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# Rethinking democracy promotion

BEATE JAHN\*

**Abstract.** Despite the fact that democracy promotion is a major part of liberal foreign policies, the discipline of International Relations has not paid much systematic attention to it. Conversely, the study of democracy promotion is dominated by comparative politics and pays hardly any attention to the international system. This mutual neglect signifies a core weakness in the theory and practice of democracy promotion: its failure to comprehend the development of liberal democracy as an international process. This article argues that a thorough engagement with John Locke explains the failures of democracy promotion policies and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the development of liberal democracy.

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## Introduction

Democracy promotion constitutes a core aspect of the foreign policy of liberal states today. Though it has a long history, at least in the foreign policy of the US,<sup>1</sup> it has gained particular prominence after the end of the Cold War with roughly USD 2 billion per year spent on democracy related aid projects.<sup>2</sup> And this amount is, since the end of the Cold War, even outweighed by other international actors like the EU.<sup>3</sup>

\* I would like to thank Milja Kurki and Christopher Hobson for the invitation to participate in the EU funded project on the Political Economies of Democracy Promotion which provided the original motivation for my reflections on this topic. I have presented earlier versions of this article at the project workshop in Aberystwyth and at the ECPR conference in Münster. Thanks are due to all the workshop participants for their constructive engagement and good ideas. The comments of the anonymous reviewers helped a lot to clarify the argument and I am grateful to Justin Rosenberg for getting the penny to drop at the end. The Lockean material in this article has also proven fruitful for my reflections on the relationship between 'Liberalism and Democracy Promotion' in Milja Kurki and Christopher Hobson (eds), *Political Economies of Democracy Promotion* (forthcoming).

<sup>1</sup> Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry, and Takashi Inoguchi, 'Introduction', in Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi (eds), *American Democracy Promotion. Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Carothers, *Critical Mission: Essays on Democracy Promotion* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Michael McFaul, 'Democracy Promotion as a World Value', *The Washington Quarterly*, 28:1 (2005), p. 156.

Despite these efforts, however, democracy promotion policies have, at best, ‘very modest’ success.<sup>4</sup> Failures attended both major post-World War II periods of ‘democracy promotion’. Modernisation theories<sup>5</sup> informed the first such period and focused on ‘various national preconditions and deep structural factors’ such as ‘levels of socioeconomic development, degrees of socioeconomic equality and group polarization, patterns of land ownership or agricultural production, the prevalence of certain beliefs or cultural traits’ which modernisation policies then sought to manipulate through aid and assistance in the military, economic, and political fields.<sup>6</sup> These policies largely failed to achieve their stated aims<sup>7</sup> and their failures, in turn, were widely blamed on the lack of a strong, coherent, and well-substantiated theoretical basis:<sup>8</sup> on ‘our lack of knowledge about the long causal chains running from outside help to internal conditions to changes of regime’.<sup>9</sup> One of the weaknesses of democracy promotion has thus been identified as its tendency to focus on ‘impulses, strategies, impacts’,<sup>10</sup> that is, to frame the issue either as a matter of foreign policy on the part

<sup>4</sup> Stephen E. Finkel, Anibal Perez-Linan, Mitchell A. Seligson, and Dinorah Azpuru, *Effects of US Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building: Results of a Cross-National Quantitative Study* (Vanderbilt University, 2006), p. 86; Carothers, *Critical Mission*, p. 5. Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Though modernisation theories and policies are sometimes excluded from the field of democracy promotion, I include them for two reasons: first, because the field of democracy promotion has historically developed out of modernisation theories (the theoretical basis for modernisation policies) with strong continuities between the two (see Paul Cammack, *Capitalism and Democracy in the Third World: The Doctrine for Political Development* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997)); secondly, excluding modernisation policies on the grounds that they focus on economic development would logically lead to an exclusion of the entire ‘economic’ strand of democracy promotion theories and policies.

<sup>6</sup> Gideon Rose, ‘Democracy Promotion and American Foreign Policy: A Review Essay’, *International Security*, 25:3 (2000/1), p. 191; Beate Jahn, ‘The Tragedy of Liberal Diplomacy: Democratization, Intervention, Statebuilding I’, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 1:1 (2007a), pp. 94–102.

<sup>7</sup> Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and ‘Nation Building’ in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Robert A. Packenham, *Liberal America and the Third World: Political Development Ideas in Foreign Aid and Social Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

<sup>8</sup> Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Modernisierungstheorie und Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975); Ian Roxborough, ‘Modernization Theory Revisited’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 30:4 (1988), pp. 753–61; Cammack, *Capitalism and Democracy*; Charles Tilly, ‘Reflections on the History of European State-making’, in Charles Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975a), pp. 3–83; Charles Tilly, ‘Western State-making and Theories of Political Transformation’, in Charles Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975b), pp. 601–38.

<sup>9</sup> Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy. Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 209–10.

<sup>10</sup> Cox et al., *American Democracy Promotion*; Jonas Wolff and Iris Wurm, ‘Towards a Theory of External Democracy Promotion? Approximations from the Perspectives of International Relations Theories’, unpublished manuscript, presented at the ISA conference in New Orleans (2010); Maria Green Cowles, James Caporaso and Thomas Risse (eds), *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Amichai Magen, Thomas Risse, Michael A. McFaul (eds), *Promoting Democracy and the Rule of Law. American and European Strategies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009). For the role of democracy promotion in US foreign policy, see Colin S. Cavell, *Exporting ‘Made-in-America’ Democracy*, The National Endowment for Democracy and US Foreign Policy (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002); Tony Smith, *A Pact With the Devil: Washington’s Bid for World Supremacy and the Betrayal of the American Promise* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Tony Smith, *America’s Mission. The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Cox et al., *American Democracy Promotion*; Thomas Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad. The Learning Curve* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999); Thomas Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy: US Policy Toward Latin America in the Reagan Years* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Jack Donnelly, ‘Democracy and US Foreign Policy: Concepts and Complexities’, in David P. Forsythe (ed.), *The*

of liberal states or as a matter of domestic political and economic development in target states. What this framing leaves untheorised, however, are the relations *between* sponsors and targets, that is, its international dimension.<sup>11</sup>

The second period of democracy promotion policies was triggered by 'The Third Wave' of democratisation<sup>12</sup> in which political factors seemed to play an important role and thus gave rise to a more optimistic assessment of the possibilities of influencing such developments from the outside. 'As the 1990s progressed, however, the bloom came off the rose ... Despite the expenditure of billions of dollars and countless hours of effort ... most of the various democracy promotion efforts had little to show for themselves.'<sup>13</sup> While empirical studies of such failures identify a host of contributing factors, theoretical weaknesses remain a problem,<sup>14</sup> specifically the failure to link political institutions to the 'social requisites of democracy'.<sup>15</sup>

Policies of democracy promotion thus suffer from two conceptual weaknesses: the first consists in a tension between the political and economic dimensions of liberal democracy generating calls 'to reconnect the socioeconomic and political spheres in both theory and practice'.<sup>16</sup> The second lies in the theoretical separation of the domestic and international dimensions of liberal democracy promotion.<sup>17</sup> These two weaknesses are interrelated, I will argue, and provide the basis for contradictory democracy promotion policies.

