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How We Got Here

Only ten years ago, few political leaders or theorists would have predicted democracy's decline. Even as late as the early 2000s, the fourth wave of democracy, which in the 1990s and early 2000s had swept through parts of Asia, Latin America, and—most notably—Sub-Saharan Africa, still seemed to be holding up. And the fourth wave built on three earlier waves of democratization, making it seem like the natural extension of democracy's global spread.

Throughout most of the twentieth century, democracy had been confined to tiny islands of freedom in a generally repressive globe, dominated by colonies, monarchies, and warlords. At the start of the twentieth century, only twelve countries, nearly all in Western Europe and North America, could truly be called democracies, though roughly thirty nations had established minimal democratic institutions and cultures, including Italy, Argentina, Germany, Japan, and Spain. Political scientist Samuel Huntington would call this initial group of democracies, which gained freedoms in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the early twentieth century, the "first wave" of democracy. These democracies—Britain, the United States, the Scandinavian nations, France, Switzerland, and British dominions like Canada and Australia—had their origins in the American and French revolutions. This small group of countries generally shared long histories of gradual democratic development, born in the theories of the Enlightenment, the European wars, and the civil strife of the early nineteenth century, and the legal systems drafted in Europe and the United States after the French and American revolutions.

Many of the first wave democracies that came of age last, in the early twentieth century, did not survive the First World War and the economic

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chaos of the 1930s. Spain, Italy, Austria, Germany, and many others crumpled in the face of a reverse wave of fascism and communism, and, as Huntington notes, the initial democratic institutions that were germinating in Poland, the Baltics, and in other parts of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in Brazil and Argentina, were snuffed out. Those countries that had not already succumbed gave way to the military takeovers by fascist Japan, Italy, and Germany. Even at the end of the Second World War, democracy remained mostly limited to the same small club of countries in Scandinavia, Western Europe, North America, and former British dominions like Australia.

But the Second World War unleashed what would become known as the second wave of global democratization. The Allies' victory and occupation of nations like Germany, Austria, and Japan allowed the occupiers to foster a rebirth of democratic institutions and culture in those countries—indeed, the new constitution drafted for Japan by its American occupiers was far more liberal than Japanese society would have accepted if Japanese leaders had drafted such a document themselves at that time. The defeat of fascism, the triumph of the Anglo-American political model (at least in areas not controlled by the Soviets), and the removal of Italy and Germany as military powers provided space for Greece and Turkey to strengthen their democratic institutions. In Latin America, meanwhile, Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia, and Peru held democratic elections in the mid-1940s.

By exhausting the British, German, Dutch, and French empires, the war also triggered a wave of decolonization around the globe. A few of the newly independent states, like India, Israel, and Malaysia, already had relatively substantial traditions of opposition politics and freedom of association, and were able to build on those. Nigeria, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia, among other newly free states, held initial elections and seemed to be putting into place democratic institutions.

Countries like India, however, turned out to be the exception. As new states emerged in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East in the 1950s and 1960s, many Western political scientists and leaders believed that these new nations were not fertile ground for democracy, at least not anytime soon. These countries had little previous experience with elections and very few educated men

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and women, and they faced many challenges, from establishing education systems to simply feeding their people. "Parliamentary democracy has a dim future in Africa," predicted a typical 1961 article titled "The Prospect for Democracy in the New Africa."[1] In the late 1970s, in her famous *Commentary* article "Dictatorships and Double Standards," in which she pushed the White House to back right-wing dictatorships as a bulwark against revolutionary left-wing authoritarian regimes, Jeanne Kirkpatrick made a similar argument, writing, "In the relatively few places where they exist, democratic governments have come into being slowly, after extended prior experience with more limited forms of participation."[2] Even as late as 1980, then mayor of Paris (later president of France) Jacques Chirac told a group of African leaders, "Multi-partyism is a political error, the type of luxury that developing countries cannot afford."[3]

