The Power of Ideas: 
A Political Social-Psychological Theory of Democracy, 
Political Development and Political Communication 

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I propose a new social psychological theoretical framework to describe, analyze and explicate under what conditions and through what processes successful democratic stabilization can occur in the developing world. This theoretical framework attempts to add new intellectual knowledge to the academic study of democracy beyond the intellectual and practical limitations of research and policies built upon mainstream structural-functional and institutionally-focused theories of democracy, namely the procedural-minimalist approach. The intellectual focus of this study is to determine what impact, if any, the Internet has on countering the negative cultural effects of repressive authoritarian rule and improving the likelihood of successful democratic stabilization in the developing world. I comparatively examine three cases in Latin America-Argentina, Brazil and Chile-who all liberalized their information and telecommunication infrastructure (with particular attention paid to the Internet) and share a common brutal history of bureaucratic-authoritarianism (to varying degrees). I hope to accomplish four primary goals: 1. to finally advance a solid research project that positively links the Internet and democracy; 2. to explicate my social psychological theory of democracy; 3. to demonstrate the usefulness of social constructivist ideology within political science research; and 4. to reintroduce the discipline of political science to sociology and demonstrate the importance and need for more interdisciplinary and holistically-focused research projects in comparative politics and international relations that are not analytically and conceptually limited to units of analysis that lend themselves to quantification.
Most of human action is social interaction. Much of it is created by social interaction which shapes and modifies even those of our activities which often appear to us as individually determined. A human social being is distinctively human but he is also a social animal. Human social behavior is what it is because we are thinking animals, even if ‘thinking‘ is by no means co-terminous with ‘rational‘. Human social activities are guided by our attempts to understand the social environment and by the ‘models‘ of it that we create inside our heads. Our main interest as social psychologists is not in what makes individuals differ from each other. It is rather in those aspects of the interaction between people and their social environments, small or large, which contribute to the social sharing of behavior and experience, and of the meaning of both.

Tajfel and Fraser, 1978
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Chapter One: Introduction
Framing the Problem

Learning democracy means, first, that the person has to do something for himself instead of being passively moved by forces imposed on him [as in an autocracy]. Second, learning in a democracy means to establish certain likes and dislikes, that is, certain valences, values, and ideologies. Third, learning democracy means to get acquainted with certain techniques, such as those of group decision [i.e. associational participation]. The goal of political socialization is learning. 1

Introduction to the Problem

The rapid, global diffusion of the Internet in the late 1980s and early 1990s immediately followed the full decentralization and privatization of the network's infrastructural backbone and operational management. Simultaneously, the international political landscape underwent drastic and unprecedented systemic changes. The formal dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the formal end of forty-six years of the Cold War doctrine, and ushered in a global wave of democratization.

Almost immediately, academic and practitioners, alike, hailed the Internet as a democratic catalyst. Academics created new enhanced communication-focused sub-fields within the various strains of development research. Practitioners expanded existing political, economic, and social development programs to include telecommunication-strengthening initiatives as a necessary infrastructural component of democratic development. Within political science, researchers developed a political communication-focused sub-field within the political development research genre -- Internet/democracy studies. Internet/democracy studies attempt to ascertain whether there is a discernable,

intersecting relationship between the Internet and democracy; or whether the unprecedented technological and systemic changes observed in the international political arena during the late 1980s and early 1990s were merely unrelated, coincidental occurrences.\(^2\)

However, despite the seemingly overnight explosion of democratic transitions throughout the developing world during this period, when examined today, the stabilization of democracy in these countries has been much less successful. This trend is particularly notable in countries where severely repressive authoritarian regimes characterized the political system prior to the democratic transition.

I examine what role, if any, transnational mass-mediated communication (that is, the Internet) plays in the process of political development.\(^3\) This dissertation attempts to negotiate the transition/stabilization paradox in relation to prevailing Internet/democracy arguments. The following research questions guide this dissertation:

1. Why are political development (that is, democratic development) efforts in the developing world plagued by a transition/stabilization paradox?

2. Are all transitional societies beset with the same set of democratic hindrances and obstacles to democratic stabilization?

\(^2\) Interestingly, the bulk of studies within the academic and public policy communities attempting to discern a positive causal and correlation link between the Internet and democracy has centered on Russian and Eastern European cases. Please refer to chapter two for a discussion of this literature.

