
POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Donald T. Regan has wondered aloud whether Social Security might be converted to a "means tested" program, with benefits available only to the needy. The Brookings Institution backs a five-percent cut in the benefits paid new retirees, which would reduce later COLA costs as well.

Social Security's 36 million beneficiaries (not to mention younger folk) may not like such medicine, Demkovich concludes, but making a serious dent in a federal budget deficit edging up to \$200 billion a year may require it.

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*Democratic
Vistas*

"Will More Countries Become Democracies?" by Samuel P. Huntington, in *Political Science Quarterly* (Summer 1984), 2852 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-0148.

Democracy has planted new flags in recent years, notably in Spain, Argentina, and Greece. But Huntington, a Harvard political scientist, is not optimistic about the overall prospects for the spread of representative government.

For more than a century after the American Revolution, democracy was on the rise around the world. Its momentum faltered around 1920, only to revive between 1942 and 1953, in part because the victorious World War II allies imposed it on the defeated powers. Ever since, however, there has been no clear trend. In January 1984, 36 percent of the world's population lived in "free" states, from Denmark to Trinidad and Tobago—no more, no less than 10 years before.

Some political scientists link the rise of democracy to increasing national wealth: As developing states reach a certain level of affluence, they seem simply to outgrow their (usually authoritarian) political institutions. Members of the political elite are thus forced to choose new institutions. In 1981, 21 countries stood within this "transition zone" of economic development. (Among them: Chile, Yugoslavia, Iran.) But democracy is not the inevitable result: In most cases, transition nations face a choice between democracy and communism. In 1981, every country that had passed through the "transition zone" and achieved a per capita gross national product of at least \$4,220 (with the exception of the small Arab oil exporting nations and Singapore) fell into one camp or the other.

Ironically, democracy must, in Huntington's view, be established from the top down, by political leaders, businessmen, and the middle class. "The passionate dissidents from authoritarian rule and the crusaders for democratic principles, the Tom Paines of this world, do not create democratic institutions; that requires James Madisons." Revolutionaries may *call* for democracy, but once in power "almost all turn out to be authoritarian themselves."

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Islamic traditions in the Middle East, dire poverty in black Africa, and Moscow's firm grip on Eastern Europe dim democratic prospects in these regions, Huntington believes. He is more optimistic about Latin America (notably Brazil), where "cultural traditions, levels of economic development, previous democratic experience, social pluralism, and elite desires to emulate European and North American models all favor movement toward democracy." The prosperous industrializing countries of East Asia—South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore—may also move in a democratic direction, despite hostile religious and cultural influences.

Huntington says that, in general, "the limits of democratic development in the world may well have been reached." Even so, by promoting economic development and free-market economies and by increasing its influence in world affairs, the United States may be able to aid the democratic cause.

Nurturing Ties To Moscow

"Why Trust the Soviets?" by Richard J. Barnet, in *World Policy Journal* (Spring 1984), World Policy Institute, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017.

Distrust and ill will have poisoned relations between the United States and the Soviet Union since the late 1970s. Yet "it is a dangerous delusion to believe that we are not already trusting the Soviet Union," warns Barnet, a senior fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies.

"No less than arms control," he writes, "the arms race is a system based on *faith*—faith that human nature works in the way that deterrence theorists say it does, faith that deterrence itself should be credited with preventing war." In short, U.S. policy-makers are trusting Moscow to act in certain ways. A new kind of trust, he says, is needed to halt a "slide toward war."

To be sure, today's rivalry has real causes: Each side sees the other as an "expansionist" power, but views its own behavior as "defensive." Adding to the enmity is American disillusionment with the *détente* of the 1970s. But Barnet contends that *détente* was oversold by U.S. politicians: Moscow never agreed to end its arms build-up or to curb its role in the Third World; the Kremlin agreed only to "manage" the arms race. Building real trust would mean going far beyond *détente*-style policies.

The most likely source of conflict is the Third World. Yet both superpowers have suffered sharp setbacks there over the years—the United States in Iran and Vietnam, the Soviets in Egypt, Somalia, China. The cost of trying to control events in such nations has become "prohibitive," argues Barnet. By pledging to keep U.S. and Soviet arms and forces out of the Third World, the two powers could reduce the potential for conflict. Eventually, in Barnet's view, they would also need to abandon all military bases beyond their own borders.

It makes little sense for the United States to treat the Soviet Union like a second-rate power by excluding it from Middle East peace talks or attacking it with "poisonous rhetoric" that feeds the Kremlin's paranoia.