



The professors will use, among other sources, data provided by the USAID, a major arm of foreign assistance in the United States. Their research, which will cover the years between 1980 and 2002, will be available in approximately 10 months to other researchers through an online database. The research also will be presented at several workshops in Washington, D. C.

Seligson acknowledged that they must be careful to avoid what social scientists call "selection bias" in their analysis. "The most difficult aspect of the study will be determining if democratic changes that occur in a foreign country can be attributed to U.S. foreign assistance." He noted that the list of countries that receive American aid continually changes, with the U.S. government often adding countries that are doing poorly and dropping others that no longer need help. "This means that unless one does a very careful statistical analysis, the results could erroneously show that where the United States invests the most in democracy promotion, the results are the worst. In fact, the countries that have done the best could have 'graduated' and no longer need U.S. assistance, leaving our nation investing in the most difficult cases."

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