

# Forced to Be Free?

## Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Rarely Leads to Democratization

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Is foreign-imposed regime change by democratic states an effective means of spreading democracy? The answer to this question is of great importance to U.S. foreign policy and the foreign policies of other democracies because regime change operations can be costly. The United States, by some estimates, has expended \$3 trillion to bring democracy to Iraq after U.S. policymakers promised before the invasion that removing Saddam Hussein and democratizing the country could be done at minimal cost.<sup>1</sup> U.S. military forces suffered nearly 37,000 casualties (4,500 dead) in Iraq from 2003 to 2011 and more than 17,000 casualties (2,100 dead) in Afghanistan through September 2012.<sup>2</sup> Despite these substantial investments of blood and treasure, neither country has yet made a transition to democracy.<sup>3</sup> The effectiveness of foreign-imposed regime change (FIRC) for spreading democracy also matters greatly to citizens of countries targeted for transform-

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1. Joseph E. Stiglitz and Linda J. Bilmes, *The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008).

2. See Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, <http://www.icasualties.org>. Forced democratization is not always this costly: U.S. forces suffered only about forty deaths total in successful democratizing interventions in Grenada and Panama in the 1980s. Some successful cases, however—such as the overhaul of West Germany and Japan after World War II—were even more costly than Afghanistan and Iraq, requiring major wars to defeat the Axis powers and change their regimes.

3. According to Freedom House, an independent organization that monitors democracy worldwide, Afghanistan and Iraq were both considered “not free” in 2011. See Arch Puddington, *Freedom in the World 2012: The Arab Uprisings and Their Global Repercussions* (Washington, D.C.: Freedom House, 2012), <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2012>.

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ative interventions. The removal of the Baathist and Taliban regimes triggered civil war and terrorism that have taken at least 110,000 civilian lives in Iraq since March 2003; at least 14,000 Afghan civilians have been killed since January 2006.<sup>4</sup>

Although democratic states have frequently attempted to spread democracy “at the point of bayonets” over the past century, scholars remain divided about whether sustainable democratic institutions can be imposed through military intervention.<sup>5</sup> Optimists point to successful cases, such as the transformation of West Germany and Japan into consolidated democracies after World War II, as evidence that democracy can be engineered by outsiders through military intervention.<sup>6</sup> Pessimists view these successes as outliers from a broader pattern of failure typified by cases such as Iraq, Afghanistan, or U.S. interventions in Central America and the Caribbean in the early twentieth century. Several recent studies have yielded little support for the view that targets of democratic interventions experience much democratization, concluding that intervention has either no effect or even a negative effect on a state’s subsequent democratic trajectory.<sup>7</sup> Still others take a conditional view: these scholars agree that, in gen-

4. Totals for Iraq (as of September 2012) are from Iraq Body Count, <http://www.iraqbodycount.org>. Figures for Afghanistan were compiled from United Nations Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), *Afghanistan Annual Report 2011: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict* (Kabul: UNAMA, February 2012), [http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/Documents/UNAMA%20POC%202011%20Report\\_Final\\_Feb%202012.pdf](http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/Documents/UNAMA%20POC%202011%20Report_Final_Feb%202012.pdf); UNAMA, *Afghanistan Mid-Year Report 2012: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict* (Kabul: UNAMA, July 2012), [http://unama.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=-\\_vDVBQY1OA%3d&tabid=12254&language=en-US](http://unama.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=-_vDVBQY1OA%3d&tabid=12254&language=en-US); and “Afghanistan: ‘Deadliest Six Months’ for Civilians,” BBC News, July 14, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-14149692>.

5. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States and its democratic allies have intervened militarily—at least in part to empower democratic rule—in Panama (1989), Haiti (1994), Bosnia (1995), Yugoslavia/Kosovo (1999), Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003), and Libya (2011).

6. Charles Krauthammer, “Democratic Realism: An American Foreign Policy for a Unipolar World,” 2004 Irving Kristol Lecture, American Enterprise Institute, Washington, D.C., February 10, 2004; Condoleezza Rice, “The Promise of Democratic Peace: Why Promoting Freedom Is the Only Realistic Path to Security,” *Washington Post*, December 11, 2005; and Joshua Muravchik, *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America’s Destiny* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1992), chap. 8. For discussions of this view, see Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006); and Jonathan Monten, “The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in U.S. Strategy,” *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Spring 2005), pp. 112–156. For an example of this view in the scholarly literature, see Nancy Bermeo, “Armed Conflict and the Durability of Electoral Democracy,” in Ronald Krebs and Elizabeth Kier, eds., *In War’s Wake: International Conflict and the Fate of Liberal Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 67–94.

7. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and George W. Downs, “Intervention and Democracy,” *International Organization*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Summer 2006), pp. 627–649; Jeffrey Pickering and Mark Peceny, “Forging Democracy at Gunpoint,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (September 2006), pp. 539–560; Scott Gates and Håvard Strand, “Military Intervention, Democratization, and Post-Conflict Political Stability,” in Magnus Öberg and Kaare Strøm, eds., *Resources, Governance, and Civil Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 147–162; Nils Gleditsch, Lene Siljeholm Christiansen, and Håvard Hegre, “Democratic Jihad? Military Intervention and Democracy,” World Bank Policy

eral, democratic military intervention has little liberalizing effect in target states, but contend that democracies can induce democratization when they explicitly pursue this objective and invest substantial effort and resources.<sup>8</sup>

Previous attempts to determine the effect of military intervention on democratization have been undermined by three problems. First, earlier studies have struggled to identify an appropriate universe of cases. Some tend to define intervention too broadly, including many cases that did not result in armed hostilities, an incursion by one state into the territory of another, a dispute over the composition of the respective governments, or the actual removal of foreign leaders.<sup>9</sup> Other studies focus on the most encompassing forms of intervention—nation building or military occupation—but omit other instances in which democracies used less radical means of intervention to impose new leaders or regimes.<sup>10</sup>

Second, almost all existing studies fail to consider the possibility that states that are targeted for democratization differ systematically from states that are not targeted.<sup>11</sup> For example, states may resort to imposed regime change only after less drastic attempts at democratization have failed, and therefore intervene in states where the prospects for democracy are poor. This tendency would cause studies to underestimate the effect of intervention on subsequent democratic change. Interveners might also choose only those cases where prospects for democratization are good, causing studies to overestimate the effect of intervention on democratization.

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Research Working Paper, No. 4242 (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, June 2007); Arthur A. Goldsmith, "Making the World Safe for Partial Democracy? Questioning the Premises of Democracy Promotion," *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Fall 2008), pp. 120–147; William Easterly, Shanker Satyanath, and Daniel Berger, "Superpower Interventions and Their Consequences for Democracy: An Empirical Inquiry," Working Paper, No. 13992 (Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research, May 2008); and Laurence Whitehead, "The Imposition of Democracy: The Caribbean," in Whitehead, ed., *The International Dimensions of Democratization: Europe and the Americas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 59–92.

8. Mark Peceny, *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Mark Peceny, "Forcing Them to Be Free," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (September 1999), pp. 549–582; Margaret G. Hermann and Charles W. Kegley Jr., "The U.S. Use of Military Intervention to Promote Democracy: Evaluating the Record," *International Interactions*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (June 1998), pp. 91–114; James Meernik, "United States Military Intervention and the Promotion of Democracy," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (November 1996), pp. 391–402; and James Dobbins, John G. McGinn, Keith Crane, Seth G. Jones, Rollie Lal, Andrew Rathmell, Rachel Swanger, and Anga Timilsina, *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Washington, D.C.: RAND, 2003).

9. Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, "Intervention and Democracy."

10. See, for example, Dobbins et al., *America's Role in Nation-Building*; and Minxin Pei and Sara Kasper, *Lessons from the Past: The American Record on Nation-Building* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003).

11. The only exception we know of is Easterly, Satyanath, and Berger, "Superpower Interventions and Their Consequences for Democracy."

Third, the literature remains divided over why intervention causes democratic change. Most analyses emphasize the motives, efforts, and choices of the intervening state—such as undertaking pro-democratic reforms or committing substantial material resources—in explaining democratization outcomes.<sup>12</sup> By focusing on the intervening state, however, these arguments neglect the importance of favorable conditions for democracy—such as economic development and ethnically or religiously homogeneous populations—in targeted states.<sup>13</sup> A key question is therefore whether democratization outcomes after intervention are the product of deliberate policy choices by interveners or a function of how hospitable local conditions are to democratic change. Answering this question will enable policymakers to better understand and assess the risks and future likelihood of success when contemplating regime change.

In this article, we conduct a new analysis of military intervention and democratization that seeks to improve on these shortcomings. First, we introduce a new dataset of foreign-imposed regime change that identifies the universe of interventions that actually change the effective leader or governing institutions of a targeted state. We examine the democratizing effect of FIRC by democracies in the twentieth century, differentiating between cases where interveners change only leaders and those where they change leaders but also help undertake democratic reform. Second, to adjust for the possibility that states may select the easiest (or most difficult) cases for intervention, we use an empirical strategy that identifies pairs of states that did and did not experience FIRC, but were otherwise highly similar, to isolate the effects of FIRC on democratization. Finally, we argue that, in addition to the intentions or incentives

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12. Meernik, “United States Military Intervention and the Promotion of Democracy”; Peceny, *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets*; Peceny, “Forcing Them to Be Free”; Hermann and Kegley, “The U.S. Use of Military Intervention to Promote Democracy”; and Dobbins et al., *America’s Role in Nation-Building*. In Iraq and Afghanistan, many commentators have focused on poor policy choices made by the Bush administration and argue that democratization in these countries could have been more successful had crucial decisions been made differently. Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq* (New York: Times Books, 2005); Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin, 2006), pp. 158–165; and Dov S. Zakheim, *A Vulcan’s Tale: How the Bush Administration Mismanaged the Reconstruction of Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2011).

13. For overviews of the comparative politics literature that emphasizes these and other domestic variables, see Jan Teorell, *Determinants of Democratization: Explaining Regime Change in the World, 1972–2006* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Barbara Geddes, “What Do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years?” *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 2 (June 1999), pp. 115–144; and Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991). Leading works include Seymour M. Lipset, “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (March 1959), pp. 69–105; and Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

of external actors, analysts must take into account domestic conditions in targets of FIRC to explain variation in democratization success and failure.

Our empirical findings support our theoretical expectations. First, we find that states that experience FIRC initiated by democracies on average gain no significant democratic benefit compared with similar states where democracies did not intervene. Second, successful democratization following FIRC depends on both the strategy adopted by the intervener and whether domestic conditions in the target state are favorable to democracy. When intervening democracies target individual leaders for removal but leave the underlying political institutions of a regime intact, democratization is unlikely to occur, even if conditions favorable to democracy are present. Interventions that implement concrete, pro-democratic institutional reforms, such as sponsoring elections, can succeed when conditions in the target state are favorable to democracy. When domestic preconditions for democracy are lacking, however, the democratizing efforts of the intervener are largely for naught: states that are economically underdeveloped, ethnically heterogeneous, or lack prior experience with representative government face serious obstacles to democratization, and even outsiders with good intentions are typically unable to surmount these barriers no matter how hard they try.

These conclusions suggest that policymakers contemplating intervention and regime change as a potential path to democracy in foreign states face a paradox. Decapitating a regime by removing its leader may appear to be a quick and low-cost means to initiate democratic change, but decapitation alone is unlikely to succeed. Foreign-imposed change that aims to reform the institutions of a regime, however, can be effective if favorable internal preconditions are present. These conditions, unfortunately, are relatively rare in countries where the costs of intervention are low. Germany and Japan in the 1930s had favorable preconditions for democracy, but overthrowing their governments involved enormous costs. Countries that lack favorable preconditions tend to be weak, and thus the immediate costs of toppling their regimes are low, making them tempting targets. But democracy is unlikely to take hold in these states, and the costs of intervention can grow astronomically in the wake of regime change because the conditions that hinder democratization are also those that increase the likelihood of civil war.

The article proceeds as follows. First, we lay out and critique the current literature on intervention and democracy. Second, we offer our theory and hypotheses for the conditions under which FIRC by democracies leads to democratization. Third, we discuss our research design. Fourth, we present the statistical results, and then conclude by discussing the policy implications of our findings.

## *The Debate about Intervention and the Spread of Democracy*

Scholars who debate whether countries can be forcibly democratized from the outside-in can be divided into three groups: optimists, pessimists, and conditionalists.<sup>14</sup> This section describes and critiques the main positions in this debate.

