

POLL

THE END OF HISTORY

The Atlantic recently asked a group of foreign-policy authorities about the prospects for democracy around the world.

Q: Worldwide, is liberal democracy stronger or weaker than it was in 2000?

73% WEAKER

"The third wave of democracy stalled in the new millennium, partly as a result of the successes in the previous decade and a half (notably in Europe and Latin America) but partly as well because of flawed U.S. policies—not least by giving democracy promotion a bad name."

"The deepening of democracy in Mexico has been impressive. But China remains firmly authoritarian, Russia and Venezuela lead the list of countries that have embraced strongmen, and the democratic revolutions in Georgia, Lebanon, and Ukraine have foundered."

"No country wants to look like Iraq."

28% STRONGER

"The U.S. may not like the outcomes, but there have at least been more experiments with democracy since 2000. The election of Hamas, the elections in Iraq, the demands for elections in Pakistan, the agitation in Burma, the awareness of election fraud in places like Kenya—all of these represent some kind of ferment whose outcome and implications are not yet clear. But [they do not represent] complacency about the absence of democracy."

"Democracy is stronger in Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, the new European Union countries, and parts of the Caucasus than it was in 2000."

Q: Is the U.S. capable of meaningfully affecting the prospects for democracy in most nondemocratic states?

68% YES

"The Bush administration has given democracy a bad name. The U.S. can't impose democracy or insist on democracy; it can only carefully support indigenous democrats (sometimes by staying far away) and the aspiration of human beings to live a better life. Most important in supporting the democratic impulse, the United States must ensure that it stays true to that impulse in its own deeds, not just its words."

33% NO

"The U.S. can nudge nondemocratic states to head in a democratic direction by providing political and economic incentives. But the U.S. has little direct leverage over the domestic developments that decisively determine the character of a state's government."

Q: Do you believe the proliferation of democratic government is inevitable in the long run?

63% NO

"Nondemocratic governments will show considerable resiliency for the foreseeable future. Indeed, they may well outperform democracies on key issues of economic growth and governance."

"Not being a Marxist, I don't think any historical development is inevitable. We seem to have forgotten that democracy is an organic phenomenon—that ... it is the outcome of specific histories, cultures, ethnicities, and events, fused together over ... time. We do not simply add water, as so many of our foreign-policy elite would have it, and get George Washington."

"Nothing is inevitable in foreign affairs. New models quite far from Jeffersonian democracy (China's 'Market-Leninism') could begin to catch the imaginations of transitional societies."

38% YES

"Despite the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, people who are free to choose (as Mrs. Thatcher said) do choose to be free. And the information revolution enables more people to see lives in free countries."

PARTICIPANTS (40): Ken Adelman, Graham Allison, Ronald Asmus, Samuel Berger, Daniel Blumenthal, Stephen Bosworth, Daniel Byman, Warren Christopher, Richard Clarke, Ivo Daalder, Douglas Feith, Leslie Gelb, Marc Grossman, John Hamre, Garv Hart, Bruce Hoffman, Laura Holgate, John Hulsman, Robert Hunter, Robert Kagan, David Kav, Andrew Krepinevich, Charles Kupchan, John Lehman, James Lindsay, Edward Luttwak, John McLaughlin, Richard Myers, William Nash, Joseph Nye, Carlos Pascual, Thomas Pickering, Paul Pillar, Kenneth Pollack, Joseph Ralston, Wendy Sherman, James Steinberg, Shibley Telhami, Jon Wolfsthal, Anthony Zinni. Because of rounding, percentages do not always total 100.