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NEWS RELEASE

The Global Promotion of Democracy: Why It's Important and Who's Doing What

Study raises questions about Canada's future policy options

Montreal –The promotion of democracy has become an increasingly important part of new global aid strategies undertaken by established democracies since the end of the Cold War. But significant reforms are needed to make it more effective, says George Perlin in a working paper entitled “International Assistance to Democratic Development: A Review” published today by the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP.org).

“I share the view that if democracy aid is to be effective, significant reforms are required,” says Perlin, a Visiting Fellow for International Democratic Development at the IRPP, who helped build the Centre for the Study of Democracy and the Canadian Opinion Research Archive (CORA) at Queen's University. “However, the point needs to be made that whatever its effect on the overall process of democratic development in particular countries, much good work has been done by members of the democracy-aid community,” maintains the author.

The military-driven attempts to force regime change in Afghanistan and Iraq have highlighted democracy-promotion as an important element in international relations, says Perlin, who was a director of curriculum in the study of democracy in post-secondary educational institutions in Ukraine.

Perlin says there are four main reasons why democratic countries have started to promote democratic development in international assistance.

- 1) It reflects a commitment to the intrinsic worth of liberal democracy.
- 2) It is believed that the spread of democracy will help reduce the incidence of armed conflict.
- 3) It is regarded by many policy-makers as a necessary support for new patterns of economic relationships associated with globalization.
- 4) Foreign aid donor countries are frustrated by the failure of their assistance programs in developing countries in the 1970s and 1980s.

This working paper is part of a new research series on international democracy-promotion and its relationship to post-conflict security, civil society and human rights. As the first study in the series, it provides an overview of the collective international effort in democracy-promotion.

"International Assistance to Democratic Development: A Review" is available free of charge in Adobe (.pdf) format through the IRPP Web site at www.irpp.org.

For more information or to request an interview, please contact the IRPP.

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