### INTERVENTION AND DEMOCRACY: THE OPTIMISTS

Scholars and policymakers alike have at times evinced optimism about the usefulness of military force for spreading democracy. Of recent U.S. presidents, George W. Bush was probably the most upbeat in this regard.<sup>15</sup> Although Bush came into office as an opponent of nation building, after the attacks of September 11, 2001, he embraced forceful democratization as a means to combat the terrorist threat that he and others argued emerged from authoritarian states in the Middle East.<sup>16</sup> One of the principal justifications put forward by the Bush administration for invading Iraq and toppling Saddam Hussein was that democratizing Iraq would initiate a wave of liberalization in surrounding Middle Eastern countries, removing repressive regimes that sponsored international terrorism.<sup>17</sup>

Bush's belief that the United States could democratize Iraq was based in part on neoconservative ideology.<sup>18</sup> Neoconservatism holds that the United States not only has a moral imperative to promote democracy but also a strategic interest in doing so because democracies do not fight one another.<sup>19</sup> Neoconserv-

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14. In this article, we focus on the effect of military intervention on democratization. For recent works from the large literature on nonmilitary means of democracy promotion, see Jon C. Pevehouse, "Democracy from the Outside-In? International Organizations and Democratization," *International Organization*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (Summer 2002), pp. 515–549; Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, "International Linkage and Democratization," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (July 2005), pp. 20–34; and Michael McFaul, "Ukraine Imports Democracy: External Influences on the Orange Revolution," *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Fall 2007), pp. 45–83.

15. International democracy promotion has historically been a central aspect of U.S. foreign policy. See, for example, Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 311–345; and G. John Ikenberry, Takashi Inoguchi, and Michael Cox, eds., *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Since the end of the Cold War, however, U.S. presidents have placed greater emphasis on spreading democracy.

16. George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: White House, 2002).

17. George W. Bush, "President Discusses the Future of Iraq," speech given to the American Enterprise Institute, Washington, D.C., February 26, 2003, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030226-11.html>.

18. On the development of neoconservative ideas toward democracy promotion, see Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads*; Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine"; and James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (New York: Viking, 2004).

19. Rice, "The Promise of Democratic Peace"; Bush, "Second Inaugural Address"; and Kraut-

ativism is also relatively optimistic about the possibility that military force can be an effective means to accomplish this goal.<sup>20</sup> As Michael Ledeen put it, "The best democracy program ever invented is the U.S. army."<sup>21</sup> Finally, neoconservatives believe that democracy is transferrable to all cultures, regardless of obstacles such as poverty, social divisions, religious affiliation, or lack of experience with democratic institutions. Bush administration officials used this idea to build public support for the Iraq War in 2002 and 2003. As Bush stated in February 2003, comparing Iraq to Japan and Germany after World War II, "In societies that once bred fascism and militarism, liberty found a permanent home. There was a time when many said that the cultures of Japan and Germany were incapable of sustaining democratic values. Well, they were wrong. Some say the same of Iraq today. They are mistaken."<sup>22</sup>

The view that outsiders can democratize other countries through military force has found some recent theoretical and empirical support in the scholarly literature.<sup>23</sup> Democratization scholars have identified several ways that foreign intervention can lead to positive democratic change. One argument suggests that intervention is often necessary to dismantle and remove abusive political and military institutions that have become entrenched against popular pressure.<sup>24</sup> Others contend that military defeat can discredit ruling elites or foster new elite bargains that favor democracy.<sup>25</sup> Intervention and occupation by a democratic power can make it costly for the armed forces or other potential antidemocratic spoilers to use violence to challenge a new regime; such actions can establish and ensure civilian control over the military.<sup>26</sup> Democratic

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hammer, "Democratic Realism." For an alternative neoconservative strategic rationale for spreading democracy, see Jonathan D. Caverley, "Power and Democratic Weakness: Neoconservatism and Neoclassical Realism," *Millennium*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (May 2010), pp. 593–614.

20. Jeffrey Kopstein, "The Transatlantic Divide over Democracy Promotion," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Spring 2006), pp. 85–98; and Krauthammer, "Democratic Realism."

21. Quoted in Claudia Rosett, "One Down, Dozens More to Go," *Wall Street Journal*, December 16, 2003.

22. Bush, "President Discusses the Future of Iraq."

23. Bermeo, "Armed Conflict and the Durability of Electoral Democracy"; Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Does War Influence Democratization?" in Krebs and Kier, *In War's Wake*, pp. 23–49; and Laurence Whitehead, "Three International Dimensions of Democratization," in Whitehead, *International Dimensions of Democratization*; and Huntington, *The Third Wave*.

24. Nancy Bermeo, "What the Democratization Literature Says—Or Doesn't Say—About Postwar Democratization," *Global Governance*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (April/June 2003), pp. 159–177; and Alfred Stepan, "Paths toward Redemocratization: Theoretical and Comparative Considerations," in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 64–84.

25. Mattei Dogan and John Higley, "Elites, Crises, and Regimes in Comparative Analysis," in Dogan and Higley, eds., *Elites, Crises, and the Origins of Regimes* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998); and John Higley and Michael Burton, "The Elite Variable in Democratic Transitions and Breakdowns," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (February 1989), pp. 17–32.

26. Bermeo, "Armed Conflict and the Durability of Electoral Democracy," p. 73.

regimes established in this way may also have several advantages that contribute to their future durability and reduce the likelihood of breakdown, including access to international resources and links with democratic actors abroad.<sup>27</sup> As Nancy Bermeo observes, “It is ironic that a devastating defeat seems to be an especially propitious setting for a [democratic] transition to be made.”<sup>28</sup>

Some studies find empirical support for the link between intervention and democratization. According to Laurence Whitehead, “[A]pproaching two-thirds of the democracies existing in 1990 owed their origins, at least in part, to deliberate acts of imposition or intervention from without.”<sup>29</sup> Robert Dahl similarly observes that “a high proportion of the countries in which polyarchy [i.e., democracy] existed in 1970 had been occupied or otherwise subject to foreign military intervention at least once since achieving independence.”<sup>30</sup>

#### INTERVENTION AND DEMOCRACY: THE PESSIMISTS

Pessimists variously argue that regime-changing interventions are likely to provoke a nationalist backlash against political institutions imposed from the outside;<sup>31</sup> to weaken domestic institutions by cultivating dependency on external support;<sup>32</sup> or to founder on a lack of knowledge or influence over local politics and actors.<sup>33</sup> As Francis Fukuyama observes, “[M]ost nation-builders soon find that their ability to shape the local society is very limited.”<sup>34</sup>

One rigorous attempt to examine this question is Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and George Downs’s study of military intervention and democracy. This study compares the democratic trajectories of states that did and did not experience military intervention by a democracy from 1946 to 2001. The results are striking: whether the intervener is the United States or some other democracy, targets of intervention experience no meaningful degree of democratization afterward.<sup>35</sup> Bueno de Mesquita and Downs contend that intervention by de-

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27. *Ibid.*, pp. 91–93.

28. Bermeo, “What the Democratization Literature Says—Or Doesn’t Say—About Postwar Democratization,” p. 162.

29. Whitehead, “Three International Dimensions of Democratization,” p. 9.

30. Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 193.

31. John Mearsheimer, “Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War: Realism versus Neo-Conservatism,” *OpenDemocracy.net*, May 19, 2005, [http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-americanpower/morgenthau\\_2522.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-americanpower/morgenthau_2522.jsp).

32. Francis Fukuyama, *State-Building: Order and Governance in the Twenty-first Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 37–39; and Donald Rumsfeld, “Beyond Nation Building,” remarks delivered by Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, 11th Annual Salute to Freedom, Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum, New York City, New York, February 14, 2003.

33. Fukuyama, *State-Building*, p. 37.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

35. Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, “Intervention and Democracy,” p. 647. Nor does intervention by the United Nations prompt democratization.



mocracies fails to spur democratization because democratic interveners have no incentive to build true democracy in states where they intervene. Democratic leaders care most about their own political survival, and institutionalizing a democratic system in another state does not serve this goal. From the perspective of a democratic leader in an intervening state, democracy induces uncertainty because “there is no guarantee that a candidate sympathetic to the policy goals of the intervener will even be running much less be victorious.” It is thus “safer and less costly” to empower a dictator because autocratic leaders do not have to cater to the whims of their population; they can undertake policies that benefit the intervener. Democratic interventions thus fail to spread democracy by design.<sup>36</sup>

Bueno de Mesquita and Downs’s argument may be unusual in insisting that democracies purposefully refrain from propagating democracy abroad, but their empirical result is common: several other studies find that although democratic intervention may have a small positive effect on target democratization, it does not instigate transitions to consolidated democracy.<sup>37</sup>

#### INTERVENTION AND DEMOCRACY: THE CONDITIONALISTS

Conditionalists eschew categorical judgments in favor of identifying factors associated with better or worse democratic outcomes among countries that experience intervention. One of the leading explanations for variation in the success or failure of interventions concerns the level of effort put forward by the intervener(s). A study led by James Dobbins, for example, argues that although a number of factors contribute to nation-building success, the single most important variable “is the level of effort the United States and the international community put into their democratic transformations. . . . This higher level of input accounts in significant measure for the higher level of output measured in the development of democratic institutions and economic growth.”<sup>38</sup> Dobbins shows that Germany, one of the clearest success stories, had by far the highest number of U.S. occupation troops per capita of any U.S. nation-building effort in the last sixty years. Germany also received the largest

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36. *Ibid.*, pp. 631–632. For the broader theory on which this argument is based, see Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003).

37. Gleditsch, Christiansen, and Hegre, “Democratic Jihad?” p. 39; Hermann and Kegley, “The U.S. Use of Military Intervention to Promote Democracy,” p. 97; and Pickering and Peceny, “Forging Democracy at Gunpoint,” pp. 549–555. Unlike Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, Pickering and Peceny find that UN intervention increases the probability of transitions to democracy. Pickering and Peceny, “Forging Democracy at Gunpoint,” pp. 552–553.

38. Dobbins et al., *America’s Role in Nation-Building*, p. xix. Nation building is typically defined as “a deliberate process of democratization administered through foreign intervention.” Jason Brownlee, “Can America Nation-Build?” *World Politics*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (January 2007), pp. 314–340, at p. 316.

total amount of aid of all cases in the first two years of its occupation, although not the largest in per capita terms. Two cases that Dobbins considers partial successes—Kosovo and Bosnia—had the second and third most occupying troops per capita, respectively, and were also the top two recipients of aid per capita and as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP). Haiti, by contrast—a failure of nation building—had one of the smallest numbers of troops and lowest levels of aid per capita.

A second conditional argument highlights the pro-democracy intentions or actions of interveners. Several studies from the 1990s argued that U.S. military interventions exert a positive effect on democratization only when the objective of these interventions is explicitly to liberalize the target state. In an examination of U.S. interventions from 1950 to 1990, James Meernik found that intervention by itself had little discernible impact on subsequent levels of democracy in target states. When “the U.S. president declared democracy was a goal of the intervention,” however, these operations resulted in positive democratic change.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Peceny’s study of twentieth-century U.S. military interventions concluded that when the United States took concrete actions to promote democratic reform, such as supervising elections, targets were significantly more likely to undergo democratic transitions.<sup>40</sup> Margaret Hermann and Charles Kegley, analyzing U.S. interventions since 1945, also found evidence that interventions intended to promote democracy succeeded, whereas “American interventions that were not focused on governmental reform . . . resulted in the target state becoming more autocratic.”<sup>41</sup>

A final set of arguments identifies conditions in the target state—not interveners’ efforts or actions—as the key variables influencing the success or failure of military interventions in producing democratic change. This view draws on the comparative politics literature on democratization, which seeks to identify factors associated with democratic transition, consolidation, and breakdown, such as a state’s level of wealth, the extent of ethnic or social divisions in a society, whether a state has any prior experience with democracy, or a state’s level of external and internal security threat.<sup>42</sup>

Several scholars argue that these factors also strongly influence the likelihood that foreign intervention will result in sustainable democratic change.<sup>43</sup>

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39. Meernik, “United States Military Intervention and the Promotion of Democracy,” p. 399.

40. Peceny, *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets*, pp. 183–216.

41. Hermann and Kegley, “The U.S. Use of Military Intervention to Promote Democracy,” p. 98.

42. Geddes, “What Do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years?”; Lipset, “Some Social Requisites of Democracy”; Przeworski et al., *Democracy and Development*; and Huntington, *The Third Wave*.

43. Pei and Kasper, *Lessons from the Past*; Brownlee, “Can America Nation-Build?”; Eva Bellin, “The Iraqi Intervention and Democracy in Comparative Historical Perspective,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 119, No. 4 (Winter 2004/05), pp. 595–608; and Daniel Byman, “Constructing a Dem-

Andrew Enterline and Michael Greig, for example, examine the survival of “imposed democracies,” defined as “democratic governments installed by a foreign power in which the foreign power plays an important role in the establishment, promotion, and maintenance of the institutions of government.”<sup>44</sup> Enterline and Greig find that the level of wealth in imposed democracies and the degree of ethnic or religious fractionalization affect the survival of these regimes: only 40 percent of imposed democracies with high levels of ethnic fractionalization survive their first decade, and just one-quarter of the poorest such states last for twenty years.<sup>45</sup>

#### CRITICAL EVALUATION

The evidence behind each of the views discussed above has important weaknesses.