The argument is based on the assumption that the theoretical fragmentation of contemporary conceptions of liberal democracy and its promotion is the product of historical development; specifically of the separation of politics and economics and of their domestic and international dimensions in modern liberal democratic societies which finds expression in the development of separate academic disciplines of Politics, Economics (or Development Studies) and International Relations (IR). The analysis of democracy promotion 'sits awkwardly in between the disciplines of international relations, comparative politics, development studies, and law – related to all

*United States and Human Rights: Looking Inwards and Outwards* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2000), pp. 199–226; William I. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, United States Intervention and Hegemony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); William I. Robinson, *A Faustian Bargain: US Intervention in the Nicaraguan Elections and American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992); and its comparison with other states Magen, *Promoting Democracy*; Peter J. Schraeder, *Exporting Democracy: Rhetoric vs. Reality* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002); Richard Youngs, *The European Union and the Promotion of Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). The impact of democracy promotion is discussed in Finkel et al., *Effects*; James M. Scott, and Carie A. Steele, 'Assisting Democrats or Resisting Dictators? The Nature and Impact of Democracy Support by the United States National Endowment for Democracy, 1990–99', *Democratization*, 12:4 (2005), pp. 439–60; Stephen Knack, 'Does Foreign Aid Promote Democracy?' *International Studies Quarterly*, 48:1 (2004), pp. 251–66. A discussion of its ideological basis and normative goals can be found in Smith, *A Pact With the Devil*; McFaul, *Democracy Promotion*; Nicolas Guilhot, *The Democracy Makers. Human Rights and International Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). Exceptions to this general trend are Mark Peceny, *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*; Jahn, 'Tragedy' I and II.

<sup>11</sup> Rose, 'Democracy Promotion', p. 209.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, 'Democracy's Third Wave', *Journal of Democracy*, 2:2 (1991), pp. 12–34.

<sup>13</sup> Rose, 'Democracy Promotion', pp. 192–3.

<sup>14</sup> Carothers, *Critical Mission*, p. 5; Rose, 'Democracy Promotion', p. 202.

<sup>15</sup> Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 57; Carothers, *Aiding Democracy*, p. 341.

<sup>16</sup> Rose, 'Democracy Promotion', p. 201.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

four but not finding a home in any one'.<sup>18</sup> As a product of the fragmentation of social scientific knowledge, each of these disciplines provides tools designed for the analysis of its respective domain – distinguishing it from, rather than relating it to, the others. Such shortcomings of disciplinary fragmentation are, of course, widely recognised and addressed by calls for, and support of, interdisciplinary research. And yet, combining the research methods or findings of different disciplines does not overcome the fundamental separation which is constitutive of these methods, and hence their results, in the first place. Instead, as the democracy promotion literature clearly shows, such combination frequently results in listing a variety of relevant factors generated by different approaches without establishing the nature of their relationship and/or in 'master narratives' based on one approach with others simply providing auxiliary material filling the theoretical gaps left by the former. In short, as products of such disciplinary fragmentation, contemporary analytical categories do not lend themselves to providing a holistic account of the development of liberal democracy. Instead, reading the history of the development of liberal democracy through the lenses of these analytical categories, as contemporary approaches to democracy promotion do, simply results in a fragmented narrative or account of that history. One solution to this problem lies in returning to a time prior to this fragmentation. Hence, I will use the work of John Locke to develop and assess a more holistic conception of the development of liberal democracy.

Contemporary models of democracy promotion are generally derived from an interpretation of the historical development of liberal democracy in the West. In the first section I will show that these models fall into two broad categories – a political approach and an economic approach – in line with contemporary disciplinary divisions. The political approach fails to theorise the relationship between the political and economic dimensions of liberal democracy. The economic approach, in contrast, accounts for this relationship between politics and economics at the domestic level, but fails to theorise the relationship between the domestic and international dimensions of the development of liberal democracy. Theoretically, I will argue, these two approaches are ultimately incompatible and they give rise to potentially contradictory democracy promotion policies.

In the second section I will turn to the work of John Locke whose reflections on, and advocacy of, liberal democracy apply to the same history, yet prior to the contemporary disciplinary fragmentation. Locke's work, I will show, provides a conception of the establishment and democratisation of liberalism based on an explicit theorisation of the relationship between politics and economy in which, moreover, the international sphere plays a constitutive role. Comparison with contemporary models shows, moreover, that despite its normative character, this Lockean conception accounts more accurately for the subsequent historical development of liberal democracy than either of the contemporary approaches and it provides explanations for the weaknesses of policies based on the latter.

This alternative conception of democracy promotion, I will conclude, calls for a fundamental rethinking of democracy promotion in theory and practice. Specifically, it suggests that a realistic analysis of the history of liberal democracy and the prospects of its promotion requires the theoretical integration of its international dimension. And this in turn necessitates a shift away from the comparative method which stands in the way of such an integration.

<sup>18</sup> Carothers, *Critical Mission*, p. 2.

## Contemporary approaches to democracy promotion

A clear definition of ‘democracy promotion’ is rather difficult to come by, partly because ‘democracy’ is a highly contested concept whose meaning ranges from majoritarian or popular rule, through the institution of elections through which this rule is often, but not always, established, to respect for individual rights even in the absence of a general franchise.<sup>19</sup> In line with this theoretical confusion, the term ‘democracy’ has historically been applied to a wide variety of political communities – ranging from indigenous tribal societies through ancient Greek city states and contemporary ‘illiberal’ or ‘authoritarian’ democracies to modern Western liberal democracies.<sup>20</sup> While the term ‘democracy’ remains essentially contested, the ‘rise of illiberal democracy’<sup>21</sup> since the mid-1990s has led to a clarification of the goal of ‘democracy promotion’ policies. Such policies, it became clear, were ultimately neither content with the introduction of elections nor with respect for liberal values. Instead, democracy promotion policies aim to establish the kind of polities that provide the model for democracy promotion: ‘modern, representative, liberal, political democracy as practiced within nation-states’<sup>22</sup> – for short, liberal democracy.

Liberal democracy in turn is understood as a conglomerate of characteristics generally found in, or associated with, European (settler) states. These states and their transition to democracy provide the main model for both major periods of democracy promotion since the Second World War: modernisation theories and policies in the 1950s and 60s<sup>23</sup> and transition theories and democracy promotion policies especially in the 1990s.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the case of South Africa seemed to prove that democratisation was possible in deeply divided societies; Spain became a model for step-by-step democratisation of authoritarian regimes; and Hungary and Poland played a similar role for the ‘triple’ transition from communism.<sup>25</sup> Finally, the cases of Germany and Japan after the Second World War are frequently cited in support of the notion that democracy can successfully be promoted by foreign actors.

It is, nevertheless, the history of Western liberal democratic states that provides the basis for the main theoretical approaches to democracy promotion. These fall into two broad groups, a political and an economic approach, in line with the disciplinary distinction between politics and economics. These two approaches, I will now show, provide rather different and at times contradictory interpretations of the history of liberal internationalism.

<sup>19</sup> Marc F. Plattner, *Democracy Without Borders? Global Challenges to Liberal Democracy* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), p. 48; Giovanni Sartori, ‘How Far Can Free Government Travel?’ *Journal of Democracy*, 6:3 (1995), pp. 101–11.

<sup>20</sup> Plattner, *Democracy*, pp. 10–1; Georg Sørensen, ‘The Impasse of Third World Democratization: Africa Revisited’, in Cox et al., *American Democracy Promotion*, p. 290; Barry Gills, ‘American Power, Neo-Liberal Economic Globalization and “Low Intensity Democracy”: An Unstable Trinity’, in Cox et al., *American Democracy Promotion*, pp. 326–44.

<sup>21</sup> Fareed Zakaria, ‘The Rise of Illiberal Democracy’, *Foreign Affairs*, 76 (1997), pp. 22–43.