\(^3\) Mass-mediated communication refers to a communication system conducted via a mass media vehicle (e.g., newspapers, periodicals, radio, television, and the Internet). Mass-mediated communication is communication directed toward a mass audience as opposed to direct, interpersonal face-to-face communication.
3. Alternatively, do certain types of authoritarian regime-led societies possess unique systemic characteristics (such as ideologies, institutions, and procedures) that make them more vulnerable to democratic stagnation and/or democratic reversion? 

4. What is the most important aspect of democracy that needs to be cultivated during the transition stage to achieve successful democratic stabilization?

5. Does a discernable relationship exist between the Internet and democracy? If so, can the Internet transcend the transition/stabilization paradox?

Placement of Current Research within Internet/democracy Studies

Internet/democracy studies share a common analytical and theoretical platform -- the focus on institutions as the primary unit of analysis. Interestingly, the focus on studying the Internet within an institutional framework is a necessary one determined by the choice of the independent variable -- democracy. Internet studies, by design, are subject to the same analytical, theoretical, and methodological limitations as the democracy research program upon which the Internet studies build. As a result, the Internet's potential for facilitating long-term democracy has yet to be fully realized -- theoretically, empirically, or actually (that is, as a function of public policy).

4 Democratic reversion describes the process of state reversion back to an authoritarian political system by rolling back the democratic institutions or increasing control over the democratic institutions. Democratic stagnation refers to the failure of a transitional society to stabilize democracy, which may lead to democratic reversion.
Democracy assistance programs have utilized this body of research as the theoretical foundation for mission statement construction, problem identification, policy research and recommendation, outcome evaluation, and alternative strategy generation.\(^5\) Consequently, the long-term effectiveness of democracy assistance policies have not been as successful as predicted when evaluated after the initial transition.

Democracy field practitioners view the Internet as the redeeming feature for democracy.\(^6\) The Internet's unprecedented transnational capacity to impact education, information, and communication has yet to be realized requiring democracy policies that incorporate media assistance initiatives. As such, a majority of the most well-respected and influential democracy field practitioners have updated their mission statements and standard operating procedures to include media assistance policies (including financial, legal, and logistical support) to developing countries. A quick examination of the United States' Agency for International Development (USAID) illustrates this trend nicely.

An independent federal agency, USAID, is the largest, non-military foreign development assistance donor worldwide. USAID provides financial and technical assistance to hundreds of non-governmental organizations working within the following

\(^5\) Democracy assistance programs are devoted to advancing policies that promote, build, and sustain democracy. These programs are primarily concentrated upon facilitating democratic transition and stabilization in the developing world by providing financial, logistical, legal, technical, and educational assistance to governments and societal organizations.

\(^6\) Democracy field practitioner refers to the organizations that sponsor and/or promote democracy assistance programs in transitional countries. Democracy field practitioners include governments, individuals, international organizations, inter-governmental organizations, policy think tanks, multinational corporations, and non-governmental organizations. An abbreviated list of organizations devoted to democracy-building assistance include the United Nations (UN), Brookings Institute, Research and Development Corporation (RAND Corporation), Freedom House, Amnesty International, and National Endowment for Democracy (NED).
development project areas: economic growth, agriculture and trade, global health, democracy, conflict prevention, and humanitarian assistance.

In 2006, USAID contributed $23.53 billion in foreign aid accounting for 22.54% of all development aid pledged worldwide ($104.38 billion) by 22 countries. Compared to the foreign development assistance donations of the top five ranking donor countries in 2006, USAID was the largest state-sponsored donor of foreign development assistance followed by the United Kingdom ($12.46 billion), Japan ($11.19 billion), France ($10.60 billion), and Germany (10.43 billion).

As the largest foreign assistance donor, USAID is also the most influential. In fact, USAID has greatly shaped the ideological, conceptual, theoretical, organizational, and procedural design governing democracy assistance programs worldwide. USAID's influence is most notable in relation to the inclusion of media liberalization assistance as a key institutional component of liberal democracy. According to the USAID, the Agency [USAID] spent over $264 million between 1985 and 2001 promoting an expanded democracy assistance platform, which includes media liberalization strategic initiatives.

Basing developing world democratization policies and programs upon institutionally-driven theories has resulted in almost identical transitional and stabilization policies, regardless of which democracy field practitioner is under

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examination. The institutional approach to democracy is a well-researched area that has become the paradigm within general democracy research (that is, democracy theory).