**THE OPTIMISTS.** The difficulty with the democratization optimists’ argument is the historical rarity of successes. One study of nation building, for example, counts only four successful cases of democratization out of sixteen attempts, a success rate of 25 percent.<sup>46</sup> Aside from West Germany and Japan after World War II, there are few positive outcomes to point to, and hardly any in less developed countries. The failure thus far of Afghanistan and Iraq to join the ranks of consolidated democracies conforms to this trend.

**THE PESSIMISTS.** Democratization pessimists initially appear to be on firmer ground, yet theoretical and methodological questions remain. Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, for example, argue that democratic leaders have no incentives to promote democracy abroad when in fact there are many instances where democracies have attempted to set up democratic systems by force. There are obvious cases where democracies have imposed autocratic strongmen abroad, but many cases where they have done the opposite. Famously, Britain and the United States demanded the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers in World War II and supervised the thoroughgoing transformation of Italy, Japan, Austria, and the western half of Germany into democracies. More recently, the United States turned out Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega and facilitated his replacement by a democratic system; negotiated the Dayton accords that installed democratic institutions (however dys-

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ocratic Iraq: Challenges and Opportunities,” *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Summer 2003), pp. 48–78.

44. Andrew J. Enterline and J. Michael Greig, “Against All Odds? The History of Imposed Democracy and the Future of Iraq and Afghanistan,” *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (October 2008), p. 323.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 335–339.

46. Pei and Kasper, *Lessons from the Past*.

functional) in Bosnia; and overturned repressive regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq and attempted to bring representative government to those countries. Although the jury is still out on the democratic transformations in Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, the actions of U.S. policymakers in these cases defy Bueno de Mesquita and Downs's logic. Because Bueno de Mesquita and Downs argue that democratic leaders intentionally empower autocrats after interventions, the failure of certain countries to democratize supports their theory only if the intervening democracy purposefully empowered nondemocratic elites. If democracy failed to take root despite interveners' efforts to facilitate democracy, that does not constitute evidence for Bueno de Mesquita and Downs's argument, but rather for arguments about the conditions under which imposed democracy succeeds or fails.

A second issue with the pessimists' position concerns the appropriateness of their research designs. The principal problem is that the independent variable—intervention—is loosely operationalized. Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, for example, in addition to using data on UN peacekeeping and intervention in civil wars, code as interveners "any state with a Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) hostility level score above 1; that is, any state that actively participated in a militarized dispute provided it is not coded as the initiator in the MID data."<sup>47</sup> No effort is made to determine whether interveners in these cases actually changed leaders or governing institutions. Pickering and Peceny use a more appropriate measure of intervention consisting of the "movement of regular troops or forces (airborne, seaborne, shelling, etc.) of one country inside another, in the context of some political issue or dispute."<sup>48</sup> Although these data track the direction of intervention—supportive of, or in opposition to, a target government—they do not indicate whether interveners actually overturned—or otherwise tried to change—leaders or governing institutions in the target state.

Each of these studies contains more than 1,000 cases of intervention. Disputes over government composition, however, or actual removal of foreign leaders, are exceedingly rare. A mere 205 of the 5,600 dispute participants

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47. Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, "Intervention and Democracy," p. 637. The MID hostility-level variable ranges from 1 to 5; only levels 4 and 5 involve the actual use of military force. Levels 2 and 3 are defined respectively as "threat to use force" and "display of force." Faten Ghosn and Glenn Palmer, "Codebook for the Militarized Interstate Dispute Data, Version 3.0," April 14, 2003, <http://correlatesofwar.org/>. Of the 1,456 countries in the MID data with a hostility level of 2 or 3, only 23 of them (1.6 percent) experienced any fatalities. Figures are calculated from version 3.10 of the participant-level (MIDB) dataset.

48. Many of these interventions consist of cross-border aerial, naval, or artillery bombardment rather than troop incursions, but Pickering and Peceny exclude these cases. Pickering and Peceny, "Forging Democracy at Gunpoint," p. 546.

(3.7 percent) in the MID dataset, for example, are coded as making demands that involved changes in the adversary's regime or government. Similarly, the most authoritative collection of information concerning how leaders leave office identifies only 72 who were removed by foreign actors (2.4 percent of more than 3,000 leaders) from 1875 to 2004.<sup>49</sup> In other words, few interventions actually attempt—or result in—regime change. Existing studies are thus likely filled with many false cases of intervention.

THE CONDITIONALISTS. Finally, studies that make conditional arguments regarding postintervention democratization leave room for skepticism. Proponents of the view that targets democratize when democratic interveners specifically undertake democratic reforms have produced little systematic evidence to support their argument. Meernik's study, for example, is limited to a small sample of twenty-seven U.S. interventions and tracks democratic change for only three years afterward.<sup>50</sup> Peceny's work includes more interventions and covers a longer time period, but is confined to U.S. interventions and measures democratization outcomes decades after U.S. intervention ended, which increases the likelihood that factors other than intervention are responsible for any positive democratic change.<sup>51</sup> Finally, most studies find only that pro-democratic intervention made targets more democratic, not that they became consolidated democracies.<sup>52</sup>

Evidence for the expenditure-of-effort argument is also far from clear-cut.<sup>53</sup> Japan, for example, is an anomaly for the argument, as it was garrisoned by low levels of troops and received a small amount of aid in relation to the size of its population, yet emerged as one of the few unqualified successes. Even Germany—the other big success—obtained far less aid per capita than did Bosnia and Kosovo, and only marginally more than Haiti, the biggest failure.<sup>54</sup> The classification of the two Balkan states as successes (even partial ones) is also dubious; David Edelstein, by contrast, remarks that the missions in these places “have largely stagnated with hardened ethnic divisions remaining in place.”<sup>55</sup> According to a 2006 report by the Congressional Research Service,

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49. H.E. Goemans, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Giacomo Chiozza, “Introducing *Archigos*: A Dataset of Political Leaders,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (March 2009), pp. 269–283.

50. Meernik, “United States Military Intervention and the Promotion of Democracy.”

51. Peceny, *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets*, pp. 202–207.

52. Hermann and Kegley, “The U.S. Use of Military Intervention to Promote Democracy”; and Meernik, “United States Military Intervention and the Promotion of Democracy.”

53. Dobbins et al., *America's Role in Nation-Building*.

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 150–158.

55. David M. Edelstein, *Occupational Hazards: Success and Failure in Military Occupation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008), p. 167. See also *ibid.*, pp. 17, 52. Neither country was judged “free” in 2011 by Freedom House. Puddington, *Freedom in the World 2012*, pp. 14, 16.

Iraq has received comparable levels of aid to Germany and twice the amount of aid that Japan received from 1946 to 1952, and it was the largest recipient of U.S. official development assistance from 2004 to 2008.<sup>56</sup> The evidence that investment of time and effort is the key to nation-building success is thus more mixed than Dobbins indicates.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, studies of imposed democracy that highlight the importance of domestic conditions in explaining democratization success following intervention have been dominated by qualitative studies focusing on single cases, such as Iraq,<sup>58</sup> or by studies that use a different universe of cases.<sup>59</sup> Almost 90 percent of the imposed democracies in Enterline and Greig's work, for example, consist of states where a democratic government was put in place at the time of decolonization. Only five of the forty-three cases in their study were independent states where a nondemocratic government was forcibly replaced with a democratic one.<sup>60</sup> Existing empirical evidence for the importance of domestic conditions as the key factor driving democratization success after intervention thus rests largely on the experience of postcolonial states rather than states that have experienced FIRC. Although the democratic trajectory of imposed regimes in former colonies is interesting (as is the more general question of the influence of colonial legacies on the institutions and development of postcolonial states),<sup>61</sup> it is less relevant to contemporary policymakers contemplating regime change as a solution to enduring conflicts with other independent states.

### *A Theory of Foreign-Imposed Regime Change and Democratization*

In this section, we offer a two-step theory of the conditions under which foreign-imposed regime change fosters democratization. No single factor determines whether FIRC promotes democracy. Interveners, we argue, must undertake concrete democratic reforms, but these steps will falter where important preconditions for democracy are absent.

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56. Nina Serafino, Curt Tarnoff, and Dick K. Nanto, "U.S. Occupation Assistance: Iraq, Germany, and Japan Compared," Congressional Research Service, Report for Congress, March 23, 2006, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA458270>.

57. The conclusions of studies of nation building, moreover, rest on case study evidence from states in which nation building occurred; there is no comparative analysis of the democratic development of similar states that did not experience foreign occupation.

58. Byman, "Constructing a Democratic Iraq"; and Bellin, "Iraqi Intervention and Democracy in Comparative Historical Perspective."

59. Enterline and Greig, "Against All Odds?"; and Pei and Kasper, *Lessons from the Past*.

60. Enterline and Greig, "Against All Odds?" p. 326.

61. See, for example, Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson, "The Colonial Or-

CONDITIONS FAVORABLE TO DEMOCRACY

First, many democratization scholars posit a strong relationship between a state's level of economic development and democratic institutions.<sup>62</sup> Although the link between development and democracy is complex, economic growth is associated with several social and political changes that appear to favor democracy, including rising personal incomes, greater access to education, an expanding middle class, and a stronger civil society and independent media. States that are more advanced economically may also have more developed bureaucratic institutions, another factor associated with a greater potential to democratize. As a result, wealthier autocracies may be more likely to transition to democracy, and they may be less at risk of backsliding once they make the transition. According to Larry Diamond, "[T]he notion that there is a strong association between a country's level of economic development and its likelihood of being a democracy has been one of the most prominent theories of the social sciences, and one of the best sustained by the evidence."<sup>63</sup> Economically developed states thus possess the most important building block for democracy.

Second, democracy may be more difficult to sustain in countries with greater ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity.<sup>64</sup> Social and ethnic diversity can impede the development of democratic institutions in several ways. Political parties are more likely to organize predominantly around ethnic cleavages, encouraging politicians to "outbid" one another by appealing to their respective in-groups and making consensus and compromise more difficult.<sup>65</sup> Heterogeneous societies also run a greater risk of sectarian violence, further hardening communal boundaries and inhibiting the functioning of democracy.<sup>66</sup> Minority groups may fear insecurity or a loss of power from open electoral competition,

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igins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation," *American Economic Review*, Vol. 91, No. 5 (December 2001), pp. 1369–1401.

62. Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, "How Development Leads to Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 2 (March/April 2009), pp. 33–48; Teorell, *Determinants of Democratization*; Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy"; Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, "Endogenous Democratization," *World Politics*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (July 2003), pp. 517–549; and Przeworski et al., *Democracy and Development*.

63. Larry Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies throughout the World* (New York: Times Books, 2008), pp. 95–96.

64. Teorell, *Determinants of Democratization*; Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Horowitz, "Democracy in Divided Societies," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (October 1993), pp. 18–38; Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977). For recent challenges to this argument, see Steven Fish and Robin Brooks, "Does Diversity Hurt Democratization?" *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (January 2004), pp. 154–166.

65. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, pp. 291–332.

66. Nicholas Sambanis, "Do Ethnic and Nonethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes? A Theoretical and Empirical Inquiry (Part 1)," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (June 2001), pp. 259–282.

particularly in the absence of strong state institutions or constitutional limits on the exercise of power by the majority.<sup>67</sup> New studies have also shown that when groups are excluded from political power at the center, or when a group is significantly poorer or richer than average, ethnic civil war is more likely.<sup>68</sup>

A third important precondition for democracy identified by many analysts is past experience with representative government.<sup>69</sup> Previous democratic regimes may have laid an institutional foundation that states can make use of, rather than building entirely new institutions. Populations that have had some experience with democracy may be more likely both to demand greater political participation and to overthrow despotic rulers who deny them popular sovereignty. Political elites may have previously been socialized into a political system characterized by norms of compromise and the nonviolent resolution of political disputes. States that have had some experience with democratic institutions in the past therefore may be more likely to sustain them in the future.

Finally, the act of intervention—by itself or in combination with some of the preconditions just discussed—may increase the likelihood of civil war, which could in turn hinder democratization. Goran Peic and Dan Reiter find that foreign-imposed regime change increases the probability of civil conflict afterward in target states, and that this effect is more pronounced when interveners change the target's political institutions in addition to its leadership.<sup>70</sup> Another study shows that FIRC increases the likelihood of civil war in countries where the preconditions for democracy are absent: poor and heterogeneous societies.<sup>71</sup> The effect of poverty on civil war is well known even if the precise causal mechanism through which poverty influences conflict is disputed, and FIRC increases the likelihood of civil war more in poor countries than it does in rich ones. Foreign-imposed regime change in heterogeneous states touches

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67. Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring 1993), pp. 27–47.