<sup>22</sup> Philippe Schmitter, ‘Transitology: The Science or the Art of Democratization?’, in Joseph S. Tulchin (ed), *The Consolidation of Democracy in Latin America* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995), p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> Jahn, ‘Tragedy’.

<sup>24</sup> Larry Diamond, ‘Is the Third Wave Over?’, *Journal of Democracy*, 7:3 (1996), p. 35; Roland Paris, ‘Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism’, *International Security*, 22:2 (1997), p. 57; Jahn, ‘Tragedy’ II.

<sup>25</sup> Laurence Whitehead, ‘Losing “the Force”? The “Dark Side” of Democratization After Iraq’, *Democratization*, 16:2 (2009), pp. 217–19.

According to the political approach, the emergence and democratisation of liberalism in Europe and America has its roots in a particular political culture – characterised by secularisation and the ‘taming of politics’ which led to the ‘invention’ of liberal ideas.<sup>26</sup> The subsequent expansion of liberalism is explained by ‘the spread of liberal ideas of the natural freedom and equality of all human beings’ which ‘doomed any special and substantial privileges enjoyed on the basis of heredity’ and ‘eventually undermined any effort to exclude people from political participation on the basis of such factors as race, religion, or sex’.<sup>27</sup> This explanation is supported with reference to the fact that it was the ruling elites themselves who eventually outbid each other in extending the franchise,<sup>28</sup> and with reference to the comparatively early introduction of universal (male) suffrage in America, assumed to be rooted in a relatively progressive political imagination on the part of American citizens who had left the traditional hierarchical political societies of Europe behind.<sup>29</sup>

Theoretically, this political approach sees liberalism or individual freedom as a ‘necessary condition’ for democracy<sup>30</sup> which explains the sequential development of liberalism and democracy in much of European and American history. According to this account, constitutional liberalism is ‘naturally “democratic”’.<sup>31</sup> Yet, if the freedom of the individual is a precondition for democracy, than the latter must not be confused with majority rule.<sup>32</sup> After all, ‘there is reason to fear that a government responsive to popular majorities will be tempted to violate the rights of unpopular individuals or minorities’.<sup>33</sup> In this view, only liberal democracies are democracies – even if they limit the franchise.<sup>34</sup>

This development of liberal and democratic political institutions was historically frequently accompanied by technological and economic development.<sup>35</sup> Yet, while economic development is widely seen as ‘very helpful’ for the process of democratisation, it is ‘neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for stable democracy’.<sup>36</sup> Since liberalism was, a hundred years ago, not at all associated with providing economic benefits, ‘a “poor democracy” is equally conceivable and possible’.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, economic development itself, according to this account, has its roots in technological innovation which, in turn, was made possible by the culture of logic and rationality the West inherited from ancient Greece.<sup>38</sup> In short, both economic and technological development as well as liberal political institutions have their roots in a particular, Western, political culture.

The political approach thus adds economic development as a helpful factor but fails to provide a theoretical account of its role in the development of liberal democracy

<sup>26</sup> Sartori, ‘Free Government’, p. 104.

<sup>27</sup> Plattner, *Democracy*, p. 67.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> Sartori, ‘Free Government’, pp. 101–2.

<sup>31</sup> Viktor J. Vanberg, ‘On the Complementarity of Liberalism and Democracy – A Reading of F.A. Hayek and J. M. Buchanan’, *Journal of Institutional Economics*, 4:2 (2008), p. 143.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 146–7.

<sup>33</sup> Plattner, *Democracy*, p. 60.

<sup>34</sup> Sartori, ‘Free Government’.

<sup>35</sup> Russell Bova, ‘Democracy and Liberty: The Cultural Connection’, *Journal of Democracy*, 8:1 (1997), p. 116; Francis Fukuyama, ‘Capitalism and Democracy: The Missing Link’, *Journal of Democracy*, 3:3 (1992a), p. 108.

<sup>36</sup> Fukuyama, ‘Capitalism and Democracy’, p. 108.

<sup>37</sup> Sartori, ‘Free Government’, p. 105.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106; Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin, 1992b).



(in comparison with other 'helpful' factors such as Western culture and values, religion, ethnicity) or of its relationship to liberal political institutions.<sup>39</sup> It thus attaches additional factors to the political 'master narrative' without integrating them theoretically. Ultimately, the political approach holds 'that the philosophy of liberalism contains within itself the seeds of its own democratization'.<sup>40</sup>

Democracy promotion policies based on this narrative therefore identify a traditional political culture as the main barrier to the development of liberal democracy and propagate policies focusing on the spread of liberal ideas and institutions. These prominently included such issues as elections, citizenship, civil society, the rule of law, decentralisation, anticorruption, and others that are designed to address precisely this political backwardness.<sup>41</sup> Generally, however, these policies do not achieve 'the hoped-for dramatic results'.<sup>42</sup> While they are often successful in establishing democratic institutions, these institutions are subsequently frequently used to pursue decidedly illiberal policies.<sup>43</sup> In short, most countries do not follow the path outlined by the historical model derived from European political development.<sup>44</sup>

These failures of the political approach and its neglect of the economic dimension of liberal democracy have given renewed impetus to the second historical narrative which focuses on economic forces of transformation. It is based on the assumption that the protection of private property is a 'sacred' principle of liberalism<sup>45</sup> which played a crucial role in triggering economic and technological development. Initially, this protection of private property ran counter to the interests of a majority of the population, that is, of the poor who did not hold any property. Historically, liberals thus widely resisted the introduction of democracy on the grounds that giving the vote to the poor would simply result in the plunder of the rich – and hence in the end of civilisation.<sup>46</sup> Thus, both Macaulay and Ricardo were ready to extend suffrage only to those social groups 'which cannot be supposed to have an interest in overturning the right to property'.<sup>47</sup>

According to this account, liberalism and democracy are initially incompatible. And yet, over time the protection of private property and the resulting technological and economic development made possible a wider spread of property within society, and consequently an extension of the franchise to wider sections of society, hence the differential pace of democratisation in Europe and America. America was blessed with abundant land, a small population, and the absence of a traditional propertied class which led to rapid economic development. Europe, in contrast, suffered from a comparatively limited supply of land, a large population, and the presence of a traditional propertied class. And yet, since economic development and democratisation

<sup>39</sup> Bova, 'Democracy and Liberty', p. 116; Fukuyama, 'Capitalism and Democracy', p. 108.

<sup>40</sup> Plattner, *Democracy*, p. 60.

<sup>41</sup> Carothers, *Critical Mission*, p. 5; Plattner, *Democracy*, p. 53.

<sup>42</sup> Carothers, *Critical Mission*, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.; Sheri Berman, 'Re-Integrating the Study of Civil Society and the State', in Zoltan Barany and Robert G. Moser (eds), *Is Democracy Exportable?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 37–56; Jeroen De Zeeuw and Krishna Kumar (eds), *Promoting Democracy in Postconflict Societies* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006).

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Carothers, 'The End of the Transition Paradigm', *Journal of Democracy*, 13:1 (2002), p. 18.

<sup>45</sup> Plattner, *Democracy*, p. 67.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 64–5.