General democracy research serves as the theoretical foundation not only for Internet/democracy studies, but for the regionally specific democratization studies as well. As such, the democratization literature is plagued with the same theoretical limitations (that is, institutionalism) as the Internet/democracy studies. Ultimately, institutionally-driven democracy research has failed to provide an explanation for the transition/stabilization gap witnessed in transitional political systems — one of the research problems guiding my dissertation. This consistency is due in large part to the influence of the USAID in promoting pluralistically-driven media assistance programs that focus exclusively on liberalizing the media institutions. Media liberalization democracy policies primarily focus upon media liberalization and media expansion-based answers to democracy building (during the transition and stabilization phases). USAID policies build upon the dominant theoretical explanation characterizing modern democracy theory — pluralism.

Within modern democratic thought, pluralism has taken center stage as the most pervasive requirement of democracy fueled by the assumption that informational and communicative pluralism is the backbone for fostering political and social pluralism. In turn, political and social pluralism builds the foundation for an active and participatory democratic citizenry (that is, a politically educated civil society engaged actively in

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10 A detailed presentation of the general democracy research and regionally-specific research is presented in chapters four and three, respectfully. Due to my research focus on Latin America, I limit the regionally specific democracy research discussion to the democratization studies focused exclusively upon my region of interest.
public dialogue). As such, pluralism-based democracy promoting programs receive the most financial and technical assistance. Democratic assistance organizations have heeded the USAID's recommendations, designing their missions and policy recommendations accordingly.

The USAID's Democracy and Governance (DG) Program assists democratic field practitioners. The DG Program builds upon four interrelated goals deemed necessary for successful democratic stabilization:

1. strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights,
2. promoting competitive elections and political processes,
3. developing a politically active civil society, and
4. creating transparent and accountable governance.

A free, independent media is one of the strategic cornerstones of the USAID DG Program's third goal -- developing a politically active civil society.¹¹

USAID asserts that the ability to access and publicize information is a fundamental democratic requirement. The media facilitates pluralism through the creation of open channels for information dissemination to the citizenry, which in turn facilitates effective societal participation in democratic institutions and processes (that is, pluralism). Within this vein, informational pluralism is the cornerstone of creating a platform for public discourse and debate -- a necessary component for participatory democracy. Further, investigatory reporting transforms the media into a watchdog for both the government and society, which increases both governmental transparency and accountability. As such, a media free from state controls is a key requirement for a

¹¹ See the USAID's Democracy and Governance (DG) Program homepage, which is accessible at http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/.
Echoing Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, USAID expanded the definition of media to include the Internet, a free media is the primary vehicle for state and society to communicate their interests and concerns, therefore, a plural array of nongovernmental, independent information sources including print and broadcast media and increased access to Internet connections is essential. Since then, the liberalization of all media (including the Internet) has been a key component of USAID's media assistance program housed within the organization's civil society dimension of democracy.

Pursuant with these goals, USAID has set aside an additional funding line (in the millions of dollars) to assistance-focused development organizations whose missions specifically promote e-governance (that is, Internet liberalization for enhanced democratic development). An abbreviated list of these organizations includes:

1. International Research and Exchanges Board's (IREX) Media Sustainability Index,
2. Internews Network/Center for Democracy and Technology's Global Initiative Policy Initiative Project,
3. the Digital Freedom Initiative (DFI), and
4. the Dot Cooperative Partnership Program.

The Dot Cooperative Partnership Program promotes the extension of enhanced access to the Internet, and helps support the development of local Internet infrastructure in developing countries. This program also aims to train local individuals in the use of Internet technologies and help them use the Internet for the benefit of their communities.

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information and communication technology (ITC) initiatives globally. The Dot Cooperative Partnership Program is comprised of four separate (but interrelated) programs:

1. Education Development Center led dot-EDU learning system,
2. Academy for Educational Development's (AED) led dot-ORG program,
3. Internews Network, Inc.-led doc-GOV program, and
4. USAID-led dot-COM Alliance.\(^1\)

Despite the vast time and resource investment allotted to the fulfillment of these goals, an assessment of USAID's published reports uncovers a striking omission. Nowhere is there a clear theoretical connection explicating under what conditions and through what processes ideological diffusion through the Internet can lead to congruent behavioral changes in the real world. Despite this glaring theoretical omission, USAID's program assumes just that. It appears as though a lot of time and money is being spent assuming that a liberalized media (Internet or otherwise) will lead to a politically active civil society. Further, it is assumed that the creation of open channels for information dissemination and communication strengthens pluralism within an expanded public sphere (albeit, electronically-mediated). Nowhere is there a clear theory explicating how informational and communicative pluralism leads to actual political and social pluralism,


or how behavior in virtual communities leads to participation in real communities. This dissertation attempts to address these theoretical concerns directly.\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{The Problem Statement}