68. See, respectively, Lars-Erik Cederman, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min, "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis," *World Politics*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 2010), pp. 87–119; and Lars-Erik Cederman, Nils B. Weidmann, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 105, No. 3 (August 2011), pp. 478–495.

69. Bruce E. Moon, "Long Time Coming: Prospects for Democracy in Iraq," *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Spring 2009), pp. 115–148; and Bellin, "Iraqi Intervention and Democracy in Comparative Historical Perspective," pp. 599–600.

70. Goran Peic and Dan Reiter, "Foreign-Imposed Regime Change, State Power, and Civil War Onset, 1920–2004," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (July 2011), pp. 453–475. See also Lars-Erik Cederman, Simon Hug, and Lutz F. Krebs, "Democratization and Civil War: Empirical Evidence," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (July 2010), pp. 377–394.

71. Alexander B. Downes, "Catastrophic Success: Foreign-Imposed Regime Change and Civil War," paper presented at the International Studies Association annual convention, Montreal, Canada, March 16–19, 2011.



off struggles for power among contending groups or results in status reversals for groups displaced from power, which may fight to regain their previous position. This is what happened in Iraq and Afghanistan—both highly heterogeneous countries—and the resulting insurgencies have helped slow democratic transitions in those countries to a crawl. Democratization after FIRC is thus hindered by the fact that FIRC sometimes causes democracy-inhibiting civil wars.

#### INTERVENER STRATEGY

Preconditions for democracy are important in creating fertile grounds for foreign-imposed regime change to bring about positive democratic change, but by themselves they cannot ensure democratization unless the external intervener takes the initiative and enacts democratic reforms. A second key factor is therefore whether the intervener removes a state's primary leader, but leaves the main political institutions and selection procedures that make up the regime intact (leadership FIRC), or whether the intervener overthrows and replaces a state's political institutions as well (institutional FIRC).<sup>72</sup>

There are several reasons to expect that leadership FIRC is unlikely to be a catalyst for democratic change. Institutions—such as elections, parliaments, and constitutions—are not generated spontaneously; they require effort to design and construct. If foreign interveners install a new leader but make no effort to build democratic institutions, the onus falls on the leader they empower, who may be more interested in securing and extending his rule than in building democracy.<sup>73</sup> Leaders who continue to rely on the support of foreign interveners to remain in power may also fail to cultivate a broad domestic base of support, making them more reluctant to risk their rule to open democratic elections. Moreover, external interveners sometimes take steps to inhibit democratic change, such as putting a dictator in office and strengthening the state's repressive apparatus, as when the United States returned the shah to power in

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72. This argument builds on the work of Peceny and Meernik, who identify the pro-democratic intent or actions of the intervener as the key conditioning factor, but we look beyond U.S. interventions, account for possible sources of selection bias, and show that focusing on the intervener is not enough: democratization success also hinges on the presence of favorable domestic conditions. Peceny, *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets*; and Meernik, "United States Military Intervention and the Promotion of Democracy." Peic and Reiter draw a similar distinction between leadership and institutional regime changes, but examine the impact of FIRC only on civil conflict, not on democracy. Peic and Reiter, "Foreign-Imposed Regime Change, State Power, and Civil War Onset." Elizabeth N. Saunders refers to interventions that seek to reshape institutions as "transformative," as opposed to "nontransformative" interventions that leave institutions unaffected. Saunders, *Leaders at War: How Presidents Shape Military Intervention* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 5.

73. Robert A. Pape argues against decapitation with airpower partially on the grounds that the new leader may be worse than the old one. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).

Iran in 1953. Similarly, the Soviet Union clearly had no interest in instilling democracy in the eastern European countries it occupied at the end of World War II. Many of these countries were promising candidates for democratization (some, such as Czechoslovakia, had previously been democracies), but without external assistance in jump-starting the process by helping to create democratic institutions, positive preconditions for democracy cannot be translated into actual democratic change.

#### SUMMARY AND HYPOTHESES

In sum, we expect foreign-imposed regime change by democracies to make targets more democratic and increase the likelihood of a transition to consolidated democracy when interveners take concrete steps to implement democratic reforms and targets possess the preconditions for democracy. This argument implies the following three hypotheses.

H1: The effect of institutional FIRC on democratization increases as targets' level of economic development increases.

H2: The effect of institutional FIRC on democratization increases as targets' level of ethnic homogeneity increases.

H3: The effect of institutional FIRC on democratization is greater if targets have previous experience with democracy.

By contrast, democratization is unlikely to occur when either of these two factors—preconditions for democracy or intervener actions to facilitate reform—is absent.

H4: Institutional FIRC has no effect on democratization in the absence of preconditions for democracy.

H5: Leadership FIRC has no effect on democratization.

#### *Research Design*

This section presents the research design we employ to estimate the effect of foreign-imposed regime change on democratization. We begin by defining these two variables. We then briefly discuss the matching method we use to account for the reality that interventions are not randomly assigned.<sup>74</sup>

#### CODING DEMOCRATIZATION

There is no perfect way to measure democracy or democratization. Scholars disagree not only about what democracy consists of, but also whether it is a di-

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74. For a more detailed discussion, interested readers are directed to the online appendix.

chotomous or continuous phenomenon.<sup>75</sup> Many distinguish between electoral democracy and liberal democracy—between a minimal definition of democracy that includes only regular free-and-fair elections and a broader definition of democracy that includes the rule of law, protections for human rights and civil liberties, pluralistic values, and constitutional limits on the power of the state.<sup>76</sup>

Although we cannot resolve this debate, we employ the leading dataset of democracy used by scholars of international relations and comparative politics, the Polity index.<sup>77</sup> The Polity index is a widely used measure of the level of democracy in a political system. The index comprises several components that take into account how political leaders are recruited, whether there are institutionalized constraints on executive power, and the degree of political competition. The Polity2 variable ranks states on a 21-point scale by subtracting each state's autocracy score from its democracy score; the resulting variable ranges from -10 (most autocratic) to +10 (most democratic), with states scoring +6 or higher considered to be consolidated democracies. For ease of interpretation, we transform the index to make it strictly positive by adding eleven; the resulting variable ranges from 1 to 21, with the threshold for consolidated democracy set at 17.

We use the Polity index to create two dependent variables that capture both change in a state's level of democracy and whether a state crosses the threshold of consolidated democracy. The first dependent variable measures the change in a state's Polity2 score from one year to the next. For example, the dependent variable for Uganda in 1985 is the difference between its Polity score in 1985 and its Polity score in 1984. The resulting variable ranges from -20 to +20, although in our dataset the largest one-year change in either direction is 19.

The advantage of a continuous measure of democracy is that it not only captures dramatic changes in a country's level of democracy, but also tracks finer-grained variation. Many scholars have cautioned, however, that on a broad scale such as Polity, minor changes up or down the spectrum may not be meaningful in substantive terms or comparable across countries.<sup>78</sup> Ultimately

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75. David Collier and Robert Adcock, "Democracy and Dichotomies: A Pragmatic Approach to Choices about Concepts," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 2 (June 1999), pp. 537-565; and Gerardo L. Munck and Jay Verkuilen, "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (February 2002), pp. 5-34.

76. Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003); Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "What Democracy Is . . . and Is Not," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Summer 1991), pp. 75-88; and Dahl, *Polyarchy*.

77. Monty G. Marshall and Keith Jaggers, *Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2010*, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>. To ensure that our results do not depend solely on Polity's codings, we check for robustness below using data on democracy from other sources.

78. See Kristian Skrede Gleditsch and Michael D. Ward, "Double Take: A Reexamination of De-

what matters is whether a country makes a successful transition to institutionalized democracy. The second dependent variable, therefore, codes whether a state experienced a democratic transition in a particular year. In other words, a country must shift from less than 17 on the Polity index to 17 or above.<sup>79</sup> After a state experiences a democratic transition, we code the variable as missing because it is no longer possible for that country to transition to democracy. If the country reverts to autocracy, however, it is then eligible to experience another democratic transition and is coded zero unless or until it undergoes another democratic transition.

#### DEFINING AND CODING FOREIGN-IMPOSED REGIME CHANGE

We define foreign-imposed regime change as the forcible or coerced removal of the effective leader of one state—which remains formally sovereign afterward—by the government of another state.<sup>80</sup> Three conditions must be met for a case to be coded as FIRC. First, targets of FIRC must be independent, sovereign states. We do not consider the imposition of regimes on newly independent states by departing colonial powers, for example, to constitute FIRC. This excludes cases such as U.S. interventions in Cuba and the Philippines following the Spanish-American War of 1898. Although the United States did impose new political systems in Cuba and the Philippines, these countries were not independent states prior to the war.

Second, targets of FIRC must also retain at least nominal sovereignty after regime change occurs. Targets of intervention that are formally annexed by an intervener—such as Nazi Germany’s incorporation of Austria, Czechoslovakia, and much of Poland (1938–39)—are excluded from the universe of FIRC, as are states that are absorbed into empires, such as Britain’s conquest of Sind (1843) and Punjab (1846).<sup>81</sup> The rulers and governing structures of states conquered and absorbed by other states are changed as a matter of course, but these changes are a by-product of conquest rather than an effort to establish a

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mocracy and Autocracy in Modern Polities,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (June 1997), pp. 361–383; and Munck and Verkuilen, “Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy.”

79. We set a low bar for democratic transitions by not requiring that states remain above this level for a minimum amount of time. On defining democratic transitions and consolidation, see Andreas Schedler, “What is Democratic Consolidation?” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (April 1998), pp. 91–107; Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); and Huntington, *The Third Wave*.

80. For a similar definition, see W. Michael Reisman, “The Manley O. Hudson Lecture: Why Regime Change Is (Almost Always) a Bad Idea,” *American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 98, No. 3 (July 2004), p. 516.

81. This criterion rules out instances of what Tanisha M. Fazal terms “state death” when these cases consist of annexation. Fazal, *State Death: The Politics and Geography of Conquest, Occupation, and Annexation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 31–33.

new regime in an independent state. Interveners may temporarily occupy and govern a state whose leader they have overthrown as long as the assumption of power is not intended to be permanent.<sup>82</sup> Examples include the U.S. occupations of Haiti (1915–34) and the Dominican Republic (1916–24), and Germany's occupations of the Benelux countries and Denmark in World War II.<sup>83</sup> Interveners may also install puppet regimes while garrisoning target countries with troops, as Nazi Germany did in Norway, Yugoslavia, and Greece. In some cases, the interval between FIRC and formal annexation is brief: the Soviet Union ousted the leaders of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in June 1940, and then annexed these countries in August. These states are coded as experiencing FIRCs, and then exiting the international system two months later.

Third, an external actor must be primarily responsible for deposing the leader. There are three specific circumstances that we argue fit this description and thus code as FIRCs. In the most common one, interveners invade with their own military forces to remove a leader, such as the United States did in late 1989 to apprehend Panamanian President Manuel Noriega. In a less frequent scenario, the threat of force is enough to prompt a leader to relinquish power, as when Haitian junta leader Gen. Raoul Cedras agreed to step down with the U.S. 82d Airborne Division poised to come ashore in October 1994. In this case, we require that the intervener issue a verbal or written demand that the targeted leader step aside, and that this demand be accompanied by an explicit threat to use force in case of noncompliance, or an implicit threat of force communicated by the movement of military forces to the target state.<sup>84</sup> For example, we code the ouster of Costa Rican President Federico Tinoco in 1919 as a FIRC because (1) President Woodrow Wilson refused to recognize Tinoco and demanded that he leave office; and (2) the United States dispatched warships to Costa Rican waters, after which Tinoco resigned and fled the country.<sup>85</sup>

In the final scenario, external actors work behind the scenes to overthrow the targeted regime using their intelligence agencies or covert military force, or by providing critical aid to domestic actors. This category can be ambiguous regarding the extent to which the resulting change of regime is attributable to external versus domestic forces. For a change of government to qualify as a

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82. Edelstein argues that the intent to leave is part of what distinguishes an occupation from colonialism. Edelstein, *Occupational Hazards*, p. 3.

83. These countries were run by German officials but were not formally incorporated into the Third Reich. Denmark was allowed to retain its prewar government until August 1943.

84. This corresponds to Todd S. Sechser's definition of a compellent threat. See Sechser, "Militarized Compellent Threats, 1918–2001," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (September 2011), pp. 377–401.

85. Dana G. Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900–1921* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 428, 440.