<sup>47</sup> Cited in Adam Przeworski, 'The Neoliberal Fallacy', *Journal of Democracy*, 3:3 (1992), p. 53; Plattner, *Democracy*, p. 65.

ultimately occurred in both cases, observers suggest that economic development is, in principle, possible anywhere.<sup>48</sup>

The economic approach thus recognises the constitutive role of private property, or economic development more generally, for the constitution and democratisation of liberalism.<sup>49</sup> 'Few relationships between social, economic, and political phenomena are stronger than that between the level of economic development and the existence of democratic politics'.<sup>50</sup> Conversely, 'poverty is a principal – probably *the* principal – obstacle to democratic development'.<sup>51</sup> Democracy promotion policies based on this approach thus aim to trigger economic development by following the European and American example, that is, by propagating privatisation and marketisation (more or less rapidly). And yet, despite following the successful models of economic development in the West, the results of these policies are extremely uneven – ranging from some highly successful to apparently hopeless cases. Income disparities are rising and it seems to be very difficult in some cases to break 'the bonds of poverty'.<sup>52</sup>

These failures of economic approaches to democracy promotion as well as the fact that economic development does not always lead to democracy have led observers to argue that economic development, or capitalism as the source of this development, is a 'necessary – though not sufficient – condition for democracy'.<sup>53</sup> Parallel to the political approach, analysts thus list additional conditions like Western culture and values<sup>54</sup> as well as state capacity, a secure social and political order, horizontal accountability and the rule of law, lack of corruption, strong political parties linked to social groups, a coherent party system, autonomous capacity and public accountability of legislatures and local governments, and a vigorous civil society.<sup>55</sup>

The attempt to theorise the connection between economic development and such additional factors has given rise to a wide variety of studies exploring the political implications of the distribution of property,<sup>56</sup> the development of the public sector,<sup>57</sup> the impact of economic modernisation on cultural change, and subsequently democracy.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Plattner, *Democracy*, p. 68; Samuel P. Huntington, 'Democracy's Third Wave', *Journal of Democracy*, 2:2 (1991), p. 33.

<sup>49</sup> This constitutive relationship as well as the potential incompatibility of liberalism and democracy underpins contemporary debates concerning the benefits of authoritarian regimes in pushing through initially painful economic reforms necessary to trigger economic development (see Zakaria, 'Illiberal Democracy'; Barbara Geddes, 'Challenging the Conventional Wisdom', *Journal of Democracy*, 5:4 (1994), pp. 104–18) as well as debates over shock-therapy in the context of communist transitions (Przeworski, 'The Neoliberal Fallacy', p. 56).

<sup>50</sup> Huntington, *Democracy's Third Wave*, p. 30; Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development. Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 273.

<sup>51</sup> Huntington, 'Democracy's Third Wave', p. 31.

<sup>52</sup> Przeworski et al., *Democracy and Development*, p. 277.

<sup>53</sup> Peter L. Berger, 'The Uncertain Triumph of Democratic Capitalism', *Journal of Democracy*, 3:3 (1992), p. 11; Philippe Schmitter, 'Dangers and Dilemmas of Democracy', *Journal of Democracy*, 5:2 (1994), p. 66; Jagdish Bhagwati, 'Democracy and Development', *Journal of Democracy*, 3:3 (1992), p. 40; Larry Diamond, 'Three Paradoxes of Democracy', *Journal of Democracy*, 1:3 (1990), pp. 50, 59.

<sup>54</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, 'Democracy for the Long Haul', *Journal of Democracy*, 7:2 (1996), p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Diamond, 'Third Wave', p. 33.

<sup>56</sup> Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>57</sup> Carles Boix and Susan Carol Stokes, 'Endogenous Democratization', *World Politics*, 55:4 (2003), pp. 517–49.

<sup>58</sup> Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, 'How Development Leads to Democracy', *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2009).

Yet, this research tends to be based on comparative studies and focuses entirely on the relationship between economics and politics within the state – that is, on the domestic sphere.

Indeed, while the ‘internationalisation’ of modernisation processes in the context of globalisation<sup>59</sup> has recently been noted, this development is taken to be historically unprecedented.<sup>60</sup> All historical attempts at modernisation ‘conceived of development as a project linked to national economic and political independence’, based on national cultures, political traditions, national industries, and local markets; in contrast, it now involves a ‘partial surrender of national sovereignty in the political, economic, and cultural realms’ opening markets to foreign penetration, abolishing cultural barriers, and advocating political institutions developed abroad.<sup>61</sup> Hence, the international dimension of the development of liberal democracy is seen as a recent phenomenon that radically breaks with the historical record underpinning conventional models.

In sum, then, conceptions of democracy promotion can be broadly divided into a political and an economic approach. Both approaches are based on an interpretation of the history of liberal democracy in European (settler) states and seek to provide explanations for core phenomena of this history: the sequential development of liberalism and democracy, the differential pace of democratisation in the comparative cases of Europe and America, the nature of the historical link between economic and political development. Yet, the resulting explanations differ considerably. The political approach locates the roots of liberalism in a particular political culture and the economic approach in economic development; the political approach argues that liberal values contain the seeds of democratisation (ultimately convincing the ruling classes) while the economic approach views liberalism (and its ruling classes) as opposed to democracy and identifies economic development as the necessary condition for democratisation; for the political approach early democratisation in settler states is the result of a progressive political culture and for the economic approach it follows the distribution of private property; for the political approach, economic development is helpful but unnecessary while it is constitutive of political democracy for the economic approach.

The substantive differences between these two approaches provide the basis for different, and at times contradictory, democracy promotion policies, either focusing on support for economic development which is then expected to lead to political democratisation as in the case of modernisation policies, or providing support for democratic political institutions as in the post-Cold War period. Yet, support for economic development in the form of privatisation and marketisation – as suggested by the model of successful Western liberal democracies – may well run counter to the interests of the majority of the population and thus undermine political democratisation. Meanwhile, support for democratic political institutions may well stand in the way of moves towards privatisation and marketisation.

There exists, then, clearly a tension between the political and economic dynamics of liberal democracy which is not resolved in either of the existing approaches. And it is arguably this tension that leads academics as well as practitioners to separate the

<sup>59</sup> Przeworski, ‘The Neoliberal Fallacy’, p. 55; Acemoglu and Robinson, *Economic Origins*, pp. 347–8.

<sup>60</sup> Przeworski, ‘The Neoliberal Fallacy’, p. 55.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

economic and political dimensions of liberal democracy promotion even while their combination is widely recognised as providing the most conducive conditions for democratisation. Hence, theories as well as policies tend to prioritise one or the other; the different policies are pursued at different times introducing phases of democracy promotion; they are undertaken by different actors. While governments generally pursue both policies, different ministries focus on different policies; while NGOs in general cover both dimensions, particular NGOs tend to focus on one or the other; while international organisations pursue both policies, different institutions will pursue different policies (the UN focusing on the political, the IMF on the economic, and so on). The tension between these two core dimensions of liberal democracy thus remains unresolved in academic as well as political practice. And yet, historically this tension has been sufficiently resolved to lead to the establishment of some mature and stable liberal democracies. And it is a thorough engagement with John Locke's reflections, I will show in the next section, that provides an answer to the question: how?

### **The Lockean alternative**

Despite the considerable differences between these contemporary approaches to democracy promotion, both are based on the interpretation of the historical development of European/American liberal democracy – the same history to which John Locke's reflections also apply albeit in his case with fore- rather than hindsight. His work thus offers a perspective on the development of liberal democracy prior to the disciplinary fragmentation which underpins the contemporary, and contradictory, interpretations of this history.

In Locke's work 'the central elements of the liberal outlook crystallized for the first time into a coherent intellectual tradition expressed in a powerful, if often divided and conflictual, political movement'.<sup>62</sup> It is thus not surprising that Locke is widely mentioned in the democracy promotion literature.<sup>63</sup> For the most part, however, these references to Locke are fairly cursory and do not entail a serious engagement with his theory. Such an engagement is nevertheless fruitful, I will show, because Locke offers an account of the development of liberalism and its democratisation which theorises the relationship between domestic and international politics and economics.

