

EXTERNAL STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY
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Outsiders can help create or strengthen formal processes of democratic rule within states in a variety of ways, both indirect and direct.

Indirectly, they can sometimes inspire with good example (City on a Hill) or foster economic growth. Economic growth, for example, helps stabilize new democracies and no democracy with a GDP PC over \$6000 has collapsed.² They can also help establish civil societies that sustain the rule of law and democracy.³

Directly, countries have tried to foster democracies overseas by diplomatic pressure (e.g recent events in Ukraine) and by providing technical and other support requested by governments themselves -- including help with election monitoring, voter education, and setting up independent electoral commissions.

Neither approach is without difficulties. Indirect approaches often fail to dislodge undemocratic regimes; yet direct approaches can be counter-productive, provoking resentment and resistance from local elites. A supportive approach thus cannot work where an entrenched regime refuses to encourage democratic change and coercive ones can provoke nationalist resistance.

I want to focus here on the heaviest forms of direct imposition, partly because they are fraught with difficulties and partly because (despite that) they seem back in fashion. My comments will focus on three trends in the imposition of regimes by great powers on lesser powers, and then make three comments on modes of doing so.

Three Trends

1. First, on average, most great powers, most of the time, try to impose their domestic regime on weaker powers around them.⁴ If we look back in history, monarchies and aristocracies have tried to do it, and sometimes successfully. The French, the British, and the Russians did it, for example, in France in 1815 when the victorious allies in the war against Napoleon restored the Bourbon monarchy. The Fascists tried to do it in the 1930s and 1940s; the Communists tried to do it in the 1950s and 1960s, predominantly in Eastern Europe. Democratic capitalists have done it, too; the United States most strikingly, of course, in the Cold War and post-Cold War period.

¹ Harold Brown Professor at Columbia Law School and the School of International and Public Affairs. These notes draw on presentations and discussions hosted by the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, benefiting from the comments of Thomas Carothers, John Cavanagh, Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Andrew Kuper, Adam Przeworski, Mary Robinson and Joseph Stiglitz, and another at the Columbia Law School Faculty Retreat and the comments of Samuel Issacharoff.

² Przeworski.

³ Putnam and, with various cautions, Carothers.

⁴ Owen

There are two good reasons for this. One, these powers believe in these systems and seek to legitimate themselves at home by exporting their system abroad. Second, they believe, sometimes accurately and sometimes not, that if you create a compatible regime nearby, you will have an easier opportunity of either coercing and/or cooperating with that regime.

2. The second generalization is that great powers have a complicated set of interests, moral and material, and so they regularly compromise their ideological interests in exporting their regime, in order to pursue their security and economic interests. For example, the Kennedy administration, while promoting the democratic Alliance for Progress, acknowledged that: "There are three possibilities in descending order or preference, a decent democratic regime, a continuation of the Trujillo regime [a dictatorship, by his followers] or a Castro regime. We ought to aim at the first, but we cannot really renounce the second until we are sure we can avoid the third."⁵

3. The third generalization is that even though many of great powers would like to impose their regimes, it is very, very costly, and so they very often fail because they are unwilling to invest the kind of resources that would be necessary in order to impose the regime they favor. We can see it today in Iraq, for example, where if the United States was as interested in imposing order in Iraq as effectively as NATO has in Kosovo, we would need an equivalent ratio of troops per capita, that is about 500,000 troops, more than three times the amount currently committed.

Three Modes of Imposition

1. **Imperial Colonialism.** While colonial powers have imposed their regimes all around the world, until recently, imperial powers have not had exporting democracy as their ideology or concern. But even where they did, as the United Kingdom, France and the United States sometimes have, the compromises they made were very marked.

The imperial power typically restricted local legislative power and only advanced the franchise a few times in their colonial dependencies. The aim of those expansions of the franchise was to maintain control, by disrupting an ethnic or class monopoly that was turning toward a nationalist movement and about to declare independence. When the empire ran out un-mobilized classes or ethnicities, and the costs of controlling the colony became too high, decolonization became the final option.⁶

Overall, therefore, while empire has sometimes been a good strategy for promoting the rule of law, fostering bureaucratic rationality and building economic infrastructure, and even public education in some rare cases; it has not been a democratizing strategy. The rule of law can help lay the foundations for long-run democracies. India is democratic today, partly due to the heritage of the British Empire.⁷ But empires rest on the collaboration of dependent, minority elites and thus are not directly democracy promoting.

⁵ Schlesinger, p 769.

⁶ For a discussion of control and collaboration/mobilization strategy, Doyle 1986, "Imperial Development."

⁷ Ferguson, Empire.

2. **Occupation.** Occupations, the second mode -- meaning foreign control without the expectation of long-term imperial rule -- have a more mixed record. Many scholars -- John Montgomery, John Owen, Minxin Pei, and David Edelstein among them-- have done valuable work on this topic. These scholars do not all agree, but they are building a coherent picture.

