Can Stable Democracy Be the Outcome of Military Interventions?

The rise of democracy since the turn of the 20th century has left it in a dominant position (Fukuyama 2006). Its expansion through coercion, example and military intervention has meant that democracy continues to extend its reach across the globe. Following the end of the Cold War with the collapse of the USSR, military intervention to promote democracy has become a method used increasingly by the West. As the counteracting reach and military position of communism and the USSR declined, its protection and patronage of a number of zones and states decreased. The US and the West were able to expand democracy into those vacated areas, both overtly and covertly, to promote favourable governments. This expansion has not been without criticism in regards to its means, legitimacy and viability in developing strong, sustainable governance and benefits to citizens of those 'intervened' states.

Historically both Germany and Japan post WW2 were, and still are, cited as successes on the potential impact of military intervention on promoting democracy and subsequent economic benefits, freedoms and stability. In the more modern era this has led to intervention and occupation in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and more recently in the Middle East and North Africa. The success rate of military interventions imposing democracy is not one which suggests or corresponds with the rate of usage for interventions. Within this context military intervention and the pursuit of democracy as an output of military intervention has taken on added relevance. This essay will suggest that military intervention can lead to stable democracies, albeit rarely and under specific circumstances. It will use both quantitative and qualitative studies on historical interventions and modern conflicts within Iraq and Afghanistan to help illustrate some of the issues involved and how rarely all of the circumstances align in order for successful democratisation to occur.

The effectiveness of military intervention in creating lasting democracy is not one littered with success. Pickering and Peceny (2006) provide a cautionary outlook by highlighting that in the 50 years from 1946-1996, 84% of states going through democratisation were not via military intervention. Enterline and Greig (2008), based on data from 1800 to 1994, argue that 30% of attempts made by Western states failed within ten years. The likelihood that a democracy will flourish tends to increase after this ten year mark as only a further 30% of imposed democracies will fail in the subsequent 40 years. A young democracy is more likely to survive if it can overcome the ten year mark, but it is clear in summarising that 60% and the majority of attempted democracies have failed (Enterline and Greig (2008)).

The success or failure of democracy implementation is often seen as being dependent on internal factors and conditions of a state. These factors or conditions include the homogeneity and potential fractionalisation of its population, its historical relationship with democracy, economic strength/equity as well as factors regarding its geography (Enterline and Greig (2008)). Being in a geographical neighbourhood where democracy is prevalent or not also affects the potential for a state to successfully adopt democracy. Of course, the impact of external factors also play a part in motivating the intervening leadership, ideology or through the intervening nation(s)' continuing resolve to maintain an influence and presence over an extended period of time, whether that is militaristically, economically or through other forms of aid (Enterline and Greig (2008), Gleditsch et al (2007) and Pickering and Peceny (2006)).

At a deeper level we can see that cultural homogeneity is a critical factor in supporting a stable democracy post-

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intervention. Enterline and Greig (2008) argue that 90% of states with a high cultural homogeneity and 84% with a high religious homogeneity survive the ten year watershed. Only 50% with high ethnic fractionalisation and 60% with high religious fractionalisation survive the same ten year period. This would suggest that cultural and religious homogeneity are important factors when indicating the potential success of a post-intervention democracy. In the case of Afghanistan there is a low level of religious fractionalisation, although the country does have a high degree of ethnic fractionalisation. Iraq, on the other hand, has both ethnic and religious fractionalisation.

However, this does not in itself mean the end of the road as far as the development of democracy and stability goes. Enterline and Greig (2008) go on to argue that fractionalisation can be moderated through prosperity and economic development by increasing the capacity of governments to foster a compromise and create both resources and incentives for groups to confine their disputes with one another to within the political system. Meanwhile Pickering and Peceny (2006) reason that a more equitable society, in relation to wealth distribution, would be more likely to survive as a stable democracy even where you find a high degree of religious/ethnic fractionalisation. Afghanistan scores poorly in both cases and Iraq does only slightly better on the economic front. Another culturally internal condition to developing democratic stability is the impact of illiberal cultural values (Pickering and Peceny (2006)). In the case of Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya this could manifest itself in cultural traditions that inhibit the transition to democracy. All three nations share the Muslim/Islamic culture, which, as Huntington (1993) argues, is not conducive to democracy due to the authoritarian character of Islamic and especially Arab culture.

