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Assessment:

**EU, American, and Canadian Approaches to
 Democracy Promotion: Are They Compatible?**

(Jeffrey Kopstein)

Jeffrey Kopstein’s analysis on EU, American, and Canadian approaches to democracy promotion and whether such approaches are compatible provides a number of important insights and raises a host of issues—and questions— not only about how democracy approaches differ, but also about how such approaches may very well overlap.

My assessment of his memo underlines that there are differences between EU and American approaches to democracy promotion, but that more similarities than examined may also reveal important overlap in vision and practice. I look at the following areas on which to draw my assessment:

1. Pre and post-9/11 differences and revealing insights from the memo on approaches to democracy promotion;
2. Pre-9/11 similarities and overlap, in some instances, concerning American, Canadian, and European coordinated institutional approaches to democracy building in Central-East Europe and Southeast Europe;
3. Post-9/11 Canadian approaches to democracy promotion, particularly in Afghanistan.

Dr. Kopstein’s analysis focuses mainly on differences between American and European Union approaches to democracy promotion in terms of the “bottom-up,” or “civil society” building vs. the “top-down,” or “governance”/“state” strategies, respectively. Differences over arguments revolve around the American Government’s policy of “overthrowing dictators” and trying to extirpate the attendant “coercive state apparatus” to enable “roll back” for democracy (primarily, elections and constitution writing) and for free market systems to emerge. In contrast, the European, or, as Dr. Kopstein addresses, the EU approach—separate from European bilateral and multilateral approaches—centers on democracy consolidation. Promotion of democracy only goes so far from the “bottom-up.” Civil society can only develop so far, even result in reemergence democratically of semi-authoritarian regimes, when the U.S.-led removal of regimes or strongly backed removal of authoritarian leaderships fails to consolidate such

democratization. According to Dr. Kopstein, the EU, both in the 1990s and during the early 21st century, continually found itself and struggles to adhere to prescriptive programs and progress reports geared toward implementation plans and, ultimately, future EU membership. Monitoring, consolidating, and adhering to arduous and prescribed EU membership requirements resulted in large-scale EU enlargement. Developing institutions remains paramount to democracy promotion for the EU and contrasts are apparent when assessing effectiveness measures between EU and US prescriptions. It makes eminent good sense to underscore these differences and point to ways where U.S. and EU leaderships might bridge their differing democracy promotion approaches.¹

Yet, there have been democracy transition mechanisms developed, constructed, implemented, evaluated, and adapted together by Americans, Europeans, and, importantly, Canadians. This has been done institutionally, as political elites, economic strategists, and military planners have long worked together in the NATO Partnership For Peace (PFP) process, for example. Whether the PFP process continues to function effectively, as NATO may or may not continue to function effectively in the post-9/11 era is another matter. The PFP mechanism could be adapted even to a EU context, but that would need to have transatlantic input, if the US and Canada were to remain involved in that key process of democratization and adaptation.²

Since the early years of the post-Cold War, the nexus between some of the key means of promoting and consolidating democracy arises from the basic premises and pragmatic implementation plans and lessons learned among North Americans and Europeans. Via education, training, exercising, and operating that North Americans and Europeans have performed together, the NATO-PFP mechanisms have transformed basic premises into practical realities. We have very important notions of democracy promotion and differences between American and EU approaches elaborated in Dr. Kopstein's memo. However, significant progress exists from the institutionalized NATO-PFP process, where NATO and PFP members continue to deliberate, debate, plan, implement, reevaluate, and most importantly, operate together in Europe and now, in areas such as the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq, and North Africa. Such historical and current baselines

¹ For some essential background on democracy promotion, particularly concrete efforts and current U.S. prioritization of resources, as well as analysis on its pitfalls, see Thomas Carothers. "The Backlash Against Democracy Promotion." *Foreign Affairs*. Col. 85. No. 2 (March/April 2006): 55-68 and Stuart Eizenstat, John Edward Porter, and Jeremy Weinstein. "Rebuilding Weak States." *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2005). Accessed on 6 June 2006 (<<http://fullaccess.foreignaffairs.org/20050101faessay84112/stuart-eizenstat-john-edward-porter-jeremy-weinstein/rebuilding-weak-states.html>>).

² For important background on the NATO-PFP process and the challenges of institutionalizing democracy building, see James Sperling, Sean Kay, and S. Victor Papacosma, editors. *Limiting Institutions? The Challenge of Eurasian Security Governance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), especially, Joshua B. Spero. "Paths to Peace for NATO's Partnerships in Eurasia." Pp. 166-184.

for democracy promotion and democratization's consolidation need to be taken into account.³ We can argue over the merits of NATO's durability and its contributions toward the EU, but we should underscore that NATO's focus on democracies, even struggling democracies, debating, planning, and implementing political and political-military operational plans together testifies to how Europeans and North Americans have forged common democratization strategies during the Cold War, post-Cold War, and, to some extent, post-9/11 eras.⁴

I would also have liked to have seen the very important essence of what Canada is doing today to promote democracy much more specifically, as it could really underpin Kopstein's analysis. By looking at what Canada has done, for example, both within institutions and working with both American and European allies in Europe, we might better grasp the significance of Canadian leaders trying to promote democracy globally. Focus on such dangerous hotspots as Afghanistan, with contributions by the Canadian Armed Forces and economic resources committed to Iraq. Canada's transatlantic commitment to NATO's policies, procedures, and programs thus illustrates how Canada keeps playing in the process of democracy building.⁵ How a transatlantic relationship with Canada and the U.S. coordinating on democratization with EU and other non-EU Europeans beyond NATO emerges remains to be seen. What is proven is that the NATO-PFP process prepared the groundwork for operations together as transatlantic allies in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, North Africa, and the Balkans. To try to facilitate democratization through the transatlantic link, particularly institutionally that enables easier coordination as opposed to competitive democracy building unilaterally and bilaterally, remains a critically important challenge.

Finally, what would also greatly facilitate the important analysis Dr. Kopstein provides would be more explicit, referenced arguments on democracy promotion and democratization's consolidation. This would reinforce the arguments made about compatibility on U.S., Canadian, and EU approaches toward democracy promotion. It would also allow for more examples to explain how some of the prominent democratization specialists on any number of key geographical hotspots assess the pros and cons of democracy promotion and democracy consolidation. To wit, some of the

³ Some important pros and cons toward democracy promotion and consolidation after violent removal of an authoritarian regime may yet continue, institutionally with Europeans, Americans and Canadians, even though the situation continues to remain greatly uncertain. See NATO in Afghanistan Press Fact Sheet. 19 January 2006. Accessed on 3 June 2006. (<<http://www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan/050816-factsheet.htm>>) and James Kitfield. "Divided We Fall." *National Journal*. April 8, 2006: 18-23.

⁴ For further theoretical and empirical analysis on democratization and the merits of forging stability and security in new ways to promote democracy, see Joshua B. Spero. *Bridging the European Divide: Middle Power Politics and Regional Security Dilemmas* (Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield Press, 2004).

⁵ Lee Carter. "Canadians struggle with army's new role." BBC News. 19 May 2006. Accessed on 6 June 2006 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4997678.stm>).

arguments to consider would be Juan Linz, Fareed Zakaria, and Samuel Huntington.⁶ There are certainly many more Political Scientists, as well as Historians, who could give a baseline for an even greater appreciation of Dr. Kopstein's analysis, as there are practitioners who've written widely on these areas, too.

⁶ For example, Samuel P. Huntington. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); Juan Linz. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); and Fareed Zakaria. *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York: Norton, 2004).