This dissertation is an inter-disciplinary, generative theoretical research project. An overarching theoretical question guides the examination of the aforementioned problem in light of the research questions posed, "how can democratic theory be adapted to include political communication and political development?" Challenging the effectiveness of institutional theories dominant in the literature, I propose a new socio-culturally-driven theory of democracy. Utilizing a social constructivist analytical framework, I advance a socio-political psychological theory of democracy. This approach conceptualizes democracy as a political system. I suggest that a political system is a complex, inter-related, reciprocal web of ideas, culture, and established behavioral patterns of interaction. Further, I argue that, overtime, this culturally-derived web of interaction organizationally encapsulates into the formal institutional structures that inform the design of the political system.

Rejecting the values-based survey methodology popular within political cultural studies, I adopt an action-based, social-psychological methodological approach for studying culture.\textsuperscript{16} Through a detailed examination of the behavioral patterns (of relation) inherent in key environments of social interaction, I infer psychological patterns of ideas and sociological patterns of culture that drive social interaction. In doing so, I

\textsuperscript{15} A theory to this effect unfolds in part two.

\textsuperscript{16} Please see chapter four.
explicate a reciprocal link between perception/behavior at the individual level and social interaction/institution design at the collective level. In this way, social interaction is the intersecting point linking individuals to society, society to institutions, and vice versa. More importantly, my analysis uncovers an alternative strategy for implementing a universal Internet/focused political development program built upon a platform of socialization and social transformation that emphasizes ideological message content over institutional liberalization.¹⁷

I designed this dissertation as a generative theory bringing ideas, culture, and behavioral action together into a comprehensive and interdisciplinary perspective. I hope to inspire a new generation of expanded social action and transformation research and policy programs that actually improve the quality of life for those living within transitional societies. This new perspective offers a platform by which to move beyond current conceptualizations and theoretical explanations by offering a broader understanding of development, grounded in the notion that political systems are ideationally-driven, culturally-derived socially constructions. In turn, my approach also informs practitioners to think about political development strategies from a broader, transformational perspective than current theories, which emphasize institutional and structural-functional approaches to development policy. Further, this dissertation serves as a generative lens by which to explore the Internet's potential for facilitating democratic stabilization in transitional societies that circumvents regional compartmentalization.

Through an exploration of three Latin American cases (Argentina, Brazil, and Chile), I argue that the transition/stabilization gap plaguing the transitional world is

¹⁷ Please see chapter six.
primarily the result of an institutional/cultural mismatch (that is, democratic institutions built upon an authoritarian culture dominated by state repression and societal fear) resulting in a systemically unstable state-society dichotomy.\textsuperscript{18} I suggest that a state-society dichotomy occurs when democratic institutions are erect in a social system devoid of the complementary democratic culture needed to sustain long-term stabilization. State-society tensions exacerbate during times of domestic crisis (usually economic) or foreign policy failure exacerbated by the rise of a skeptical and negative view of democracy.\textsuperscript{19} Society openly question democracy's effectiveness and continued desirability, and a semi- or full authoritarian reversion at the behest of society is realistically imminent possibility. I suggest that fledgling transitional democracies share a common socio-political incongruence that hinders stabilization efforts -- democratic institutions built upon a socio-political culture of authoritarianism.

Authoritarian statecraft design centralizes all power in the state providing ordinary citizens with very few avenues for political involvement, influence, and change. Policy tools (such as press censorship, political party deactivation, judicial system oversight, political opponent persecution, and dissenter assassination) are designed to politically deactivate the individual through subordination. The most effective subordination technique is the use of repressive techniques designed to instill a fear of


\textsuperscript{19} In chapter nine, I comparatively examine specific instances where societal demands challenging the effectiveness of and preference for democracy threaten the continued sustainability of democratic governance today.
challenging the authority of the state through political activism. In this way, potential threats deactivate before manifesting into a real threat (i.e., an organized coup) to state power.