I will begin by setting out Locke's theoretical conception of the constitution and democratisation of liberalism as a purely heuristic device whose explanatory potential is subsequently compared with the contemporary approaches. Locke's work certainly invites and deserves a systematic critique which goes, however, beyond the scope of this article. Core areas of contention and critique will nevertheless emerge in the exposition of the historical consequences of the Lockean promotion of liberal democracy as well as in its implications for contemporary democracy promotion.

Like most classical authors, Locke begins his reflections on government with assumptions about the state of nature. This state of nature of all men, he argues, is

<sup>62</sup> John Gray, *Liberalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 11.

<sup>63</sup> Plattner, *Democracy*; Sartori, 'Free Government', pp. 101–2; Claude Ake, 'Devaluing Democracy', *Journal of Democracy*, 3:3 (1992), pp. 33–4.

‘a *State of perfect Freedom* to order their Actions, and dispose of their Possessions, and Persons as they think fit’.<sup>64</sup> Yet, upholding this freedom requires self-preservation.<sup>65</sup> And it is this requirement, Locke argues, that can only be fulfilled if ‘every Man has a *Property* in his own *Person*’ and ‘the *Labour* of his *Body* and the *Work* of his *Hands*’.<sup>66</sup> Self-possession, property in one’s person and the fruit of one’s labour, thus allows individuals ‘the taking any part of what is common, and removing it out of the state Nature leaves it in, which *begins the Property*’.<sup>67</sup> According to Locke, the right to private property therefore exists already in the state of nature, and it is this right that underpins and upholds the natural freedom of the individual who would otherwise perish.<sup>68</sup> Locke supports this theoretical argument with reference to the historical origins of government largely based on information about indigenous communities in America.<sup>69</sup> ‘Men are naturally free, and the Examples of History shewing, that the Governments of the World . . . had their beginning laid on that foundation, and were made by the Consent of the people’.<sup>70</sup> And since this freedom is based on property, the ‘great and *chief end* therefore (of government) is the *Preservation of their Property*’.<sup>71</sup>

Locke thus naturalises the (in fact man-made) right to private property which provides the necessary basis for individual freedom; such free individuals then demand government by consent which in turn has to protect private property as the basis for their freedom. In short, Locke argues that individual freedom is and must be based on private property for without private property the individual is necessarily dependent on others for its survival and thus not free.

Yet, this ideal formulation did not reflect the social and political conditions at the time of Locke’s writing. In fact, it was precisely because most governments in Locke’s time and throughout history had not been governments by consent, and because private property had not necessarily been protected, that Locke developed this theory and propagated it against the prevailing political positions, such as Filmer’s defence of paternal government which he attacks in the first treatise.<sup>72</sup> In practice, he thought it ‘evident that there is a difference in degrees in men’s understandings, apprehensions, and reasonings to so great a latitude, that one may, without doing injury to mankind, affirm, that there is a greater difference between some men and others in this respect, than between some men and some beasts’.<sup>73</sup> A liberal polity could therefore not be established by simply introducing elections. Locke thus had to show how society could be based on the principles of private property and government

<sup>64</sup> John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 269.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 287–8.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 289.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 289, 294.

<sup>69</sup> Naeem Inayatullah and David L. Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 35–43; Beate Jahn, *The Cultural Construction of International Relations: The Invention of the State of Nature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000).

<sup>70</sup> Locke, *Two Treatises*, p. 336.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351.

<sup>72</sup> Locke developed a philosophy of history explaining such counterevidence. In a nutshell, he argued that while states had originally been established on the basis of consent, over time rulers exploited their position and justified authoritarian government with reference to illiberal custom and tradition that gradually shaped the political imagination of the people; Locke, *Two Treatises*, pp. 329, 343.

<sup>73</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 2 Vols., collated and annotated by Alexander Campbell Fraser (New York: Dover, 1959), p. 446.

by consent in the absence of a majority of individuals supporting such developments or, conversely, how the majority of the population could be made sufficiently rational to establish and maintain such a polity. In other words, Locke saw himself confronted with the task of promoting 'liberalism' in a non-liberal environment.

Locke's solution to this problem was faithful to the fundamental premises of his theory – and in particular to the linkage between freedom and private property. If private property was the basis of individual freedom, Locke argued, property owners would demand that government protect private property and hence their freedom. He thus advocated the extension of full political rights to property owners only – and the concomitant denial of these rights to those who did not own property. '*Paternal Power* is ... where Minority makes the Child incapable to manage his property; *Political* where Men have Property in their own disposal; and *Despotic* over such as have no property at all'.<sup>74</sup>

This solution, however, directly contradicted his claim that, in principle, all people were born free and equal and thus had a right to consent to government. Moreover, Locke saw the tiny minority of property owners, 'the rich', who would have been accorded full political rights, as 'mostly corrupt'.<sup>75</sup> Hence, Locke was interested in extending the franchise and, perfectly in line with his theory that private property provides the basis for individual freedom and the rights that follow from this, he argued that an extension of the franchise could be achieved by turning more, and ideally all, sections of society into property owners. This was a neat theoretical solution, but in practice it threw up the problem where all this additional property was to come from. Once private property had been naturalised and Locke had committed himself to its protection, redistribution was not an option. So, Locke argued that private property was more productive than common property and thus of greater benefit to all of humankind.<sup>76</sup> It was therefore justified to turn common into private property: God gave the land 'to the use of the Industrious and Rational'.<sup>77</sup> People could simply attain property by mixing their individual labour with the original common property. The privatisation of common property was thus the solution to the problem.

Assuming that land – at the time the most important additional source of wealth – in England was too scarce to provide the vast and rising number of poor with property, Locke looked abroad: 'Yet there are still *great Tracts of Ground* to be found, which ... *lie waste*, and are more than the People who dwell on it, do, or can

<sup>74</sup> Locke, *Two Treatises*, p. 384. This does not mean that the emancipatory potential of Locke's thought is strictly limited to property owners. Locke simply aims to exclude those deemed unable or unwilling to uphold this principle as foundational for society from political rights. Once based on this principle, society could curtail individual property rights for purposes of international competition and defence and in order to allow every individual to fulfil its rights and obligations to God – that is, to work for its upkeep. See Barbara Arneil, *John Locke and America. The Defence of English Colonialism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. 159; James Tully, *A Discourse on Property. John Locke and his Adversaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 63; John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke. A Historical Account of the Arguments of the Two Treatise of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 246; Peter Laslett, 'Introduction', in John Locke, *Two Treatise of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 105. Similarly, political rights could be extended to non-property owners well socialised into the principles and practices of such a society.

<sup>75</sup> Dunn, *John Locke*, p. 217.

