with its elites (Livingstone 2009, 235). What's more, its double standard policies in the post Cold War era added further instability, through its criticism of human rights abuses in Venezuela but staying silent on abuses in its preferred ally Colombia, and its failed drugs policy in Colombia with implications for human health, animals, crops and the environment (ibid., 234). As a result, US involvement has contributed to the instability of democracy in several LATAM states.

As the US sometimes favoured authoritarian regimes to protect its interests and arguably did not prioritise democracy, it was not allowed to develop in a sustainable way in several areas of LATAM.

We are seeing the implications today, with an increase in authoritarianism in LATAM: rigged elections, human rights violation, increasing decline of democratic performance, and corruption (Puerta Riera 2021). US foreign policy is one of the components which provoked democratic instability in LATAM states. Furthermore, the Trump administration had no clear policy of DP, and distanced itself away from assistance for democracy, turning instead to closer relations with foreign leaders with no analysis of their democratic criteria (*ibid.*). In Venezuela, Trump's shortcomings resulted in a weakening of the opposition's choices to create a way forward for fair elections, and the cutting of financial assistance, resulted in more illegal border crossings and a regression in reforms for good governance (*ibid.*). While there are a few democracies in LATAM that are considered among the world's best, many others such as Bolivia, Honduras, Brazil, Guatemala and Paraguay are showing various signs of democratic fragility (Zovatto 2020). Despite this, the states looked at in LATAM provides an interesting observation: there is a weak correlation between fragile democratic governance in LATAM and the strength of LATAM civil societies as independent actors.

Comparing civil society in LATAM and the US' practice of DP presents a niche for further research. Does the last decade, with Trump's effect on DP and the strength of civil society advocate further analysis of a DP which highlights the benefits and independence of civil society, dismissing the legitimacy of regime change/intervention at state level? While it is not correct to assume US DP efforts failed in the case of LATAM based on this information, it is reasonable to say that it was not successful and question its justification. Zovatto claims that a renovation of democracy in LATAM should be targeted at strengthening its institutions, improving its resilience and quality (Zovatto 2020). Furthermore, it should "empower citizens, recover economic growth, rethink the development model, and adopt a new social contract" (*ibid.*). This is an area for future research, as it would question the hypotheses of the democratic peace theory, possibly producing variant perspectives of the theory looking at civil society as an independent actor which has stronger influence on government.

This reframing of DP is something which Puerta Riera advocates, as there is a desire to unpick the existing framework for policy making and begin the process afresh with a more efficient and bold approach for the re strengthening of democratic institutions in LATAM (Puerta Riera 2021). The state leader is only one component, and the Trump case shows how the narrative of DP efforts can be damaged, but the correlation between that and civil society independence from the state is weak, showing it is only a limited effect. Civil society's role will also affect the position of the US in the

region. Livingstone notes that as democracy expands in LATAM, civil society's strength and the political desires of elected governments will establish whether the US and its alliance with LATAM military and upper class, will be able to cripple democracy or twist public life in the same way it practiced in past decades (Livingstone 2009, 235).

A criteria for DP assistance should note its institutions, economy, society, public perception of democracy, long-term benefits over short term (regime change just a short term benefit), political parties and their international relations. DP programs should have more sophistication and a consideration of the various factors in the target state. IR theory can play a role in this. For example, the Cuban case (authoritarian) would suit the typical neo-realist approach where regime change and state intervention would allow the other factors to begin to flourish. However, cases such as El Salvador, Bolivia and Chile would need to consider further components such as NSAs, civil societies as well as political parties in its approach (constructivist), and in such circumstances the long-term effects is prioritised over the short term, to ensure sustainable development of democracy. The development of civil society in LATAM challenges the legitimacy of US DP efforts, given that it rose in conjunction with the authoritarian era in LATAM, and the weak democracies are partly caused by US DP practice and Trumps effect on it.

Chapter 9. Conclusion

This thesis has investigated how the US has promoted democracy and the difference that Trump made on this policy. It argues that US interests and desire for stability have contributed to the current fragility of democracy in Latin America, by working against its governments during the previous decades and regimes as opposed to strengthening democracy in the region. Furthermore, Trump damaged the reputation of the US' DP efforts especially by his often anti-democratic narrative and his focus on immigration and the US border as opposed to protecting US interests in LATAM. Trumps change of policy in LATAM, moving away from old DP practices and his absenteeism in the face of the crisis, has made the situation worse. However, the current situation in LATAM highlights a contrast between weak democratic governance and strong civil society, questioning the effectiveness and legitimacy of US democracy promotion as a foreign policy tool, as civil society growth occurred in spite of the state and its breakdowns (Kamrava and Mora 1998, 899).

This raises the question over whether past US foreign policy of DP was justified in LATAM's case, as it resulted in weak democratic governance and social issues which are prevalent today, yet strong civil societies emerging in a different, independent way. This gives grounds for future research not only on the dependence of these two variables on each other- state actors and civil society in DP, but the justification for US DP efforts, and the sustainable benefits it may have brought to states in LATAM as a result of its efforts to protect its own interests and contain the spread of communism. The strength of LATAM civil societies is a notable contrast to the problems LATAM democracies are facing. It opens a possible discussion of how DP should be reformed as a foreign policy, possibly being more civil-society oriented, focusing on issues of civic space and aid assistance to non-state actors in countries where they are attempting to spread democracy and create sustainable benefits for its citizens.

It also critiques the democratic peace theory, by claiming that through state interventionism, peace is not the sole reason for promoting democracy, as the US has tended to put its stability and interests first, particularly in LATAM's case. On the other hand, a peaceful state could be more sustainable if democracy is stronger in civil society and citizens see the direct, long-term benefits of being in a democracy, rather than foreign actors manipulating the actions of government. It also questions the nature of Trumps effect on democracy, as this thesis has shown that Trump did not have a coherent

policy of DP and damaged America's reputation as a foreign policy advocate for democracy. He adopted a non-democratic narrative and attempted to overturn America's own democratic institutions and reform its foreign policy. However, the long term implications are not yet understood, and will take a few more years to manifest, particularly in 2024 during the next US election. It may be just a temporary convenience for the US if the Biden administration manages to reverse Trumps legacy in foreign affairs and find a way to assist LATAM democracies through the current challenges it faces.

Indeed, DP as a foreign policy tool may be on the decline, if the voices of civil societies and non state actors are becoming more involved in the discourse around democracy. Their involvement in DP is another interesting area for future research. Overall, the United States is still a vital partner for LATAM and a source for democratic assistance abroad, even if there are questions over the long term benefits of its past DP efforts in LATAM, and its reputation was damaged by the Trump administration. The return of such politics, or the further weakening of democracy in LATAM may pose further questions to its own perception of democracy in the United States.

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