I argue that repression acts as a disengagement agent in successfully polarizing society using 'divide-and-conquer' implementation techniques. State-sponsored violence strategically pits societal members against one another to prevent potential opposition interests from organizing and infecting the rest of society. In this way, state repression effectively shapes societal behavior to congruently complement and reinforce the centralized structural-functional characteristics of the authoritarian regime. State-sponsored ideological and associational repression creates multiple avenues for highly effective cognitive control of society (that is, compliance, apathy, obedience, and mistrust of outsiders) measured as behavioral manifestations (that is, political inactivity and self-policing).

I argue that, when examined over time, the tools of state sanctioned repression create a culture of repression by institutionalizing repression into networks in which society cognitively associates repression with the state apparatus, regardless of the type of political system in power and continues to manifest dissociative political behavior. The collective cultural persistence of societal distrust and fear of the state is particularly notable considering the primary role played by civilian security police and military forces within the authoritarian political system. In this manner, the cognitive and behavioral attributes of repression persist long after the authoritarian regime dissolves causing major stabilization obstacles. After all, democracy demands an active, participatory civil society. Thus, the transition/stabilization gap is a result of building democratic
In chapters six and seven, I extend this analysis. I argue that in transitional societies with a history of right-wing totalitarian regimes, the scope of ideological and associational control, degree of violence, and extent of infiltration was overwhelmingly more severe.\textsuperscript{20} I suggest that this higher degree of severity is due in large part to the unique cross-regional institutionalization of intelligence-heavy, propaganda-driven state terror networks that successfully infiltrated every aspect of public and private life. A historic comparative examination of bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile demonstrate that the cultural implications of right-wing, fear-based totalitarian repression is significantly amplified, causing additional socio-cultural hurdles to the stabilization of participatory democracy that warrant special attention. In chapter eight, I examine the cascading effects of bureaucratic authoritarian repression by examining the history of government-media relations in the construction of state ancillary approaches to the media.

To circumvent this incongruence, I argue that successful democratic stabilization requires the replacement of the culture of repression and fear with an inclusive, rights-based democratic culture. Democratic culture implies that the political, economic, and social rights and liberties of all members within a heterogeneous society are recognized, legally protected, and allowed public vocalization without repercussion by the state. Democratic culture recognizes that political engagement (that is, contestation and negotiation) in a diverse and stratified society is contingent upon social cohesion. Social cohesion, I argue, is a function of cultural pluralism. Cultural pluralism builds upon the

\textsuperscript{20} Please refer to chapter three for an analysis of regime typologies including totalitarian, authoritarian, and bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes.
sub-ideas of equality and tolerance for the ethnic, religious, and racial differences that exist within a heterogeneous society. Cultural pluralism is the dynamic by which minority groups participate fully in the dominant society, yet maintain their cultural differences. A pluralistic society is one where different groups can interact while showing a certain degree of tolerance for one another, where different cultures can coexist without major conflicts, and where minority cultures are encouraged to uphold their customs.  

Furthermore, I believe that cultural pluralism is the required socio-cultural foundation required for creating a democratic identity within society. A democratic identity is a collective term. A society possesses a democratic identity when different groups political act with the understanding that all members of that heterogeneous society are empowered with the right to express their interests even if those interests run counter to the interests of other groups. A society possesses a democratic identity when groups, with historically contrasting interests, ban together when the state seeks to restrict one or more interest groups from exercising their right to political interest articulation, organization, participation, and action. I assert that the creation of democratic identity is a necessary socio-cultural prerequisite for the structural-functional components of a participatory democracy -- political pluralism and social pluralism -- since the existence of both requires organizational participation by societal members.

The democratic identity challenges the traditional term 'identity politics' in which conscious-raising political action is undertaken to advance the interests of traditionally

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marginalized and disenfranchised segments of the society. Steep identity divisions (primarily along ethnic, racial, religious, and class lines) have plagued the overwhelming majority of the developing world countries. As such, identity politics has undermined democracy serving as a catalyst for nationally-driven separatist movements. In these situations, group identity supersedes national identity laying waste to nation-building attempts and societal cohesion. The fear is the destabilization of the entire system and reversion to authoritarianism to reestablish order.22

However, I argue that the Internet has the potential for facilitating democratic stabilization if utilized as an educational tool for cultural socialization. I propose that democracy is a cultural pluralistically-driven system of learned ideas, values, and complementary behavioral. My analysis conceptualizes the media (with a focus on the Internet) as a system of information and communication governed by the complex, interrelated human processes of learning and communication. The primary unit of analysis is culture since human learning and communication processes can only occur through a cultural milieu.