There were many failures to impose a stable domestic regime through foreign occupation. We need only think of the U.S. intervention in Cuba in 1898 and again in 1907; in the Philippines from 1898; in Haiti and Nicaragua. Democracy promotion and strategic dominance were dual aims in these cases. In all those cases there was a failure to establish a democratic government. In the 1920-30-2, the U.K. failed in Iraq, in Palestine and in Egypt (from 1882 to 1954) to leave behind the rule of law and semi-democratic government. In the postwar period, the Soviet Union failed in Eastern Europe to leave behind stable, self-sustainable Communist governments.

On the other hand, France's occupation of Germany and western Austria to 1947; the U.S., U.K., and France in Germany and western Austria; and the U.S. in Japan were all instances of successful democratic transplant. How and why?

First of all, there was a complete defeat. In no case was there just a liberation of one group that was then freed to rule in its own interests. A complete defeat offered a fresh slate for transformation.

Second, the occupiers were able to draw upon indigenous traditions of liberal capitalism and representative rule. The occupation had a restorative aspect to it.

Third, a good strategy was adopted, an equalizing strategy in most of these cases, offering new opportunities for hitherto subordinated classes.

Fourth, there was an assured departure. That is, they drew a public distinction between occupation and imperial rule. The occupiers were known to be temporary.

Fifth, they were well prepared. As David Edelstein has noted, as early as 1943 the U.S. set up schools at the University of Virginia and at Yale to train future administrators of Germany and Japan. In 1943, it was not clear we were going to win the war. Nonetheless, in 1943 the US began to develop adequate language and other civil administration skills and undertake long-term planning.⁸ This contrasts nicely with a story in *The New York Times* in which a senior U.S. staff officer of the 3rd Infantry Division mentioned that, after successfully taking Baghdad, his division had **no further orders whatsoever**.⁹ That is, they had no instructions on how to occupy or govern, or on what was to happen next: a striking and we now know consequential difference. Add that to the weakness of democratic traditions in Iraq, the incomplete defeat of the insurgents (to put it mildly) and the very slow pace of reconstruction and the challenges of a successful occupation in Iraq become clear.

3. **Multilateral Peacebuilding.** The third mode of imposition is multilateral, multidimensional peacekeeping in the wake of a civil war or humanitarian crisis. It is very different from occupation

⁸ David Edelstein, "Occupational Hazards: Why Occupations Succeed or Fail," (Draft) Edelstein is defining success differently, not in terms of democracy or self-determination, but in terms of US security interests.

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or colonialism. It either rests upon consent of the key domestic parties or it is a multilateral rescue of country that has experienced a humanitarian crisis, as did for example Somalia, Bosnia or East Timor, and an occupation that is designed to promote human rights and local self-determination, and devoid of the national interest of any particular occupier.

We have seen many successes: Namibia, El Salvador, Cambodia, Mozambique, East Timor. By “success,” I am talking about something very modest on the scale of democratic rule-- that is, some degree of participation, a national election, but not necessarily a resolution of all the other problems that we know that are still associated with early democracy.

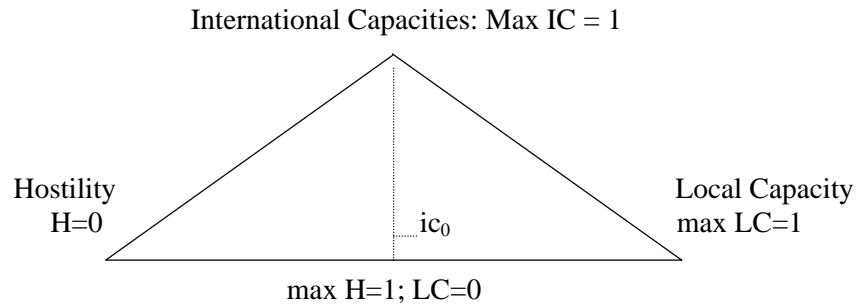
There have also been equally striking failures to transfer democratic rule, including Rwanda, Bosnia, Angola, Liberia and Somalia.

The key factors in success appear to be twofold:

1. Consent through a comprehensive, negotiated peace settlement. A genuine, comprehensive, negotiated agreement, bringing all the relevant players together to negotiate a future --not just a truce, but envisioning a future form of rule – seems to make a difference. The "occupation" is the consent-based even when extensive authority has been transferred to the UN (as in East Timor) or to another international body (such as NATO in Bosnia). When the UN enters without consent, as in Bosnia or Somalia, or with heavily coerced consent, as NATO did in Bosnia after Dayton, achieving a successful participatory peace is very difficult. It is not impossible; the peace in East Timor and between East Timor and Indonesia is still holding, but only because of exceptional investment in the second factor, below.
2. A major international investment of peacebuilding resources. Multidimensional peacebuilding on the cheap is a prescription for failure. According to the studies that Nicholas Sambanis and I have done about resolving civil wars,¹⁰ one needs to have as much international capacity as is needed to counterbalance the local level of hostility and the local level of poverty (local capacity). The more the “local hostility” (measured by deaths, refugee displacements and the stronger, more numerous and hostile the factions) and the less the “local capacity” (measured by government capacity and poverty); then the larger the “international capacity” needs to be in terms of troops, money, and authority in order to offset the first two and launch a process of peacebuilding that restores order, builds new institutions and launches economic development. These can be seen as constituting three dimensions of a triangle, whose “area” is the peacebuilding probability, the prospect for peace, and whose shape differs for each country. We code as successful democratic peacebuilding cases where war does not resume (<1000 war deaths) and a low level of participation is reached (Gurr variable \geq 3).