FIRC in these circumstances, we require evidence that (1) the foreign government officially (although not necessarily publicly) made removing the target regime its objective; (2) agents of the foreign government were present in the target country and working toward regime change; and (3) the extent of the aid provided by foreign forces was of such a magnitude that regime change would have been unlikely to succeed absent that support. Carlos Castillo Armas, for example, stood little chance of overthrowing Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala without U.S.-provided airpower—and the Guatemalan officer corps' belief that the United States would intervene directly if the army repelled Castillo Armas's ragtag invasion force.<sup>86</sup> The Brazilian army, by contrast, received no U.S. aid when it toppled President João Goulart in 1964. President Lyndon Johnson wanted Goulart removed; members of his administration discussed this preference with Brazilian officers; and Johnson ordered a U.S. naval task force to head for Brazil, but the Brazilians needed little encouragement and received no U.S. weapons, and the coup occurred before any U.S. ships arrived in the vicinity.<sup>87</sup> The former is thus coded as a FIRC whereas the latter is not.

According to these criteria, there were 109 cases of FIRC from 1816 to 2008.<sup>88</sup> Although more than 100 FIRCs appear in our dataset, many of these cases are not included in the analysis in this article. Some states had multiple leaders removed in a single year (e.g., Peru 1881 and Guatemala 1954); because our unit of analysis is the country-year, these additional FIRCs are not included in the analysis. Several other countries experienced FIRC shortly before exiting the international system (e.g., Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania 1940). These cases are omitted from the analysis because it is impossible to measure the dependent variable. Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) are also dropped because our source of data on democracy has been unable to code the regime types of these countries. Finally, because there was only one FIRC by a democracy in the nineteenth century, we limit the time span of our analysis to the twentieth century. These omissions—and missing data for a few cases—leave the number of FIRCs in the analysis at 70.

**FIRC BY DEMOCRACIES.** We differentiate FIRCs undertaken by democratic interveners from those carried out by nondemocracies. Interveners that rank 17 or higher on the Polity index are assigned a value of 1 on a dummy variable for in-

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86. Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–1954* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 246, 338.

87. Michael Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions: Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), pp. 77–79. According to Grow, however, “Johnson had been fully prepared to carry out a large-scale U.S. military intervention.” *Ibid.*, p. 79.

88. These cases are listed in the online appendix.

tervener democracy. Interveners with Polity scores less than 17 are coded as autocratic interveners. As shown in the online appendix, from 1816 to 2008, democracies enacted 40 FIRC. Of the 70 FIRC in our analysis, democracies carried out 37 (53 percent) compared with 33 by nondemocracies (47 percent).<sup>89</sup>

Because transitions to democracy may unfold over time, however, the key independent variable in our analysis is whether a country experienced a FIRC by a democracy within the last ten years. This ten-year window enables us to measure the effect of FIRC on democratic change over an extended period of time.<sup>90</sup> A ten-year window allows sufficient time for democratic reforms to be implemented and to take hold, but remains short enough that democratization can still be attributed to FIRC.<sup>91</sup> It also allows us to track and account for variation in democratic change that may occur following FIRC, which we would not be able to do if we looked at targets' Polity scores at particular intervals post-FIRC. In 1995, for example, France intervened in the Comoros Islands to overturn a coup by French mercenary Bob Denard. The country's Polity score initially held steady at 15, but then fell to 9 after another coup, before rebounding in the mid-2000s until the Comoros became a consolidated democracy in 2004. Democratic interveners account for 363 of the 643 FIRC years (56 percent) after 1900.

**LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTIONAL FIRC.** To differentiate the effects of FIRCs by democracies that change only leaders from those that also change institutions, we code two dummy variables denoting whether the intervening democracy replaced one leader with another, or instead took action to democratize the target state's political institutions after deposing a leader. We code a FIRC as "institutional" if an intervener either assisted local authorities in organizing or conducting elections, or made holding elections a condition for recognizing a successor government.<sup>92</sup> For example, the U.S. intervention in Nicaragua in 1926 is coded as an institutional FIRC because after the United States coerced the removal of Emiliano Chamorro, U.S. soldiers supervised Nicaraguan elections in 1928, 1930, and 1932.<sup>93</sup>

Cases where interveners do not participate directly in conducting elections

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89. See the online appendix.

90. In cases where a second FIRC occurred before the initial ten-year period elapsed, we code the period of the initial FIRC as ending in the year before the new FIRC. We then code a new ten-year period as beginning in the year of the second FIRC, and a dummy variable is coded with the regime type of the second intervener.

91. Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, "Intervention and Democracy," p. 638.

92. Interveners may also help draft constitutions, design governing institutions, set up financial institutions, or assist with any manner of additional reforms, but at a minimum they must facilitate free-and-fair elections in some material way that goes beyond mere rhetoric.

93. Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 208.

may still be coded as institutional if the intervener insists that the target hold elections as a condition of normalizing relations, ending sanctions, or removing troops. For example, the U.S. commission sent to the Dominican Republic in 1912 informed President Eladio Victoria that unless he handed over power to a constitutionally elected successor, the United States would cut off the flow of customs receipts to the government, leaving it bereft of revenue in the face of rebellion.<sup>94</sup>

To qualify as an institutional FIRC, elections need to be “free and fair” in the sense that voters are not coerced to cast their ballots for one candidate or another. It is not necessary for suffrage to be universal, however. Several U.S. interventions took place at a time when the political participation of women, blacks, or both in the United States was restricted if not banned. The United States still undertook good-faith efforts to promote democracy as it was understood at the time; these mainly involved holding elections in which more than one candidate and political party was allowed to run. Espousing pro-democracy rhetoric by itself is insufficient to qualify an intervention as an institutional FIRC. Leaders intervene for many reasons; spreading democracy may be one among several arguments made in favor of targeting a foreign regime, or it may become a post hoc justification for intervention undertaken for other motives. We do not try to divine leaders’ true intentions beforehand, but rather look at what policies interveners actually pursued in target countries after they topple the sitting regime.

To code institutional FIRCs, we began with Peceny’s coding of whether or not U.S. leaders adopted “proliberalization” intervention policies. Peceny defines proliberalization policies as “the combination of active support for free-and-fair elections with active promotion of at least one of the following: centrist political parties, reformist interest groups, reductions in human rights abuses, and/or formal subordination of the military to civilian authority.”<sup>95</sup> Our definition is thus broader than Peceny’s, although in practice these other reforms often go hand-in-hand with promoting elections, and almost all of our U.S. cases are also coded by Peceny as instances of proliberalization interventions.<sup>96</sup> We did additional research using material from the *Foreign Relations of the United States* collection and the secondary literature for each U.S. FIRC that appeared on Peceny’s list of cases as well as for those (by the United States but also other democracies) that did not.<sup>97</sup> Ten institutional FIRCs are included in

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94. Sumner Welles, *Naboth’s Vineyard: The Dominican Republic, 1844–1924* (New York: Payson and Clarke, 1928), pp. 697–699.

95. Peceny, *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets*, p. 15.

96. For Peceny’s list, see *ibid.*, pp. 20–21.

97. Cases we code as institutional FIRCs are identified in the online appendix and in table 2.



the analysis (constituting 27 percent of FIRCs by democracies), compared to 27 leadership FIRCs (73 percent).<sup>98</sup>

One coding issue that warrants further discussion is how to deal with Nazi Germany's occupation of six Western European democracies during World War II and their liberation by the Allies in 1944–45. Britain and the United States toppled indigenous Nazi collaborationist governments in France and Norway, and German occupation authorities in Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Luxembourg in the course of winning World War II. We consider all of these cases to be FIRCs, but should they be considered institutional FIRCs? We argue that they should not because the Allies did nothing but restore previously democratic governments to power. All six countries were democracies before experiencing German intervention, and reverted to democracy on their own after liberation. Thus, although these FIRCs restored previous governments to office, the Allies did not take active measures to instill democratic institutions in countries lacking democracy. These countries surely would have remained democracies had they not been overrun by the Wehrmacht. Cases such as these thus seem qualitatively different from cases where an intervener tries to transform a nondemocratic system into a democratic one.

U.S. FIRCs. Finally, because the United States is the greatest repeat offender in our dataset (participating in approximately one-third of all FIRCs since 1900), we assess the democratizing effect of U.S. interventions separately. Some analysts argue, for example, that crusading for democracy abroad has been a consistent theme in U.S. foreign policy, whereas others stress the anti-democratic nature of U.S. interventions and the willingness of the United States to work with dictators.<sup>99</sup> Accordingly, we differentiated FIRCs carried out by the United States from FIRCs enacted by other democracies. The United States participated in 28 of the 37 FIRCs by democracies in our analysis (76 percent); democracies other than the United States participated in 20 (54 percent).<sup>100</sup>

#### CONTROL VARIABLES

We include seven variables to capture the effects of factors previously shown to be correlated with democracy: level of economic development (proxied by

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98. There are actually thirteen institutional FIRCs, but Grenada (1983), Afghanistan (2001), and Iraq (2003) are omitted owing to missing data.

99. Compare Smith, *America's Mission*; and David F. Schmitz, *The United States and Right-Wing Dictatorships, 1965–1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). See also Jeane Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," *Commentary*, Vol. 68, No. 5 (November 1979), pp. 34–45.

100. The United States was the sole intervener in twenty cases; other democracies intervened alone in twelve cases.

the log of a state's energy consumption), state age (how long a state has been independent), previous experience with democracy, whether a state was a British colony, ethnic heterogeneity (proxied by the ethnolinguistic fractionalization index), and whether a state was involved in an interstate or a civil war.<sup>101</sup> To assess whether the effects of FIRCs by democracies are contingent on the target state's level of economic development, ethnic heterogeneity, or previous experience with democracy, we generate interaction terms by multiplying our measures of these factors by dummy variables for institutional and leadership FIRCs.

#### ACCOUNTING FOR SELECTION EFFECTS WITH MATCHING

All studies designed to measure the effect of an intervention—whether it be foreign-imposed regime change or a new cancer drug—must confront the problem of selection bias. Medical trials deal with this problem via randomization, which ensures that the group that receives the drug (the “treated” group) does not differ appreciably from the group that receives the placebo (the “control” group). Researchers can thus confidently attribute any difference in outcome between the two groups to the treatment. The problem with estimating the effect of FIRC on democratization is that states do not randomly select targets for intervention. The danger thus arises that differences in democratization outcomes may stem not from FIRC but from differences between the two groups in some other factor associated with democracy, such as economic development or ethnic homogeneity.

To address the issue of non-random selection, we use a technique that matches cases of FIRC with cases that did not experience FIRC, but which were extremely similar to those that did. According to Michael Gilligan and Ernest Sergenti, “The idea is to compare cases where all other causal variables are as similar as possible so that any difference between the cases can be attributed to the treatment.”<sup>102</sup> This procedure minimizes the risk that our estimate of the effect of FIRC on democratization is biased by systematic differences in where democratic states choose to intervene.<sup>103</sup> Using this method, we con-

101. Detailed information on the sources and coding of these variables is available in the online appendix.

102. Michael Gilligan and Ernest Sergenti, “Do UN Interventions Cause Peace? Using Matching to Improve Causal Inference,” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (July 2008), pp. 90–91. See also Jason Lyall, “Are Coethnics More Effective Counterinsurgents? Evidence from the Second Chechen War,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 104, No. 1 (February 2010), p. 7.

103. To implement matching, we used the MatchIt program. See Daniel E. Ho, Kosuke Imai, Gary King, and Elizabeth A. Stuart, “Matching as Nonparametric Preprocessing for Reducing Model Dependence in Parametric Causal Inference,” *Political Analysis*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Summer 2007), pp. 199–236. It should be noted that this procedure allows for matching only on variables that can be observed and measured. It is still possible that there is bias introduced by unobserved omitted variables. Other ways to deal with selection issues include Heckman selection models and instru-

structured six datasets—one for each type of FIRC we examine.<sup>104</sup> Variables used to match cases of FIRC to similar non-FIRC cases include all seven control variables plus Polity score, population, and region of the world. This procedure—described in detail in the online appendix—yielded datasets in which the mean values for all variables did not differ appreciably across cases that did and did not experience FIRC. In every case, matching greatly reduced the difference in the mean values of all variables between the FIRC and non-FIRC groups (between 85 and 99 percent depending on the type of FIRC). We then evaluate the effects of FIRC using these “most similar” sets of cases, and compare them to the effects generated by the complete, unadjusted dataset.

### *Analysis and Results*

We tackle our five hypotheses in reverse order, first examining the effects of leadership and institutional FIRC on democratization individually and then analyzing their effects conditional on domestic factors in targets. We begin by showing some simple bivariate statistics before moving to multivariate analysis. For both change in level of democracy and democratic transitions, we compare the results of naïve regressions that do not deal with selection bias to results obtained after matching was performed. Finally, we show results for our conditional hypotheses.