To this end, in chapter six, I advance a socio-culturally-focused, social psychologically-guided argument that explicates under what conditions and through what processes democratic culture may be learned. Through this theoretical analysis, I explicate the process of learning culture and its relationship to both the psychological aspects of memory at the individual and collective levels of analysis, as well as, the sociological aspects of inter- and intra-group behavior. I conduct this analysis through an examination of the Internet's role as an agent of socialization for producing, shaping, and

22 Please refer to chapters seven, eight, and nine for a detailed discussion of identity divisions within the developing world.
changing culture via ideological diffusion and communication. I suggest that the Internet plays an important dual role in democratic cultural socialization (that is, education) acting both as an agent of behavioral modification and of social change.

My culturally-driven, social constructivist approach examines the implicit and explicit ideological content of the messages and images transmitted through the media. I suggest that the construction of effective messages follow the audience approach to communication primarily used by marketing and advertising executives. An audience approach takes into account cultural differences among audience members and promotes the use of message personalization tools aimed at addressing the unique cultural aspects of a specified target audience. I further suggest that effective socialization initiatives aimed at transcending relative cultural differences among diverse groups within the mass audience is possible, if messages and images are constructed using universal ideas that speak to an unfulfilled human interest. In regards to democratic socialization, Internet messages should stress the universal human interests that complement cultural pluralism (e.g., tolerance, dignity, respect, diversity, community, unity, trust, rights, understanding, and equality).

In doing so, I argue that the volatile issues of interest politics (such as ethnicity, race, religion, and class) that have the potential to threaten social cohesion in transitional democracies and derail democracy can be mitigated, and, perhaps, even circumvented. Instead, universal human interest-driven democratic acculturation and socialization tools attempt to replace identity politics-based identities with a broader rights-based democratic identity -- a necessary first step toward initiating the long-term process of stable democratization. In sum, I argue that the Internet/democracy relationship is more
effectively examined using a cultural model of political communication organized around a framework of human learning and communication. My refocused analysis will ultimately allow me to explicate the psychological and sociological processes governing ideological, cultural, and behavioral learning.

My approach challenges mainstream thought within the Internet/democracy literature, which is overwhelmingly techno-deterministic and path dependent. Techno-determinism is an institutionally-driven approach arguing that the media is a primary component of the state. As such, democracy promoting policies must include provisions for liberalizing media institutions in addition to liberalization provisions dedicated to traditional state institutions (such as elections, political parties, legislatures, constitutions, and civic associations). Once the liberalization of the media institutions transpires, the assumption is that the increased amount of diverse information creates politically educated population, which seeks out multiple avenues for public debate and civil activism.

The public policy concern becomes one of application in which the specifications of how the Internet acts as an agent of social change regarding the promotion of democratic culture and destruction of the existing culture of repression that is preventing full democratic stabilization more than two decades after the initial democratic transition. Ultimately, I incorporate the original, interdisciplinary theoretical contributions contained here into a coherent proposal for democracy promotion policies that transcend relative cultural differences for implementation in any transitional country.

The theoretical and practical goals of this dissertation are three-fold:

1. To identify and explain the weakest link that fundamentally threatens
the necessary state-society nexus in democracies attempting to transcend the transition/stabilization gap (cultural incongruence with new governmental institutions);

2. To construct a new transnational socio-cultural theory of democracy reuniting the general and regionalist intellectual strains in hopes of creating a solid theoretical foundation by which to begin meaningful Internet studies; and

3. To provide democracy practitioners with an Internet/democracy theory that actually details the psychological and sociological processes through which the Internet facilitates democracy.

I hope to advance prescriptions that specifically outline how the Internet can culturally re-educate society to democratic ideas, values, and norms (that is, cultural pluralism). The ultimate goal of my approach is to change society's political behavior (from mediated participation to active participation) using corporate marketing and advertising techniques (e.g. image branding and target audience identification). Ultimately, I argue that democracy is an idea, and, like any idea (e.g. youth, virility, and independence) can be successfully marketed globally if we familiarize ourselves with basic business, advertising, and marketing principles. This socio-cultural theory of democracy explores the recognition of the importance of the socio-cultural norms of the transitional system, both before and after the actual transition, as a function of the prior regime, as well as the social and cultural norms that serve as the foundation for the new democratic system.

Successful stabilization policies will identify socio-cultural mismatching as the