¹⁰ Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, “International Peacebuilding: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis,” *American Political Science Review* 95, 4 (December 2000) pp. 779-801 and *Making War and Making Peace: The United Nations since 1990* (Princeton University Press, forthcoming).

A Peacebuilding Triangle¹¹



If the international community engages in a conflict area such as was Rwanda in 1993-94 with a cheap operation designed merely to monitor and facilitate, when the extremists are determined and all factions are hostile and distrustful, one is asking for disaster, which of course is what occurred.

But democratic peace-building can be done effectively, and successes in Namibia, El Salvador, Cambodia, Mozambique, and East Timor are the result of significant international efforts to help transfer democratic institutions to societies that are otherwise extremely problematic prospects for democratic rule. The keys were matching the right degree of international authority (from monitoring to quasi-sovereign trusteeship), military and civilian governance assistance and economic redevelopment to the nature of the dispute in question – the amount of destruction sustained and deaths and displacements suffered.

The four graphs below draw on a comprehensive data set of 119 civil wars since 1945, including wars that experienced UN and other international peacebuilding assistance and those did not (were not settled or were settled by conquest, partition or exhaustion).¹² “Graph a” shows how the level of hostility (deaths and displacements) relates to poverty (measured in electricity per capita, the most widely available comparable measure). Increasing wealth greatly improves the prospects of success, but at every level of wealth deaths and displacements also count, making success more difficult to achieve. “Graph b” shows how much difference a comprehensive peace treaty combined with UN peacebuilding assistance can make, at every level of wealth, but especially for the poorest countries. Graphs “c” and “d” show the debilitating effects of increases in the number of factions and the effects of ethnic war.

In conclusion, looking at Iraq through a peacebuilding lense does not offer much space for optimism. Iraq is far from low on the international poverty scale, but if one adds the death and displacements inflicted by Saddam to the current death toll (100,000), the increasing number of

¹¹ The triangle is a metaphor for the peacebuilding space after civil war. Available space is determined by the interaction of the triangle’s three sides: Local Capacities (LC), International Capacities (IC), and Hostility (H) level. The greater Local and International Capacities and the smaller the Hostility level, the greater the space for peace. We assume a strictly positive level of IC, given the support and legitimacy offered sovereign states by international law and norms. This positive level of international support is denoted by the constant ic_0 which ensures that IC cannot be zero. All three variables, LC, IC, and H can be measured as indices, ranging from 0 to 1 (maximum).

¹² These graphs come from *Making War and Making Peace* (PUP, forthcoming), chapter 3.

factions, the ethno/religious twist to the conflict currently emerging among the Sunni, Shia and Kurds and the very weak consent now reflected in the transitional government, the prospects for peace ride very heavily on whether the election later this month can establish a legitimate peace/polity and whether then the US and UN presence will become a constructive element in creating a self-sustaining peace.

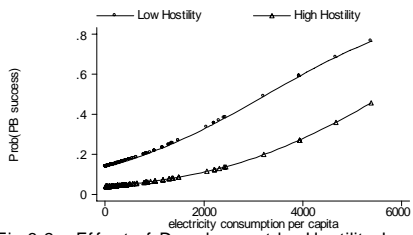


Fig.3.2a: Effect of Development by Hostility Level

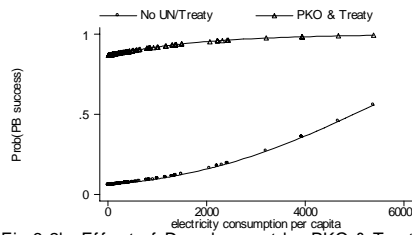


Fig.3.2b: Effect of Development by PKO & Treaty

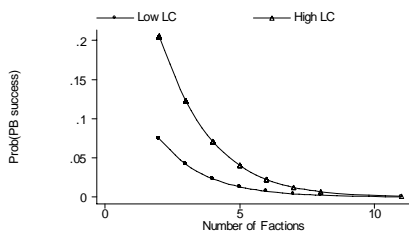


Fig.3.2c: Effect of Factions for Low & High LC

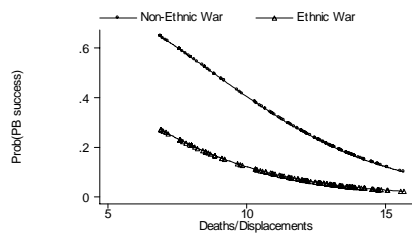


Fig.3.2d: Effect of Deaths, Displacements by War Type

Figure 3.2: Predictors of Probability of Peacebuilding Success