<sup>76</sup> Locke, *Two Treatises*, pp. 296–8.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

make use of, and so still lie in common.<sup>78</sup> It was this common land in America which could be used, at least in principle, to furnish all individuals with property and thus make them eligible to full political rights. In short, ‘Locke ... was offering the New World, specifically the colonial settlements of America, as validation of his sociopolitical philosophy’.<sup>79</sup> According to this theory, the expansion of liberalism and its subsequent democratisation required three steps: first political rights were to be given to property owners only who would establish a liberal society; secondly, common property could then be expropriated and transformed into private property thus increasing the number of property owners; and thirdly, on the basis of this wider distribution of property, political rights could be extended.<sup>80</sup>

Historically, the establishment of liberalism and its eventual democratisation broadly followed the trajectory outlined by Locke. First, land owners and merchants who had become rich from the trade with the colonies – among them Locke’s own long-time patron, the Earl of Shaftesbury – increasingly demanded political rights with direct reference to their property which led to a huge increase of members in the House of Commons.<sup>81</sup> And these men subsequently used their political power to institutionalise the protection of private property on which their individual freedom rested. In other words, this development led to the establishment of a liberal state characterised by the transference of *de jure* political power into the hands of commercial and capitalistic interests and the stabilisation of property rights in seventeenth-century Britain.<sup>82</sup>

Once in power, however, these men were not content with securing the existing property arrangements but systematically engaged in the transformation of common into private property – both in the domestic and the international sphere. Thus, Locke’s work was frequently cited in Parliament in support of private enclosure acts which, between 1710 and 1815, transferred 6.5 million acres or 20 per cent of the total land from common into private property.<sup>83</sup>

These domestic policies were accompanied by the propagation of colonialism in which the Earl of Shaftesbury and Locke himself played a crucial role. Locke was secretary to the Lord Proprietors of Carolina (1668–71), secretary to the Council of Trade and Plantations (1673–4), a member of the Board of Trade (1696–1700), he invested in the slave-trading Royal Africa Company (1671) and the Company of Merchant Adventurers to trade with the Bahamas; he was a Landgrave of the

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 299.

<sup>79</sup> Herman Lebovics, ‘The Uses of America in Locke’s Second Treatise of Government’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 47:4 (1986), p. 577.

<sup>80</sup> Locke’s work allows for a more progressive interpretation based on his argument that the transformation of common into private property was justified only ‘where there is enough, and as good left in common for others’ (*Two Treatises*, p. 288). This limitation on the practice of transforming common into private property can be, and has been, used to justify a liberal ‘welfare state’ with quite considerable limitations on private property (for example, James Tully, *A Discourse on Property. John Locke and his Adversaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982)). The early development of liberal democracy in Europe and America was nevertheless largely based on the ‘conservative’ interpretation set out here.

<sup>81</sup> Michael Perelman, *The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 175; Acemoglu and Robinson, *Economic Origins*, p. 350.

<sup>82</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson, *Economic Origins*, pp. 349–50.

<sup>83</sup> David McNally, *Political Economy and the Rise of Capitalism: A Reinterpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 62, 8–9; Perelman, *Invention of Capitalism*, p. 175. McNally reports that in 1710 the first private enclosure act was presented in Parliament, followed by 100 between 1720–50, 139 between 1750–60, 900 between 1760–79, and 2000 between 1793–1815 (p. 11).

proprietary government of Carolina, wrote parts of the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, handled the day to day correspondence with the colonists in Carolina, and Edisto island was originally called Locke island. His writings, political and theoretical, cover all aspects of colonialism and consistently defend it.<sup>84</sup> And it was these writings, particularly Locke's theory of property, that 'preachers, legal theorists, and politicians' used to base first the land claims of the British colonists and then those of the American citizens on the enclosure and cultivation of land.<sup>85</sup> The same argument was also influential in Australia, New Zealand, Canada throughout the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth century.<sup>86</sup> These colonial policies thus allowed European colonists to acquire property and, perfectly in line with the dynamic outlined by Locke, it was in settler societies like New Zealand, the US, and Australia that the promise based on such wider distribution of property – the introduction of universal franchise – was first realised.

In Europe, meanwhile, the gradual democratisation of liberalism was similarly in line with Locke's theory. Until well into the nineteenth century, voting rights were limited by property qualifications and liberals widely and passionately resisted the extension of the franchise on precisely the grounds that Locke had set out: namely that those who did not own property could not be expected to support and maintain laws protecting private property. Such resistance was necessary because the poorer sections of society vociferously demanded political rights. Upheavals, rebellions, and the threat of revolution were widespread and integral features of society: rulers had to be forced to give up power.<sup>87</sup> Yet, it was precisely the ruling elite's resistance to extending the franchise which ultimately guaranteed the liberal character of Western democracy.<sup>88</sup> For the enclosure of commonly owned land domestically, colonial appropriation of land internationally, and the industrial revolution all contributed to economic growth that led to a wider distribution of property in society – in line with the widely noted link between economic development and liberal democracy.<sup>89</sup> In other words, a sizable middle class slowly emerged and allowed liberals to lower the property threshold for voting rights gradually, thus extending the franchise – but only to those sections of society that had actually achieved a measure of individual freedom based on private property and who therefore had a stake in upholding the liberal character of government. Thus, general evidence suggests that a successful democratisation of liberalism requires the inviolability of property rights.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>84</sup> James Tully, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 140–1; Richard Tuck, *The Rights of War and Peace: Political Thought and the International Order from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 167. On Locke's support for colonialism, see also Arneil, *John Locke and America*; David Armitage, 'John Locke, Carolina, and the "Two Treatise of Government"', *Political Theory*, 32:5 (2004), pp. 602–27; David Boucher, 'Property and Propriety in International Relations: The Case of John Locke', in Beate Jahn (ed.), *Classical Theory in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 156–77.

<sup>85</sup> Arneil, *John Locke and America*, p. 169.

<sup>86</sup> Duncan Ivison, 'Locke, Liberalism and Empire', in Peter R. Anstey (ed.), *The Philosophy of John Locke: New Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 93.

<sup>87</sup> Charles Tilly, *Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1650–2000* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Kyong-won Kim, 'Marx, Schumpeter, and the East Asian Experience', *Journal of Democracy*, 3:3 (1992), p. 24.

<sup>88</sup> Bova, 'Democracy and Liberty', p. 116; Ake, 'Devaluing Democracy', pp. 33–4.

<sup>89</sup> Przeworski et al., *Democracy and Development*; Acemoglu and Robinson, *Economic Origins*, p. 58.

<sup>90</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson, *Economic Origins*, p. 82; Daniel Chirot, 'Does Democracy Work in Deeply Divided Societies?', in Zoltan Barany and Robert G. Moser (eds), *Is Democracy Exportable?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 107.



Moreover, the transformation of common into private property remains at the core of liberal strategies to foster economic growth today. The last two decades have seen a remarkable revival of liberalism in the form of market economics, the privatisation of state-owned industries, and the trimming of welfare benefits by liberal democracies.<sup>91</sup> This latest round of 'privatisation' and 'liberalisation' targeted communal ownership of water and electricity supplies, education, health care, and the establishment of 'new enclosures' in the form of intellectual property rights over natural products and their uses.<sup>92</sup> Policies of privatisation and marketisation also lie at the core of the development policies of international organisations like the IMF and World Bank as well as those of individual liberal states.

The Lockean conception of the establishment and democratisation of liberalism thus appears to be broadly in line with the historical development of liberal democracy in Europe and America. Hence, I will now use the remainder of this section to show that this Lockean integration of the domestic and international, political and economic dimensions of liberal democracy accounts more comprehensively for the historical development of liberal democracy than either of the contemporary approaches.

The political approach, as we have seen, assumes that liberalism has its roots in a particular 'secular' or tolerant, 'tame', and 'rational' political culture in Europe. This claim, however, is directly contradicted by the fact that the period before the emergence of liberal ideas at the end of the seventeenth century was characterised by the bloodiest civil war in English (and European) history – a war, no less, which was in large part religious. The 'invention' of liberal ideas, in the case of Locke, for example, was thus not the result of a secular, tame, and rational political culture. Instead, Locke's formulation of what later became core principles of liberalism is more accurately understood as an attempt to find a solution to the problem of religious violence.<sup>93</sup> This solution lay in the 'privatisation' of religion, in a clear distinction between the private and the public sphere. The public sphere, 'political society' says Locke, 'is instituted for no other end but only to secure every man's Possession of the things of this life' and thus has no right to adjudicate on matters of the afterlife.<sup>94</sup> Conversely, while individuals may follow their particular faiths in the private sphere, they may not 'obtrude those things upon others, unto whom they do not seem to be the indubitable Doctrines of the Scripture'.<sup>95</sup> This 'privatisation' of religion, if practiced, does indeed remove religion as a cause of civil conflict and thus leads to a 'taming' of political culture in this respect. But it requires the protection of the private sphere which in turn is based on the protection of private property.