With a few exceptions, like India's Jawaharlal Nehru, who held a deep and intense belief in Indian democracy, leaders of the former colonies essentially echoed Kirkpatrick's theme, publicly arguing that they could not be expected to develop democracies overnight—not when they had so many other priorities. Of course, postcolonial leaders in Africa and Asia had ulterior motives for claiming that their people were not ready for democracy. But without a doubt, most of the first generation of postindependence leaders displayed little interest in democracy. Malawi's first postindependence leader, a Scottish-trained doctor named Hastings Banda who maintained an intense love for all things Scottish and an obsession with Malawians' personal grooming—his government banned long hair for men and pants for women—named himself "Life President" of the country and had his picture plastered inside every office building and movie theater, as well as in most homes.[4] Banda, one of the most controlling of the postindependence African big men, certainly believed that his people couldn't be trusted with the franchise. Malawians, he told reporters, were "children" and needed a powerful ruler to guide them.[5]

Theorists Huntington and Seymour Martin Lipset, meanwhile, argued that countries needed to attain a certain level of economic development to create the conditions for successful democracy—a level of development that virtually none of the postcolonial states had attained. The exact level of

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development at which democracy solidifies was difficult to pinpoint, but many proponents of this modernization theory have argued that, once a country reaches the income level, per capita, of a middle income nation, it rarely returns to authoritarian rule. (Exceptions were states totally dependent on oil wealth, in which a small elite could use oil simply to solidify its control of power.) Economic development, these theorists argued, would create such features as a sizable middle class, an educated populace, and greater integration with the rest of the world.

In particular, development theorists like Huntington placed their bets on the middle class as the primary moving force behind democratic change. As the middle class grew in size, middle class men and women would build new networks of business and society outside of the control of the state. They would gain more education, build more ties to the outside world of democratic ideas, and increasingly demand more social, political, and economic freedoms. In addition, development would promote higher levels of interpersonal trust, seen as critical to civic engagement in politics, to open debate, and to forming opposition political parties. "In virtually every country [that had democratized] the most active supporters of democratization came from the urban middle-class," Huntington wrote.

For the most part, until the early 1970s, the theory that these poor, newly independent nations could not support democracy seemed correct. Even India suffered its own dramatic democratic reversal, when in the mid-1970s Prime Minister Indira Gandhi suspended the constitution and declared a state of emergency, essentially making herself dictator. Indeed, in the 1960s and 1970s democracy suffered another reverse wave, though this reverse did not cancel out all the gains of the previous two waves. Military regimes took power again in Greece and Turkey. Nearly every postcolonial African state developed into some kind of authoritarian regime, often ruled by a domineering independence leader like Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta or Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah. Many of these nations also adopted highly centralized economic policies, which not only failed to produce high growth rates but also contributed to a general centralization of power in the hands of the ruling regime. Postcolonial states that had seemed to offer prospects for democracy, like Nigeria, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Burma, disintegrated into civil war

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or fell prey to military takeovers, such as the bloody civil conflict in Indonesia in 1965–66, where in the aftermath of a military takeover communal riots killed as many as one million Indonesians.

And if Asia's postcolonial leaders proved more successful economically than their counterparts in Africa, opening their countries to international trade and using the power of the state to support industrialization and primary education made them no less dictatorial than their African peers. The leaders of South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore—Park Chung Hee, Chiang Kai-shek, and Lee Kuan Yew, respectively—established spartan, tightly controlled states. Thailand's military generals might allow American companies and American soldiers into their country, but not American-style democracy. When a group of prodemocracy opposition politicians criticized the ruling Thai junta in 1949, the security forces grabbed four men from the opposition, who never made it out of police custody. When the police finally released their bodies, the corpses were pocked with bullet holes and showed signs of torture, including swollen eyes and ears, burns over their bodies (likely from lit cigarettes), and shattered legs.[6] Overall, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in the second reverse wave, as many as one-third of the countries that had been democracies in the early 1960s had reverted to authoritarian rule by the early 1970s. The reverse wave, Huntington noted, sparked broad pessimism that stable democracy could take hold anywhere in the developing world.

The international system enabled authoritarian rule and, generally, posed a major obstacle to democratic change during the Cold War. The Soviet Union crushed stirrings of democratic reform in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and other Soviet satellites. Meanwhile, not only did many Western leaders tolerate anticommunist autocracies, by the 1970s—with oil shocks staggering the U.S. economy and the retreat from Vietnam denting American military confidence—they also openly wondered whether democracy could actually defeat communism around the world. In 1977 Henry Kissinger, the former secretary of state and a believer in détente with the Soviet Union, wrote, "Today, for the first time in our history, we face the stark reality that the [communist] challenge is unending."[7] Kissinger's views were widely shared among American policy makers and intellectuals, most