#### BIVARIATE ANALYSIS

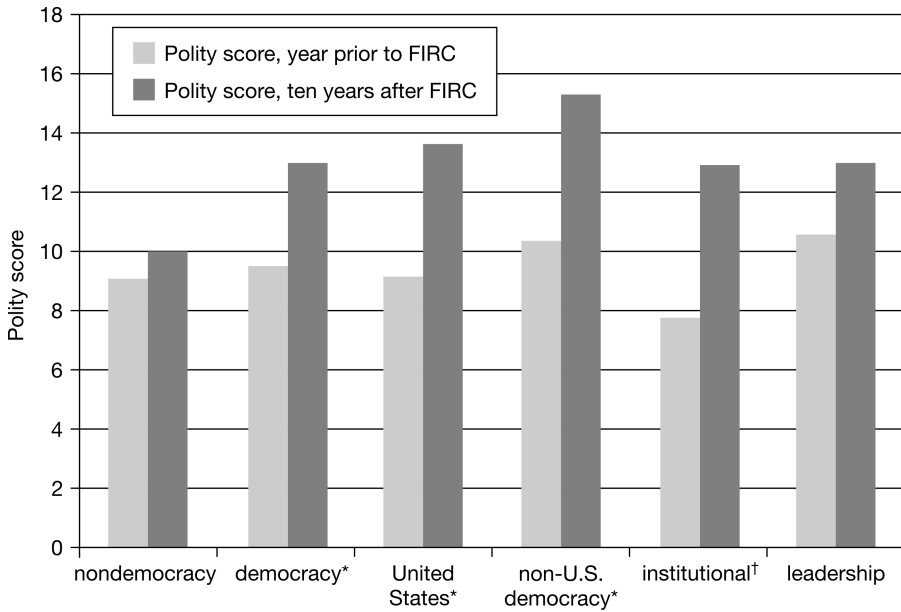
Figure 1 compares the average Polity scores of states that experienced different types of FIRC in the year before intervention with their average Polity scores ten years after intervention. The figure shows that targets of FIRC by democracies become significantly more democratic over the following ten years, gaining nearly 3.5 points on the Polity index. This improvement is driven by institutional FIRC: targets experience significant democratic gains (over 5 points on Polity) only if the intervener takes actions to promote democracy. When democracies simply exchange one leader for another without helping to bring about elections, targets gain less than half that amount, a change that is not significant. Even when democracies take steps to foster elections, however,

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mental variables. These methods, however, require the analyst to identify at least one variable that is correlated with the choice to intervene but does not affect democratization. We share the view expressed by others that finding such variables is exceedingly difficult. See Gilligan and Sergenti, “Do UN Interventions Cause Peace?” p. 91.

104. Country-years of FIRC (e.g., Guatemala 1954) were matched with country-years of nonFIRC (e.g., Uruguay 1904). The following ten years were then added to the dataset for each country, allowing us to adjudicate the effect of FIRC on democratization over equal amounts of time.

Figure 1. Polity Scores of Targets of Foreign-Imposed Regime Change (FIRC) One Year before and Ten Years after Intervention, 1900–2000



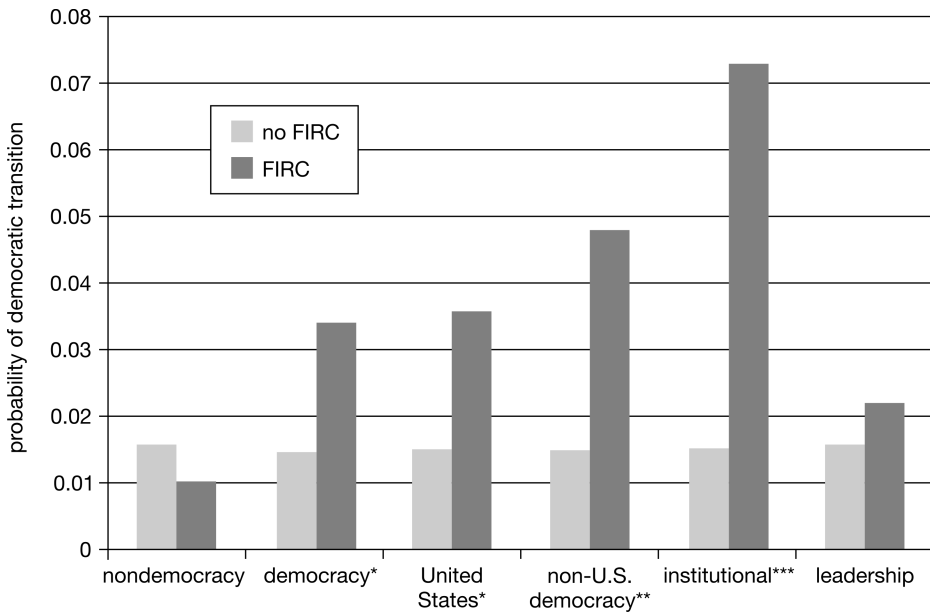
† =  $p < 0.10$ ; \* =  $p < 0.05$

targets on average remain firmly in the middle of the autocracy-democracy spectrum (13 on the 21-point scale) despite experiencing sizable gains on the Polity index. FIRC by democracies results in positive democratic change when interveners change institutions as well as remove leaders, but on average this change is incremental, causing targets to become more democratic but not fully democratic.<sup>105</sup>

Figure 2 examines the effects of different types of FIRC on the likelihood that states experience a transition to consolidated democracy compared to states that did not experience FIRC. Specifically, the figure shows the average yearly change in the probability of democratization associated with each type of FIRC, tracked for up to ten years. The general story is similar to that in figure 1. The baseline yearly probability of democratization in the dataset is roughly 1.5 percent, but when democracies implement FIRC, it is 3.4 percent—a statistically significant difference. This increase, as with change in Polity

105. U.S. FIRC and FIRC by other democracies have effects of similar magnitude, increasing targets' Polity scores four to five points on average.

Figure 2. Average Yearly Effect of Foreign-Imposed Regime Change (FIRC) on the Probability of Transition to Consolidated Democracy in Ten Years Following Intervention, 1900–2000



\* =  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

score, is largely attributable to institutional FIRC, which raises the yearly probability of democratization almost fivefold to 7.3 percent. Targets of leadership FIRC, by contrast, have only a 0.6 percent better chance of transitioning to consolidated democracy each year than states that did not experience FIRC, an increase that is not significant.<sup>106</sup> These differences are reflected in the absolute probabilities of democratization in these three scenarios: 22 percent of FIRCs by democracies are followed by democratic transitions within ten years. The comparable figure for institutional FIRCs is 40 percent, but it is only 15 percent for leadership FIRCs.

#### MULTIVARIATE RESULTS

These bivariate results are consistent with the existing literature in that they suggest that institutional FIRCs have a positive effect on target democratiza-

106. FIRCs by both the United States and by other democracies exert positive and significant effects on the likelihood of democratic transitions, although the latter is larger.

tion (contradicting H4), whereas leadership FIRCs do not (supporting H5). These tests, however, do not control for alternative explanations, do not account for possible selection bias, and cannot get at the conditional relationships we hypothesized. Table 1 presents our multivariate analysis. To economize on space, only the coefficients for the FIRC variables are shown.<sup>107</sup> Columns 1 and 2 contain results for the first dependent variable—change in Polity score—whereas columns 3 and 4 show results obtained using transition to consolidated democracy as the dependent variable. Using the complete dataset, we ran three models for each dependent variable, comparing autocratic to democratic FIRCs, institutional to leadership FIRCs, and U.S. FIRCs to those by other democracies. Because matching is performed for each of the six types of FIRC, creating six different datasets, we ran separate models for each type of FIRC in the matched analysis. We use two types of statistical analysis that correspond to our two dependent variables. To analyze change in level of democracy, we use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression with standard errors clustered by country.<sup>108</sup> Because democratic transitions are extremely infrequent (less than 2 percent of all observations in the dataset) and standard logit models overestimate the probability of such rare events, we use rare events logit (Relogit) to analyze this dependent variable.<sup>109</sup>

**CHANGE IN TARGET POLITY SCORE, NO MATCHING.** An examination of the results in table 1 for change in Polity score after FIRC (column 1) shows few significant results. FIRCs carried out by democracies, for example, lead to little discernible improvement in democracy in target states: the coefficient is positive, but small and insignificant. States that experience FIRC at the hands of a democracy on average register a barely perceptible yearly gain of roughly one-tenth of a point on the Polity scale in their own level of democracy. Given that the average Polity score of a state that experiences FIRC by a democracy after 1900 is 9.5, such a gain would place these states close to 10.5 on the Polity index after ten years. In other words, targets of democratic FIRCs on average are firmly autocratic when they undergo intervention, and experiencing FIRC at the hands of a democracy hardly changes that status. By comparison, FIRCs by nondemocracies reduce targets' Polity scores, but the effect is of similarly small magnitude and is also insignificant.

Differentiating between FIRCs by democracies that promote free-and-fair elections and those that merely change leaders shows that the former increase

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107. Complete tables are available in the online appendix.

108. Like Pickering and Peceny, we use the Prais-Winsten method to correct for autocorrelation in the dependent variable. Pickering and Peceny, "Forging Democracy at Gunpoint," pp. 548–549.

109. Gary King and Langche Zeng, "Logistic Regression in Rare Events Data," *Political Analysis*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2001), pp. 137–163.

Table 1. The Effect of Foreign-Imposed Regime Change (FIRC) on Target Democratization, 1900–2000

Variable	Change in Polity Score (Prais-Winsten regression)				Probability of Democratic Transition (rare events logit)			
	1		2		3		4	
	All Data	N	Matched Data	N	All Data	N	Matched Data	N
FIRC by nondemocracy	-0.08 (0.11)	9,535	-0.31† (0.17)	464	-0.50 (0.72)	6,618	-0.95 (0.71)	420
FIRC by democracy	0.09 (0.12)	9,535	0.18 (0.14)	652	0.94† (0.50)	6,618	0.25 (0.63)	434
Institutional FIRC	0.53† (0.28)	9,535	0.38 (0.25)	159	2.42*** (0.50)	6,618	1.53† (0.91)	108
Leadership FIRC	-0.05 (0.12)	9,535	-0.13 (0.18)	500	0.17 (0.78)	6,618	0.16 (0.91)	317
FIRC by United States	0.06 (0.17)	9,535	0.09 (0.17)	452	0.94† (0.56)	6,618	1.62 (1.43)	276
FIRC by non-U.S. democracy	0.15 (0.16)	9,535	0.19 (0.22)	388	1.19* (0.50)	6,618	1.32 (1.39)	222

NOTE: Cell entries are regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on each country in parentheses (robust standard errors in the Prais-Winsten regressions). In columns 1 and 3, three models were estimated for each dependent variable: one included FIRCs by democracies and nondemocracies, a second included institutional and leadership FIRCs, and a third included U.S. FIRCs and FIRCs by other democracies. In columns 2 and 4, separate regressions were run for each type of FIRC. Control variables included but not shown are energy consumption (logged), state age, previous experience with democracy, former British colony, and interstate and civil war involvement. In the models with matched data, ethnolinguistic fractionalization and population (logged) are also included.

† =  $p < 0.10$ ; \* =  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

subsequent levels of democracy whereas the latter, if anything, decrease it. The substantive effect of institutional FIRC is roughly half a Polity point per year, yielding a gain of about five points over a ten-year period. This effect, however, is of marginal significance ( $p = 0.06$ ). FIRCs by the United States and by other democracies have no statistically discernible effect on change in Polity score.

CHANGE IN TARGET POLITY SCORE, MATCHED DATA. The matching procedure we use is designed to select countries that did not experience FIRC but that are highly similar to countries that did. The idea is to eliminate background differences between states that might affect their propensity to democratize and thereby isolate the effect of FIRC. The analyses in columns 2 and 4 in table 1 use six datasets constructed using this matching procedure, one for each type of FIRC.

The results in column 2 for change in Polity score largely confirm the findings of the unmatched data: FIRCs by democracies—whether they change leaders or institutions, or are carried out by the United States or some other democracy—do not significantly increase targets' levels of democracy. The major difference between the matched and unmatched results is the lack of significance of institutional FIRC, which had achieved significance at the 10 percent level in the initial analysis. The decrease in the size and significance of this variable suggests that some countries that experienced FIRC (e.g., Germany and Japan) were already likely to democratize owing to other factors (such as positive preconditions for democracy). This predisposition for democratization in some targets of institutional FIRC inflated the effect of this variable in the analysis of the full dataset. The matched analysis in column 2 shows that when a highly similar set of cases is used for comparison—including states with similar initial levels of economic development, ethnic heterogeneity, and democracy—institutional FIRC does not make targets significantly more democratic than similar states that do not undergo this type of FIRC.