Moreover, this solution to the problem of religious conflict must not be confused with tolerance (despite the fact that Locke called his essay on this question 'a letter concerning toleration'). For tolerance is conceptually tied to groups, not individuals, and practiced in the public sphere, so that the 'privatisation' of religion 'has elided

<sup>91</sup> Plattner, *Democracy*, p. 68.

<sup>92</sup> Christopher May, *A Global Political Economy of Intellectual Property Rights* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>93</sup> Inayatullah and Blaney, *International Relations*, p. 35.

<sup>94</sup> John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. James H. Tully (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), p. 48.

<sup>95</sup> Locke, *A Letter*, p. 57.

the problem of tolerance, obviated the necessity to be tolerant, rather than make people tolerant'.<sup>96</sup> Hence, secularisation, the 'taming of politics', and 'tolerance' are historically not a cultural precondition for the emergence of liberalism but rather its consequence and as such based on the economic and legal development of private property and the private sphere.

And it is this protection of private property which also provides a more plausible explanation of technological and economic growth than the inheritance of a logical and rational ancient Greek culture. For even if Greek (or Muslim, for that matter) culture play a role in the technological and economic development generated in Europe, it is 'the development of property rights over discoveries and intellectual goods, along with the existence of a competitive market economy and a tradition of academic freedom to experiment'<sup>97</sup> that explains its timing.

Hence, the origins of liberal ideas are better explained by the interests of rich land owners and merchants (as well as Locke himself in the employ of one of these) who pursued political rights for the purpose of securing their property, and thus also their freedom, from state intervention. If liberalism is subsequently not associated with providing economic benefits to larger sections of the population,<sup>98</sup> this does not prove its independence from economic foundations but rather the opposite: It was because voting rights were based on property that there was no need to make economic concessions to poorer sections of the population – until the latter had gained sufficient political strength to challenge this arrangement. In short, the roots of liberalism lie, as Locke and the contemporary economic approach hold, in the protection of private property.

Further, the claim that the logic of liberal values leads to democratisation and that this logic was ultimately internalised by ruling elites and, conversely, that the main hindrance to the introduction of democracy lies in a traditional political imagination<sup>99</sup> is equally undermined by the history of radical political upheavals in Europe throughout this entire period – attesting not to a traditional but rather to a radical political imagination.<sup>100</sup> 'The evidence', conclude Acemoglu and Robinson, 'is ... consistent with the notion that most moves toward democracy happen in the face of significant social conflict and possible threat of revolution. Democracy is usually not given by the elite because its values have changed. It is demanded by the disenfranchised as a way to obtain political power and thus secure a larger share of the economic benefits of the system'.<sup>101</sup> Indeed, it was the resistance of the ruling elite that ultimately ensured the liberal character of Western democracy because it provided time for economic development and consequently a wider distribution of property within society. When, finally, political concessions had to be made, voting rights could be extended gradually to propertied citizens alone who now had a stake in upholding a political system based on the protection of property.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Adam B. Seligman, 'Democracy, Civil Society, and the Problem of Toleration', in Barany and Moser, *Is Democracy Exportable?*, p. 125.

<sup>97</sup> Arturo Fontaine Talavera, 'The Future of an Illusion', *Journal of Democracy*, 3:3 (1992), p. 113.

<sup>98</sup> Sartori, 'Free Government', p. 105.

<sup>99</sup> Plattner, *Democracy*, p. 62.

<sup>100</sup> Tilly, *Contention and Democracy*; Ake, 'Devaluing Democracy', pp. 33–4.

<sup>101</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson, *Economic Origins*, p. 29; Kim, 'Marx', p. 24.

<sup>102</sup> Bova, 'Democracy and Liberty', p. 116.

Contemporary explanations by both approaches for the differential pace of democratisation in Europe and America are similarly unsatisfactory. The political approach assumes a more progressive political imagination of the American population. And yet, the radical and violent history of Europe during that period clearly contradicts the assumption of a backward attachment to hierarchical political structures in Europe. Meanwhile, the assumption of the economic approach that early American democratisation was triggered by advanced economic development does not account for the fact that British technological and economic development for much of that period surpassed its American counterpart without leading to early democratisation.

The Lockean approach, in contrast, does not treat the issue as a case of comparative but separate domestic developments. Though early democratisation was indeed made possible in America (and other European settler states) because in these states property was more widely distributed amongst the population. Yet, the reason for this spread of property did not lie in domestic economic development *per se*. Rather, it was colonialism, the expropriation of indigenous, that is, 'foreign', political communities that generated a relatively wide spread of property in America. Expropriation through colonialism, however, does not pitch different sections of the same political community against each other. Instead, it created an alliance of interest between all settlers; ruling elites had nothing to fear, but a lot to gain, from extending the franchise in settler communities. The dynamic relationship between domestic and international politics thus accounts for what in terms of contemporary approaches appears as contradictory evidence: a radical political imagination in Europe, yet early democratisation in America; advanced economic development at least in parts of Europe, yet a wider spread of property in America.

It is this theoretical integration of the domestic and international political and economic dimensions of liberal democracy which provides a more comprehensive account of the constitution of liberalism and its democratisation in general. After all, it was the power differentials between European and non-European societies in the Americas, and later in other parts of the world, that enabled Locke to offer the appropriation of foreign land as a means to widen the distribution of property within domestic European societies as a precondition for the extension of the franchise to wider sections of society – a precondition which liberalism reduced to the domestic sphere could not have met, partly because its protection of private property precluded internal redistribution and partly because further appropriation of domestic communal property met its limit in widespread and violent resistance that could easily have turned into outright revolution. Colonialism, in short, is now widely regarded as having played a crucial role for economic development in Europe.<sup>103</sup> In addition, it provided political and material relief in this fraught situation. It allowed the ruling elite to pursue a large part of its economic goals abroad, thus not adding to the already heavy pressure on the domestic poor. It allowed the domestic poor and politically disenfranchised to emigrate and thus relieved the political pressure on the government. And it allowed the government to export its poor, its criminals, its

<sup>103</sup> Robert B. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World. Fate and Fortune in the Rise of the West* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007); David Washbrook, 'From Comparative Sociology to Global History: Britain and India in the Pre-History of Modernity', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 40:4 (1997), pp. 410–3.

orphans as well as to offer employment in the administration of the colonies. Colonialism provided common political ground for rich and poor alike and thus bridged the gap between their otherwise mutually exclusive interests. And by doing so, it also enabled European elites to resist demands for political rights long enough for a sizable middle class to emerge. In short, the claim that the development of liberal democracy was historically a domestic or national phenomenon which has only recently been undermined by interdependence or globalisation is simply false. Both European and American economic development as well as the subsequent democratisation of their political institutions have been triggered by, and dependent on, international economic opportunities whose exploitation in turn was dependent on radical power differentials.