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of whom in the 1970s and early 1980s accepted that the Soviet Union would not reform, that communism and democracy would have to coexist indefinitely, and that democracy might eventually turn out to be the historical accident, restricted to a few societies of the West and perhaps doomed even there.[8]

Even when Western allies crushed potential young democracies, Cold War realities dominated. In 1975, as Portugal released its last colonial possessions, the leaders of one of those possessions, East Timor, developed plans to build an independent democracy on their tiny half-island. But that year giant Indonesia invaded Timor with the tacit consent of the United States and other powers, including the regional power, Australia. In a meeting with Indonesian dictator Suharto, President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger made clear they would not stand in the way. "Whatever you do," Kissinger told Suharto, according to documents later released under the Freedom of Information Act, "We will try to handle it in the best way possible."[9] Indonesia launched a brutal military occupation of East Timor. According to an estimate by Geoffrey Robinson of the University of California at Los Angeles, as many as 200,000 East Timorese—close to half the population—died from the occupation in the late 1970s.[10]

In April 1974, in an event that was only later recognized as having launched the third wave of democratization, leftist military officers in Portugal, frustrated with the government's continued commitment to expensive and bloody colonial wars, deposed the authoritarian regime that had ruled the country for five decades. Thousands of Portuguese flocked into the streets of Lisbon, gathering near the flower market, where they began waving carnations and sticking them into soldiers' gun barrels to show their support for the rebels. The coup paved the way for an opening of the Portuguese political system, and within a year of the "Carnation Revolution," Portugal had held a free election.

Beginning with the Carnation Revolution, democracy spread in the third wave across southern Europe, to parts of East Asia and Latin America, and, after 1989, to much of post-Soviet Eastern Europe. Between the mid-1970s and the early 1990s, some thirty authoritarian nations would

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become democratic, and more would develop at least some trappings of democracy. Of course, the idea of a "democratic wave"—political science shorthand for sweeping change—could be overstated. Specific domestic factors in each nation precipitated democratization, and it would be impossible to claim that political change in one nation necessarily sparked change somewhere else. But in certain regions and at certain times, like Latin America in the late 1970s and early 1980s, or Eastern Europe in 1989, the sheer number of countries undergoing change in a short time meant that reforms in Brazil or Poland did have a demonstration effect, influencing the political situation in Argentina or Czechoslovakia. The Carnation Revolution, for instance, was watched carefully in neighboring Spain. Shortly afterward, with the death of Spanish dictator Francisco Franco, Spain embarked on its own transition, in which King Juan Carlos helped manage a democratic opening.[11] Reforms in Brazil and Argentina in the late 1970s and early 1980s encouraged the reformers in Chile, who had already begun pushing back against dictatorship. Chile restored democracy in 1990 and built what is now arguably the most stable democratic system in Latin America.[12]

Many of these third wave nations also had experienced rapid economic growth in the 1970s, seemingly adding support to Huntington's theory that growth helps build a middle class and, thus, democratic change. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, economic reforms helped usher in high growth in Spain and Greece and other southern European nations, and several of the Asian nations that would democratize in the third wave, including the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, and Taiwan, also posted high growth rates in the 1970s and early 1980s. In the case of Korea, Thailand, and Taiwan, these growth rates were some of the highest in the world. The military regimes running these nations often played a role in sparking the growth through free market policies, but in Greece, Spain, and other nations, they proved incapable of managing some of the challenges of growth, including inflation, higher public debt, migration to urban areas and the need for greater social services, and macroeconomic instability. This lack of economic management hurt the autocrats' legitimacy, particularly with the middle class businesspeople.

In addition, these nations' middle classes seemed to respond to growth exactly as Huntington and Lipset had predicted. Demanding greater eco-

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nomic, social, and political freedoms, urban middle class men and women led demonstrations in the Philippines, Argentina, Chile, Taiwan, South Korea, and many other nations. In countries like Bulgaria or Burma, where the urban middle class was much smaller, democratization during the third wave faced many more challenges, and had a harder time laying foundations for democratic consolidation.

In the Philippines, it was primarily Manila's middle class, over a million men and women, who formed the bulk of the People Power movement that forced dictator Ferdinand Marcos to step down in 1986 and flee into exile. In South Korea in the late 1980s, middle class urbanites in Seoul, including many university students, led angry and sometimes violent protests against dictator Roh Tae Woo, forcing him to concede to democratic reforms and, ultimately, paving the way for the presidencies of former dissidents Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung, who'd once been hunted and nearly killed by the military regime.