PROBABILITY OF DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION, NO MATCHING. Column 3 in table 1 shows results using all data for our second dependent variable, transitions to consolidated democracy. At first glance, the results are substantially different than for change in Polity score. Regime changes by democracies, for example, are positively associated with democratic transitions, although statistical significance is borderline. Much as in the bivariate analysis, this result is driven by institutional FIRCs, which increase the probability of a democratic transition more than tenfold.<sup>110</sup> FIRCs that change only leaders have a negli-

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110. Calculations were performed using CLARIFY, setting continuous variables to their mean values and dichotomous variables to their modes. Michael Tomz, Jason Wittenberg, and Gary King,



gible effect. Cases of regime change by the United States and by other democracies also appear to increase the likelihood of democratic transitions.

PROBABILITY OF DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION, MATCHED DATA. Reanalysis of these models using the matched data reveals that the significant relationships in the regressions using the full dataset were likely a product of democracies intervening in places where democratization was already probable for other reasons. After matching, for example, the coefficient for FIRCs by democracies decreases by 73 percent. Similarly, the coefficient for institutional FIRCs drops by 37 percent. The former estimate loses statistical significance, while the latter retains significance at the 10 percent level ( $p = 0.09$ ). The reduced size of these coefficients and associated reduction in statistical significance indicates that the effect of these types of FIRC was largely a function of the inclusion of many states in the overall dataset that were dissimilar to the states in which democracies intervened, and that democracies intervened in some countries with a high propensity for democratization. When a set of most similar states is examined, the effect of FIRC was substantially reduced. Although the size of the coefficients for FIRCs by the United States and by other democracies increased, so too did the uncertainty around those estimates, rendering previously significant results insignificant.

In sum, our analysis suggests that when states that experience foreign-imposed regime change by democracies are examined alongside highly comparable states that did not, targets of FIRCs by democracies do not become significantly more democratic or more likely to transition to consolidated democracy. A partial exception is institutional FIRC, but matching revealed this effect to be exaggerated by cases that were likely to democratize absent this type of FIRC. This evidence supports H5, which predicts that little democratization would occur in targets of leadership FIRC, and provides partial support for H4, which predicts that institutional FIRC would not affect subsequent democratization in the absence of favorable preconditions for democracy. The next subsection examines the joint effect of these two factors.

A CLOSER LOOK AT INSTITUTIONAL AND LEADERSHIP FIRC. Table 2 lists the thirteen countries that experienced an institutional FIRC at the hands of a democracy. The table suggests initial plausibility for some of our conditional hypotheses: countries that have made sizable democratic gains or successful democratic transitions—with a few exceptions—appear to be relatively wealthy and homogeneous, and to have had some prior experience with democratic rule. For example, the United States attempted to democratize the

Table 2. Democratization in Targets of Institutional Foreign-Imposed Regime Change

Country	Year	Change in Polity Score over Ensnuing Ten Years	Successful Democratic Transition over Ensnuing Ten Years
Nicaragua	1910	0	no
Dominican Republic	1912	0	no
Dominican Republic	1914	0	no
Dominican Republic	1916	0	no
Costa Rica	1919	0	no†
Nicaragua	1926	-5	no
Japan	1945	+9	yes
Federal Republic of Germany	1955	+19	yes
Panama	1990	+17	yes
Haiti	1994	+14	yes‡
Afghanistan	2001	n.a.	n.a.
Iraq	2003	n.a.	n.a.

† Costa Rica is coded as a democracy before and after the removal of Federico Tinoco and is thus not coded as experiencing a democratic transition.

‡ With the election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1990, Haiti experienced a transition to democracy that was interrupted by a coup the following year. U.S. intervention in 1994 restored democracy to a previously democratic state rather than creating democracy anew. Haiti was unable to maintain its democratic momentum, however, slipping from the ranks of consolidated democracies in 1999.

Dominican Republic and Nicaragua in the early part of the twentieth century, perpetrating a total of five institutional FIRCs in those countries. In no case did these FIRCs have the desired effect. The United States overthrew three Dominican governments in succession in 1912, 1914, and 1916, and occupied the country from 1916 to 1924.<sup>111</sup> Not only did the Dominican Republic make no headway in its level of democracy, the government the Americans left in place was overthrown six years later by the leader of the Guardia Nacional, an institution created by the U.S. occupiers.<sup>112</sup> The country's Polity score plummeted to 2 under Rafael Trujillo's dictatorial rule. Similarly, Nicaragua gained little democratic benefit from U.S. institutional FIRCs in 1910—which ousted Liberal leader José Madriz and empowered Nicaragua's Conservative Party—and in 1926—which removed Emiliano Chamorro in favor of Adolfo Díaz.<sup>113</sup> In both cases, the United States was forced into further military intervention

111. Bruce J. Calder, *The Impact of Intervention: The Dominican Republic during the U.S. Occupation of 1916–1924* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), pp. 5–19.

112. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

113. On these cases, see Yann Kerevel, "Re-examining the Politics of U.S. Intervention in Early 20th Century Nicaragua: José Madriz and the Conservative Restoration," Research Paper Series, No. 43 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Latin American Institute, November 2006); and Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream*, pp. 137–149, 205–216.

to save its newly empowered protégé. In an eerie replay of events a few years earlier in the Dominican Republic, Anastasio Somoza—the head of the Guardia Nacional created by the American occupiers—overthrew the government in 1936 and established a dictatorship.

The only real success stories for institutional FIRC are West Germany and Japan following World War II, and Panama after the removal of Manuel Noriega.<sup>114</sup> These three states were characterized by relatively high levels of income (GDP per capita between \$3,000 and \$6,000 in the year prior to intervention, in 1996 dollars) and low levels of ethnic diversity (ethnolinguistic fractionalization scores between 0.01 and 0.21).<sup>115</sup> Germany and Japan were also highly developed bureaucratic states with industrial economies. Germany was a democracy for a decade in the Weimar period, but all three states had experience with constitutional rule (if not complete democracy) in the past.

Figures 3 to 6 and table 3 present the results of several interaction models estimated on the complete dataset to buttress these claims.<sup>116</sup> Because the substantive effect and statistical significance of interaction terms are not easily discerned by examining coefficients and standard errors, we use graphs to evaluate these effects.<sup>117</sup> The solid lines in the figures indicate the marginal effect of FIRC; the dotted lines graph the 95 percent confidence interval. The effect is significant when these dotted lines are each above (or below) zero.

Figures 3 and 4 test H1 by graphing the marginal effect of institutional and leadership FIRC on the probability of targets experiencing a democratic transition as these states become more economically developed.<sup>118</sup> If the hypothesis that FIRC that reform target state institutions lead to better democ-

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114. Grenada would constitute a fourth success, but it is not included in the Polity dataset owing to its small population.

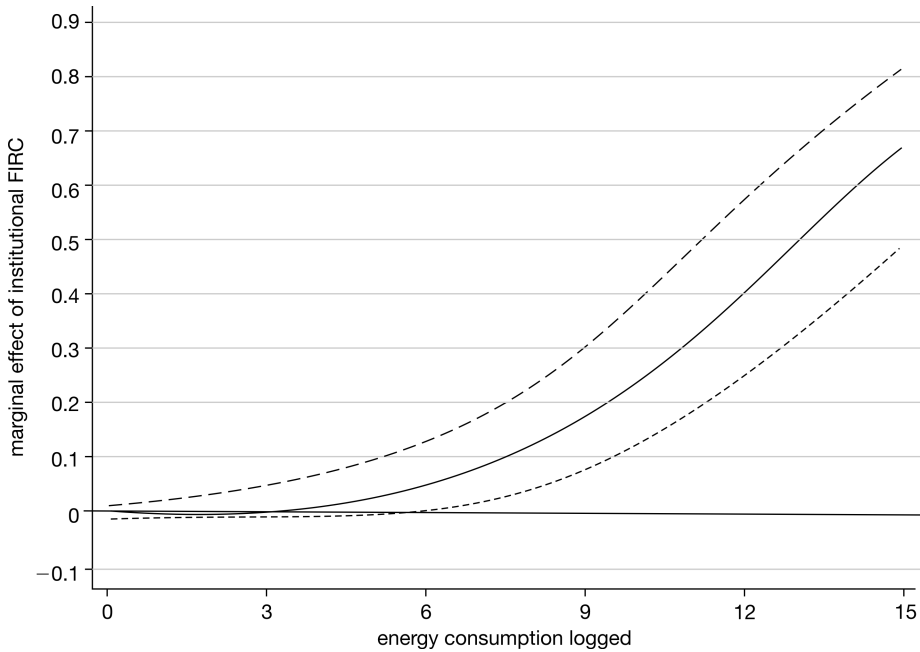
115. The exception to the rule is Haiti—a poor if ethnically homogeneous country—but this case consists of the United States restoring a previously democratic government to power rather than constructing democracy completely from scratch. Haiti thus provides limited evidence for the democratizing force of institutional FIRC. Moreover, in 1999 Haiti slipped from the ranks of consolidated democracies. Panama also has a restoration aspect to it since the U.S. invasion in late 1989 reinstated Guillermo Endara, who won the elections in May of that year but was prevented from taking office by Manuel Noriega.

116. It is not possible to estimate conditional effects using the matched datasets because matching removes most of the variation in the variables of interest. Although matching shows that the effect of institutional FIRC was exaggerated, it still exerted a (weakly) significant effect on the likelihood of democratic transitions after matching. The substantive effects shown in the figures thus represent upper bounds for the effect of institutional FIRC on democratization.

117. Thomas Brambor, William Roberts Clark, and Matt Golder, "Understanding Interaction Models: Improving Empirical Analyses," *Political Analysis*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Winter 2006), pp. 66–69; and Bear F. Braumoeller, "Hypothesis Testing and Multiplicative Interaction Terms," *International Organization*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Fall 2004), p. 809.

118. Graphs using change in Polity score as the dependent variable look remarkably similar and are posted in the online appendix.

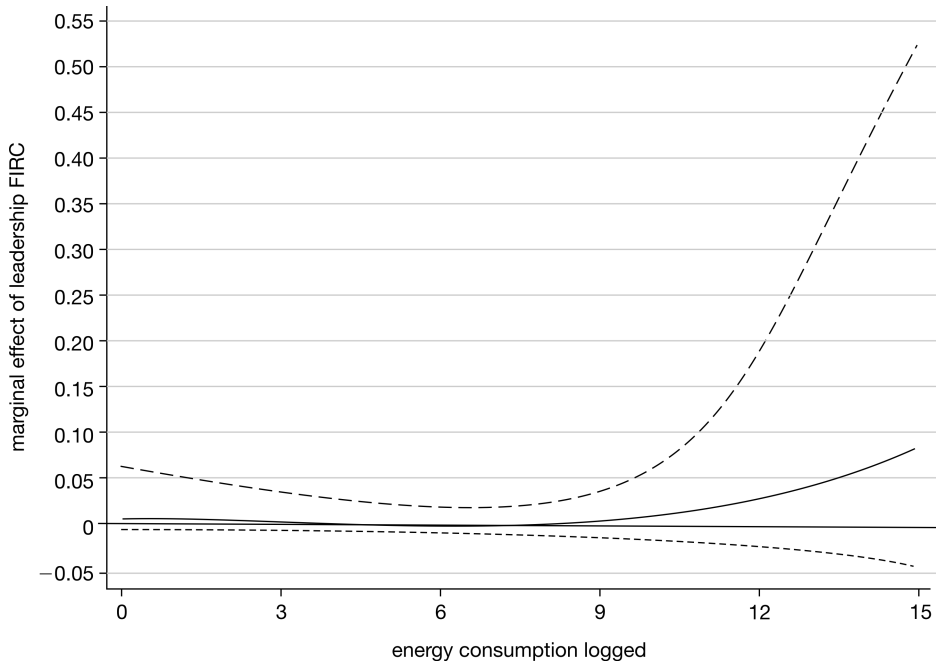
Figure 3. Marginal Effect of Institutional Foreign-Imposed Regime Change (FIRC) over Ten Years on Probability of Transition to Consolidated Democracy as Target's Level of Economic Development (Log of Energy Consumption) Increases



ratization outcomes in more developed states were correct, the line in figure 3 should be upward-sloping. As is evident from the figure, this is indeed the case. States that are the least developed economically, such as the Dominican Republic, receive no significant democratic benefit from institutional FIRCs. The effect quickly becomes significant as states grow wealthier, however, and by the time a country reaches Japan's level of industrialization in the 1940s, its chance of democratizing increases by 24 to 32 percent after an institutional FIRC. At West Germany's level of development in the 1950s, the probability of democratization increases by 41 to 50 percent. Compare these sizable effects to those in figure 4 for targets of leadership FIRC, which register essentially no improvement in the likelihood of becoming a consolidated democracy: the marginal effect of leadership FIRC is zero for most of the range of economic development, and the confidence interval straddles zero throughout, meaning that the effect is also insignificant. These graphs lend support to H1, that institutional FIRCs improve targets' prospects for democratization only when these states are economically developed.