The Lockean account, finally, provides a theoretical explanation for some of the systematic contradictions arising out of contemporary democracy promotion policies. It suggests that policies promoting the spread of liberal ideas and institutions are based on the false assumption that 'the slave must be educated slowly and painfully to understand that he or she is a human being with a unique dignity that can best be recognized by certain kinds of social and political institutions'.<sup>104</sup> Instead, 'the slave' is fully aware of his or her dignity and demands its recognition quite frequently. These political demands, however, will only lead to a *liberal* political culture if they are based on the spread of private property within society. Inasmuch as the survival of individuals and their real existing freedom depends on communal property and redistribution (ethnic, religious, or otherwise), 'indifference' towards these communities is not an option – as nationbuilding processes have shown historically.<sup>105</sup> In short, the Lockean theory provides an explanation for the ironic fate of many policies focusing on political institutions: while these policies are successful in establishing and spreading such institutions, in the absence of the required economic preconditions the latter are then frequently used to pursue highly illiberal policies.<sup>106</sup>

Similarly, it provides a theoretical explanation for the disjuncture between the economic model and its practice, that is, for the rising gap between rich and poor states that makes economic development in 'late, late developing countries (mainly in Africa)' so much more difficult.<sup>107</sup> Unlike Europe at the beginning of its development, contemporary poor states are also weak states within the international order. They do not enjoy the opportunity of privatising other communities' property or of exporting the negative consequences of domestic privatisation into the international sphere. On the contrary, they operate within an international economic and political system that has been set up in the interests of the rich and powerful liberal democratic states. And these interests, precisely because the latter have become democratic, continue to lie in growth necessary to provide economic benefits to their own populations. Hence, these states have a strong incentive to keep the terms of the international economic and political order in their favour. The international order thus provides the framework demarcating the possibilities and limits of political and economic development for individual states suggesting that policies of democracy

<sup>104</sup> Fukuyama, 'Capitalism and Democracy', p. 107.

<sup>105</sup> Chirot, 'Does Democracy Work?', p. 101.

<sup>106</sup> Carothers, *Critical Mission*; Berman, 'Civil Society and the State'; De Zeeuw and Kumar, *Promoting Democracy*.

<sup>107</sup> Huntington, 'Democracy's Third Wave', p. 33.

promotion must address these systemic constraints in addition to, and in combination with, their propagation of particular strategies on the part of targets and sponsors.

## **Conclusion**

What, then, are the implications of Locke's understanding of liberalism for the contemporary debate on democracy promotion? Ultimately, Locke's reflections show that the international sphere plays a crucial and constitutive role in the development of liberal democracy – and it is the failure to recognise and theoretically integrate this international dimension which leads to the weaknesses, contradictions, and failures of democracy promotion.

The basis for this conclusion lies in Locke's reflections on the complex and contradictory relations between politics and economics at the heart of liberalism. If private property is indeed constitutive of individual freedom and hence a liberal political culture, then the spread of liberal democracy requires the spread of private property. Since the protection of existing private property within liberalism precludes redistribution to this end, the spread of private property is achieved through the privatisation/expropriation of communal property which in turn removes the pre-conditions for the development of a liberal political culture in communities subject to expropriation. Providing the conditions for the development of liberalism in one section of society therefore simultaneously removes these conditions from others and hence leads to deep economic and political divisions rather than to stable liberal democracies.

Locke believed that the international sphere could play a crucial role in mitigating these tensions. He thus advocated colonialism as a means to temper the negative consequences of 'liberalisation' within domestic society. In Locke's normative theory the international sphere functions as a kind of valve which allows for the relief of internal pressure through external appropriation as well as the export of the negative consequences of internal expropriation. Subsequent historical evidence supports this Lockean theory and shows that the international did indeed play a constitutive role for the establishment and democratisation of today's mature liberal democratic states.

And it is this constitutive role of the international that is missing from contemporary democracy promotion literature. For the most part, the latter explicitly holds that liberal democracy is historically the product of endogenous 'national economic and political independence' which has only recently been affected by international forces in the form of globalisation.<sup>108</sup> This integration of the international dimension in the form of globalisation into the debate on democracy promotion rightly draws attention to the importance of international opportunities and constraints for domestic democratisation processes. And it gives rise to the demand that scholars and practitioners 'should care at least as much about the World Trade Organization' as they do about the impact of assistance for elections or support for civil society.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Przeworski, 'The Neoliberal Fallacy', p. 55.

<sup>109</sup> Rose, 'Democracy Promotion', p. 201.

And yet, this belated empirical recognition cannot entirely fill the gap left by the failure to theoretically integrate the constitutive role of the international for the development of liberal democracy. For it misses the fact that liberal democracies themselves play a constitutive role in the production of non-liberal states and in that of the structures and dynamics of the international system itself. While globalisation is often presented as an external force that potentially interferes with domestic policies,<sup>110</sup> Locke's work draws attention to the fact that it is the result of the foreign policies of liberal democratic states themselves. Since the political survival of liberal democracies, precisely because they have become democracies, requires the constant reproduction of the economic foundations of that regime – that is, of economic growth and benefits to its own population – liberal democracies cannot help but engage in international power politics with the aim to shape the international economic and political order in their favour. And it is this mutually constitutive role of domestic and international politics which explains the often contradictory nature of liberal foreign policies: pursuing 'neoliberal economic reforms' on the one hand that frequently 'undercut the political reforms' of their democracy promotion programmes on the other.<sup>111</sup> In other words, Locke's theory makes sense of the observation that democracy promotion policies often amount to a programme for the advancement of market liberalism.

More generally, it is the failure to integrate the international dimension into the theoretical conception of liberal democracy promotion which leads to a disjuncture between expectations and outcomes. And it is the mutually constitutive role of domestic and international politics in this field that explains empirical variation. It suggests that the development of a stable liberal democracy is successful if and when domestic *and* international conditions (ranging from opportunities for appropriation through political struggles to the structure of the international order) are conducive to the spread of private property within society. In the absence of attempts to spread private property or under domestic and international conditions that frustrate such attempts, a stable liberal democracy is unlikely to develop.

To be sure, the historical role of international politics for the development and democratisation of liberalism – in the form of colonialism for the production of capital as well as political actors and identities, for instance<sup>112</sup> – is sometimes empirically recognised. But such insights are not integrated into the theoretical conception of liberal democracy promotion and the comparative method that dominates the field and essentially places distinct and separate cases next to each other for purposes of comparison. Yet, in so doing this method fails to take into account the crucial interactive dimensions of democracy promotion. More importantly, however, the logic of comparison leads to policies of emulation. 'Latecomers' are expected to follow, broadly, in the footsteps of successful predecessors. Yet, if the dynamic relations between the political, economic, domestic, and international are constitutive of actors, their interests and policies as well as the international system at large, then emulation is not an option. 'Latecomers' will here always be confronted with conditions for democratisation that are by definition different from those encountered by their predecessors.

<sup>110</sup> Przeworski, 'The Neoliberal Fallacy'; Acemoglu and Robinson, *Economic Origins*, p. 348.

<sup>111</sup> Nancy Bermeo, 'Conclusion: Is Democracy Exportable?', in Barany and Moser, *Is Democracy Exportable?*, p. 259.

<sup>112</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson, *Economic Origins*, pp. 350, 357.

In short, the Lockean theory undermines the assumption that the development of liberal democracy is largely a matter of domestic politics or bilateral relations of assistance; instead, it suggests that the political and economic structure of the international system in general and the international policies of powerful liberal democratic states within that system in particular crucially shape the opportunities and constraints for democracy promotion. And it is in the sense of studying relations between, rather than comparing distinct cases of, international actors that the call for the 'application of the tools of international relations to the subject matter of comparative politics'<sup>113</sup> must be understood and is long overdue.

<sup>113</sup> Rose, 'Democracy Promotion', p. 189.