Looking to the Philippines example, Thailand, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh also built flawed but increasingly reformist governments, while demonstrators in Burma in part modeled their massive 1988 prodemocracy protests on the People Power movements in Manila.

The middle class did not always act so forcefully, but it invariably played a major role. In Chile, Turkey, and Brazil, gradual economic development and slow pressure for reform from an emerging middle class ultimately forced leaders to negotiate transitions to democracy and to return the military to the barracks. In apartheid South Africa, middle class white liberals, tired of their country's isolation and its negative impact on commerce, subtly pressured the ruling National Party to liberalize. Many of these middle class attempts at political reform began with measures to solidify democratic institutions. In South Africa, leaders backed by the urban middle class passed one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, recognizing a vast array of human rights including the right to healthcare, housing, and education. In Thailand, idealistic young Bangkokians, sometimes working with reform-minded foreign NGOs, wrote and passed a forward-thinking constitution with broad protections for rights and clauses that created independent institutions to oversee political competition and prevent vote buying.[13]

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Later in the third wave, when coups threatened nascent democracies, middle class men and women stood up for reform. As the Argentine military threatened the civilian government in 1985 and 1987, the civilian leaders called hundreds of thousands of people out into the streets of Buenos Aires to support the government's legitimacy. In the Philippines, post–People Power leader Corazon Aquino faced down multiple coup attempts, including a serious one in late 1989 by Marcos loyalists. Each time, Aquino called upon her support among middle class Manila residents, using televised speeches to rally her faithful, and staving off all of the military's attempted putsches.

The middle classes' resistance to democratic rollback was not the only sign, during the third wave, of their seemingly deep commitment to democracy. Numerous polls taken during the third wave across Latin America, Asia, Southern and Eastern Europe, and other democratizing regions showed extremely high levels of support for democracy. In one such study cited by Huntington, around 75 percent of Peruvians in 1988 believed that democracy was the most desirable political system. In another series of polls, taken in a range of former Soviet satellites, overwhelming majorities, primarily in urban middle class areas, declared that democracy was preferable to all other forms of government.

Broader public demands for democracy also challenged authoritarian leaders across the third wave at a time when many of these authoritarians no longer could count on the backing of the Soviet Union or the United States as the Cold War came to a close. The Solidarity protests at Poland's shipyards in the early 1980s did not immediately force an end to Polish communism, but they helped set the stage for the revolutions of 1989, which quickly spread from the more developed Eastern European nations to even the least developed, like Bulgaria and, eventually, Albania, which had been kept in near isolation during the Cold War by its paranoid, xenophobic ruler, Enver Hoxha. Facing its own economic challenges, the Soviet Union had less capacity to repress dissent in its satellites, while, in the United States, support for democracy and human rights was beginning to build.

The People Power movement in the Philippines indeed not only pushed Ferdinand Marcos out of power but also helped reshape American thinking

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about the strategic benefits of authoritarian regimes, a shift that would add fuel to global democratization in the third wave. As crowds gathered in Manila to call for Marcos's ouster, the outpouring prompted some officials within the administration of President Ronald Reagan to begin aggressively promoting the idea that democratic governments in developing nations like the Philippines ultimately would prove better partners for Washington than even the friendliest authoritarian regimes—and that the United States thus should reduce its support for even avowedly anticommunist autocrats. Paul Wolfowitz, who was assistant secretary of state for East Asian affairs during the anti-Marcos protests, wrote in 2009 following the death of People Power leader Corazon Aquino, "Some U.S. officials in the mid-1980s defended Marcos on the grounds that 'there's no real alternative' . . . but that ignored the fact that continued U.S. support for Marcos was itself discouraging opposition." In fact, Wolfowitz wrote, Washington finally made a crucial decision that would help push forward the third wave of democratization—that democratic government, not a conservative autocrat, was the best antidote to communism: "In the end, the conclusion was that it would be more dangerous if Marcos continued on his current course."[14]