Figures 5 and 6 evaluate H2 by graphing the marginal effect of institutional

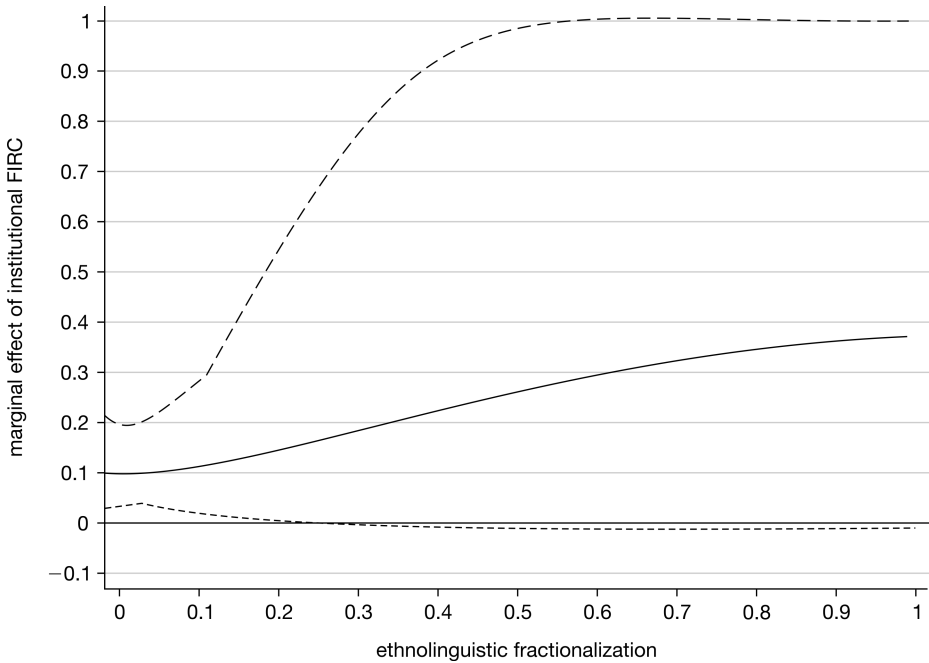
Figure 4. Marginal Effect of Leadership Foreign-Imposed Regime Change (FIRC) over Ten Years on Probability of Transition to Consolidated Democracy as Target's Level of Economic Development (Log of Energy Consumption) Increases



and leadership FIRC on democratic change as targets become increasingly ethnically heterogeneous. Figure 5 shows that only the most homogeneous states receive a significant boost in their chances of transitioning to consolidated democracy. States at or below 0.15 on the ethnolinguistic fractionalization index are about 10 percent more likely to democratize after an institutional FIRC. By the time the index reaches 0.2, the effect is already insignificant, and remains so even as the point estimate increases. The small number of cases causes the confidence interval to balloon, meaning we should not put any confidence in the estimated effect of institutional FIRC at high levels of heterogeneity. Leadership FIRCs, by contrast, have no significant effect on the probability of democratization at any level of diversity. The estimated effect decreases as targets become more heterogeneous but is never significant. These two figures provide solid evidence for H2: democratization outcomes are better when target state populations are highly homogeneous and democratic interveners make efforts to reform institutions.

Table 3 provides evidence on H3, which holds that democratization outcomes are superior after FIRC if interveners promote institutional change and the target was a democracy at some point in the past. The table shows the

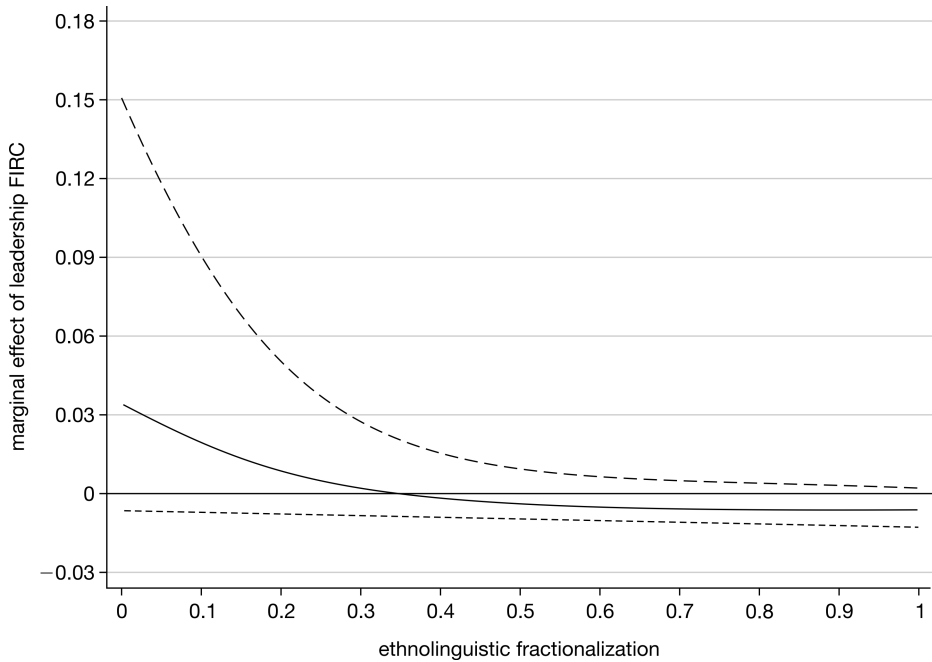
Figure 5. Marginal Effect of Institutional Foreign-Imposed Regime Change (FIRC) over Ten Years on Probability of Transition to Consolidated Democracy as Target's Level of Ethnic Heterogeneity Increases



probability of democratization after institutional and leadership FIRCs when the target was and was not previously democratic. As is evident from the upper left corner of each two-by-two, both types of FIRC significantly increase the likelihood of a democratic transition when the target was a democracy in the past. The absolute probability of a transition, however, is nearly twice as large after an institutional FIRC than following a leadership FIRC. When states were previously democratic but did not experience FIRC, the probability of democratic transition in a given year was 4 percent. When previously democratic states experienced a leadership FIRC, the probability of a transition increased to 11 percent, but it increased to 20 percent after an institutional FIRC. Regime changes that alter governing institutions thus result in a higher probability of democratic transitions when targets have previous experience with democracy, and a higher probability than leadership FIRCs under the same circumstances.

In short, the evidence supports H1, H2, and H3 that it is the combination of intervener actions to promote institutional change and fertile preconditions for democracy that increase target-state levels of democracy and the prospect for

Figure 6. Marginal Effect of Leadership Foreign-Imposed Regime Change (FIRC) over Ten Years on Probability of Transition to Consolidated Democracy as Target's Level of Ethnic Heterogeneity Increases



transitions to consolidated democracy. FIRC is unable to effect positive democratic change—even when the intervener specifically takes actions to bring about elections—when domestic conditions in the target are not amenable to democracy. Similarly, positive preconditions do not translate into democratization absent intervener efforts to change institutions.

A CLOSER LOOK AT FIRCS BY THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER DEMOCRACIES. The multivariate analysis above shows that although FIRCs by the United States and by other democracies had positive effects on democratization in target states, these effects were not statistically significant after matching. An examination of the cases confirms that the identity of the intervener did not make much of a difference for democratization outcomes. Five countries made successful democratic transitions after a FIRC involving the United States: France (1946), Japan (1949), the Federal Republic of Germany (1955), Panama (1990), and Haiti (1994).<sup>119</sup> France and Haiti, however, were cases where the United States restored previously democratic governments to power, and Haiti

119. The year of transition to democracy is in parentheses.

Table 3. The Effect of Previous Democracy and Type of Foreign-Imposed Regime Change (FIRC) on the Probability of Transitions to Democracy, 1900–2000

		Previous Democracy	
		Yes	No
Institutional FIRC	yes	0.200	0.043
	no	0.039	0.010
Leadership FIRC	yes	0.111	0.007
	no	0.038	0.011

later reverted to autocracy. U.S. FIRCs thus brought democracy in three out of twenty-eight cases (11 percent), one of which (Germany) was joint with Britain and France. Other democracies were similarly unsuccessful: of the five democratic transitions following FIRCs involving other democracies—Greece (1926), France (1946), the Federal Republic of Germany (1955), Lesotho (2001), and the Comoros (2004)—two (France and Lesotho) were restorations of previously democratic governments, and in two others (Greece and the Comoros) the interveners did nothing to promote democratic change. Thus, the most generous interpretation would put the rate of democratic transitions after FIRCs involving democracies other than the United States at three out of twenty (15 percent); a less generous interpretation would identify a single successful transition (the Federal Republic of Germany) out of twenty (5 percent). This case, of course, also involved the United States. A closer look at the evidence thus suggests that the identity of the intervener—whether the United States or some other democracy—has little effect on targets' chances of becoming consolidated democracies.

#### ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

We subjected our statistical analysis to several robustness checks to ensure that specific coding decisions did not affect our results. None of the following changes affected our basic results: using a five-year rather than a ten-year window to measure the effect of FIRC; requiring a state to remain democratic for three years rather than one year following a democratic transition; using an alternative measure of democracy—Tatu Vanhanen's Polyarchy dataset—instead of Polity; using a fixed effects model with a lagged dependent variable; and treating the Allied FIRCs at the end of World War II as institutional rather than leadership FIRCs.<sup>120</sup> Results and discussion for all of these tests are available in the online appendix.

120. On the Polyarchy data, see Tatu Vanhanen, "A New Dataset for Measuring Democracy, 1810–1998," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (March 2000), pp. 254–265.



## *Conclusion*

Policymakers in democracies tend to be optimistic about the possibility of spreading democracy, but their optimism is not supported by the conclusions of most scholarly studies of forceful democracy promotion. These studies, however, use inexact proxies of intervention and focus on the motives and efforts of interveners. We therefore examined the effect of interventions that actually changed the composition of foreign governments and emphasized preconditions for democracy in target states in addition to intervener actions.

Correcting for non-random selection using matching, we found that leadership FIRC had no effect on democratization, and that the positive effect of institutional FIRC was inflated by the high propensity of some targets of FIRC to democratize absent intervention. Moreover, the effect of institutional FIRC is contingent on preconditions for democracy in target states. Our analysis of these conditional effects showed that democratization was more likely to occur after institutional FIRC in places with high levels of wealth, ethnic homogeneity, and previous experience with democracy. By contrast, the effect of leadership FIRC was not contingent on domestic preconditions. Thus, our findings put us squarely in the conditional camp.

This analysis suggests several lessons for the scholarly and policy debates over regime change and democratization. First, simply overthrowing foreign leaders is unlikely to enhance democracy, and may actually contribute to chaos and even civil war in target states. This is an important lesson given the rise of precision airpower and remotely piloted drone aircraft. Just as some analysts of airpower have argued against the effectiveness of decapitation as a military strategy for winning wars,<sup>121</sup> our findings indicate that democratization via decapitation is unlikely to work. Moreover, it is especially unlikely to work in places where it is most likely to be employed: weak states such as Syria with little experience with democracy and significant societal divisions. In fact, leadership FIRC in these types of countries may help trigger civil war. U.S. leaders should thus resist the temptation to use airpower to effect a quick and easy regime change in the hope that democracy will somehow emerge in the aftermath.

A second lesson is that intervention to restore democracy in recently democratic countries that have reverted to autocracy—either through a coup or foreign occupation—can succeed. Foreign-imposed regime change may thus be better at getting countries that have managed to make democratic transitions back on track than at fostering democracy in the first place. FIRC may have a role to play in safeguarding democracy instead of promoting it.

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121. Pape, *Bombing to Win*.

Finally, if democracies hope to promote their institutions abroad, they must not only take concrete actions—such as facilitating elections—but realize that these actions are not enough. Domestic context matters: some countries are better candidates for democratization than others, and external efforts to bring about democratic change are more likely to work where those preconditions are present than where they are absent.

Regime change may appear to be a low-cost option for powerful democracies such as the United States in the twenty-first century because potential targets are weak states, but looks can be deceiving. Democracy is unlikely to take root in these places, and the United States may find itself drawn into protracted quagmires such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Democracies may be better off employing nonforceful means—such as foreign aid, development assistance, and attempts to build civil society—to bring about a more democratic world.