Wolfowitz played a central role in pushing the Reagan administration, still wedded to a policy of backing conservative dictatorships, to abandon its support for Marcos and embrace the prodemocracy movement in Manila. Beginning with a *Wall Street Journal* article he wrote in 1985 calling for American democracy promotion to counter communism, Wolfowitz advocated, in public and in private administration interagency meetings, for the White House to embrace democratic reforms in the Philippines. Embracing the democracy movement would be a sharp change for the United States and a risk in the Philippines, which at that time was a critical American ally and home to important naval bases. Though a decade earlier Wolfowitz would have found few allies for his cause, by the mid-1980s pressure to make democracy promotion a part of American and Western European policy had begun to build among a community of academics, writers, congressional representatives, and a few policy makers, both neoconservatives like Wolfowitz and, later, liberal internationalists like Samantha Power and Michael Ignatieff, as well as many West German, British, and Nordic activists and writers. What's more, the coming end of the Cold War, a decade

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later, would give their arguments greater resonance, because it would become harder for American realists to use the conflict with the Soviet Union as a reason to prop up pro-Western dictators like Marcos or Mobutu, or for Western European realists to advocate their own détente with the nations of the Warsaw Pact.

Wolfowitz and his allies had argued during the Manila protests that, in the long run, the global spread of democracy would be in America's interest. Democratization, they believed, would minimize the possibility of global conflicts that might necessitate American intervention, reduce the corruption and rent-seeking that added burdens to American companies investing abroad, enlarge the sphere of countries committed to free trade and free markets, and generally enhance America's prestige abroad. It was an idea that already had begun to gain traction in the Carter administration, which had made human rights a focus. The rhetoric of democratization also appealed to Carter's successor, who usually sought broad visions rather than policy details, and it gained traction in Washington and other Western capitals. As Reagan declared in a speech to the American Conservative Union, "America's foreign policy supports freedom, democracy, and human dignity for all mankind, and we make no apologies for it. The opportunity society that we want for ourselves we also want for others, not because we're imposing our system on others but because those opportunities belong to all people."[15]

The democracy advocates had help. In 1983 the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) was founded in Washington, funded through an annual congressional grant and given a mission to support democratic institutions around the world, including free media, unions, and political parties. Partner democracy-promotion organizations like the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, also established in the early 1980s, were designed to augment NED's overseas work.[16] From the beginning, much of NED's work was popular with civil society organizations in developing nations, and extremely unpopular with rulers, though by the 2000s that would change: as American democracy-promotion efforts during the George W. Bush era became increasingly unpopular in regions like the Middle East and South Asia, NED grantees from civil society

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organizations would hide their affiliation with the group.[17] But earlier on, NED grants helped speed transitions to democracy in countries like Poland, where the group invested heavily in the Polish trade unions that played a major role in criticizing the communist regime.[18] Private organizations that performed similar functions, like George Soros's constellation of Open Society initiatives, also would add to the investments in democratization in the third wave nations.

With the end of the Cold War, democratization moved to the forefront of American policy making, and the third wave of democratization expanded beyond the post-Soviet states to include parts of Latin America and Asia and even some African nations. Democracy advocates on both the right and the left gained influence and power. Some, like Madeleine Albright, took high-profile positions in the administration of President Bill Clinton. The United States, now an unrivaled superpower with a soaring economy, enjoyed the luxury of making democracy promotion a central pillar of foreign policy; America could embark on armed foreign interventions to save nations trying to build new democracies, even when those countries were tangential to American strategic interests. The American public, riding the economic boom of the mid- and late 1990s, would tolerate a more internationalist foreign policy; American liberals, who since the Vietnam War had linked military intervention to overaggressive, even brutal, American power, could now support the use of force to prevent crimes against humanity and to save beleaguered potential democracies like East Timor or Kosovo. And if the United States wanted to promote democracy and help build a new class of political leaders, even close to the traditional spheres of influence of Russia or China, who was going to stop it? By the mid-1990s, Moscow was on the verge of bankruptcy and Beijing still had not fully recovered from the stain of the Tiananmen massacre.

As president, Clinton decided to make democracy promotion a core part of his foreign policy. Searching for a theme that would convey a foreign policy for the post–Cold War era and would be remembered by history, Clinton had settled on one phrase: democratic enlargement.[19] Democratic enlargement, he decided in meetings with his National Security Council,

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would form the center of his foreign policy and would be a successor to the containment policy of the Cold War. It would capture the optimism and hope of the post–Cold War era and would wed optimism to strategic purpose. Enlargement would mean that America's priority now would be to help expand the number of free states in the world, because, as National Security Advisor Anthony Lake told historian Douglas Brinkley, "as free states grew in number and strength the international order would become both more prosperous and more secure."[20] The Clinton administration, he said, would help consolidate young democracies, help counter the aggression of states hostile to democracy, and support the liberalization of undemocratic nations.[21] Of course, there would be exceptions, such as China and the Middle East, but from early in his first term, and even in his speeches on the campaign trail, Clinton aggressively highlighted democracy promotion as vital to American national interests. His first National Security Strategy stated that "all of America's strategic interests—from promoting prosperity at home to checking global threats abroad before they threaten our territory—are served by enlarging the community of democratic and free market nations."[22] In studying the Clinton administration's record, Thomas Carothers, of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, found that Clinton had for the first time institutionalized democracy promotion in the U.S. foreign policy bureaucracy—every U.S. embassy now had to submit an annual report on its democracy promotion efforts—and the White House, in its budgeting requests, clearly made democracy promotion one of its strategic priorities.[23] Between the early 1990s and 2000, U.S. government spending on democracy promotion grew from around $100 million annually to over $700 million annually.[24] Clinton attempted to support what he considered the most important nations on the verge of democratization, including Russia and Mexico; under Clinton, the United States became Russia's largest investor, American democracy-promotion organizations like NED expanded their Russia programs, and the Clinton administration pushed the International Monetary Fund, G7, and World Bank to use their resources to foster democratization in Russia.[25] The White House drastically expanded funding for democratic institution building and market reforms in the newly free nations of Eastern Europe, and, on the campaign trail in

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1996, Clinton boasted, "With our help, the forces of reform in Europe's newly free nations have laid the foundations of democracy."[26]

East Timor, which in 1975 had shown the limits of what Washington would do to protect a nascent democracy during the Cold War, served as an example again in 1999. As in 1975, a brutal bloodletting exploded in Timor. After the majority of Timorese voted to separate from Indonesia, militias with links to the Indonesian armed forces began a campaign of slaughter that would not have been out of place in the Rwandan genocide. Gangs of militiamen wielding machetes and automatic weapons hacked, disemboweled, and beheaded known independence supporters, aid workers, journalists, and anyone else who happened to be in their way. Thousands died, and 70 percent of Timor's infrastructure was destroyed. But this time the world responded. Despite having minimal strategic interests in East Timor, major powers like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia backed an armed humanitarian intervention that, under the auspices of the United Nations, ultimately stemmed the violence, allowed relief workers to avoid a total catastrophe in East Timor, and ultimately helped Timor to finally break from Indonesia and build a fragile and independent democracy.[27]

The Timor triumph, along with successful Western intervention in Kosovo, only further emboldened Washington. With the end of the Soviet Union, Western fears that democracy would not survive and that communism would last forever suddenly vanished. Few had predicted the Soviet collapse, but in its wake a Western triumphalism quickly emerged. Francis Fukuyama later protested that he never intended his "End of History" article to express this conviction that liberal democracy had triumphed forever, but the piece captured the victorious Western mood. Democracy, Clinton administration officials now argued, had a universal appeal, and would spread, well, universally—a belief, as Robert Kagan noted, rooted in the Enlightenment concept of the inevitability of progress, of history constantly moving forward toward human improvement.[28] In aid conferences and missions to developing nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, officials from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, U.S. government agencies, and other Western organizations preached the new gospel of economic and political liberalization.

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Kishore Mahbubani, a former senior Singaporean foreign service official, remembered meeting a top Belgian official in 1991, the year that probably marked the apex of post–Cold War triumphalism. Before a group of Asians, the official declared, "The Cold War has ended. There are only two superpowers left: The United States and Europe."[29]

Post–Cold War haughtiness even filtered into bilateral relations with powers like Russia and China. In the 1990s Western scholars like Gordon Chang predicted the coming collapse of the Chinese Communist Party and took bets on when it would fall to a democratic uprising. American officials, seeing in Yeltsin's Russia the opposite of the Soviet Union—Russia would now be a close friend, an American-style democracy—pushed to expand NATO closer to Russia's borders, ignoring warnings from experts that Russian nationalism had hardly just vanished, and that Russians—and Chinese—might resent this dramatic American intervention in their backyard.[30]

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