Stepan and Robertson (2003) cited Pickering and Peceny (2006), argue it is not Muslim countries but specifically Arab societies that have difficulty in implementing democratisation. However, considering the civic insurrection of the Arab Spring in 2011 this does seem slightly outdated and less clear-cut as a hypothesis. Tunisia post-Arab spring has gone through elections and has now a democratically elected government. The Egyptian populous eagerly continue to chase further freedoms and greater democratic goals in the face of an elected government opposed to the idea of further extending the democratic experiment. However, Stepan and Robertson's (2003) argument is not completely without merit. Democracy is an ideology, especially in its form as liberal democracy. It is promoted by Western powers and is often perceived as, if not in actuality being, favourable to Western interests rather than those of local 'intervened' societies (Mac Ginty 2011)). When liberal democracy is put into a local arena with other political/religious ideologies it competes and often attempts to overcome any competing ideology. To avoid being perceived as a form of imperialism and subsequent resistance it often co-opts or attempts to work within the framework or parameters of local ideologies whether that is in the form of religious and/or cultural values (ibid). I would argue that this 'resistance' to democracy is often from the top down by those who have previously held power or are connected with previous ruling elites and therefore have a vested interest in continuing the previous status quo. For the majority of people within the world, including those within the Muslim world, justice, transparency and representation are all intrinsically important and passionately bought into, as seen on the streets of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya.

History plays a profound role in determining and nurturing the success of a young democracy. For a state, if there has been no previous experience of democracy or it has experienced failed attempts at democratisation then the likelihood of successful democracy is diminished (Russett (2005)). Successful democratisation is also influenced by international and regional politics. A largely democratic region is more likely to support and nurture a young democracy, be that tacitly or overtly. Equally, a newly democratised state can find itself being perceived as a security threat by undemocratic neighbours, thereby perpetuating instability (Russett (2005) and Gleditsch (2007)). Over the 20th century key success stories for democratisation via military intervention have been Japan and Germany. Both ended war with the allied powers of WW2 with totalitarian regimes. Germany had a history with failed democracy while Japan had no real experience of it. Both were located in undemocratic regions and suffered from serious economic hardships post-war, yet have been able to maintain durable and long lasting democracies. In both examples, there was a strong case to be made for their successful uptake of democracy, based on the level of economic and intellectual development invested within them. Post-war America and its allies were focused on democratising both states and bringing them into their areas of influence. Both nations, through long-term occupation/protection from allied forces, were able to prosper from stability and security, thereby negating threats from neighbours and were able to spread economic growth throughout their respective nations. It is important to note that military support and investment of that magnitude are uncommon. Even with large and continued support

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success is not guaranteed. For example, Iraq has also had long-term investment and military occupation; however, with its low capita income and internal strife, due in no small part to the occupation, it has not seen the same levels of growth.

There is more to creating a lasting peace via an imposed democracy then mere investment. In the case of Iraq there is a historical unfamiliarity with democracy, added to which states that have gone through civil strife find it harder to overcome internal underlying issues and be able to democratise (Russett (2005)). States where interventions take place are often weaker than the intervenors and have some form of humanitarian, political and social issues caused by failure of government, civil war and/or insurrection (Enterline and Greig (2008)). This breakdown in society and/or division in politics means they are not likely to be fertile ground for any major upheaval, especially without extended support (Owen (2002)). Therefore, any democratic implementation is fraught with danger unless underlying issues are addressed as these issues provide further challenges to any attempt at democratisation.

Historically Western interventions have quite often avoided installing democratic forms of government/governance, often favouring stable autocracy over potentially unstable democracy. Pickering and Peceny (2006) illustrate this when discussing French military interventions, 81% of which were in support of non-democratic regimes. Overall since 1945, 75% of interventions have led to no changes in civil government (Williams and Masters (2011)). In the case of Iraq the US attempted to install a handpicked leader of its own choosing (Ahmed Chalabi) who would be more acceptable to their own electorate (Mesquita and Downs (2006)) to head the government in order to help maintain order and influence. However, his appointment faced resistance from Iraqi officials and civilians alike who felt his loyalty and influence was for the US and subsequently he was perceived to lack the legitimacy to be entered as a leader.

Gaining legitimacy from the buy-in and support of a nation's citizens is a critical factor in supporting and sustaining democratisation (Pickering and Peceny (2006)). In the case of the invasion of Iraq, the lack of a UN mandate created illegitimacy as the intervening forces were seen as being US-led. This lack of UN mandate pointedly underlines subsequent difficulties in the installment of government. In contrast, UN interventions have a much better track record of democratising than unitary actions by liberal states, although this needs to be taken with the cautionary note that the UN is often involved in peacekeeping where the parties involved are often actually ready for peace (Russett (2005), Pickering and Peceny (2006)). To attain legitimacy it is therefore imperative that democratisation takes hold and that it is a specific and legitimate aim from the outset (Enterline and Greig (2008), Owen (2002)).

Where democratisation has not been an explicit goal from the outset, Russett (2005) argues that it has virtually never occurred. Therefore intervention needs to carry a degree of legitimacy and clearly favour democratisation rather than seeking to purely topple an unfavourable undemocratic leader/regime. Any imposed democracy is likely to face issues with its legitimacy by virtue of its birth through military intervention from citizens of the targeted state and its institutions (Enterline and Greig (2008)). This would lead to questioning the intentions of nations trying to stimulate democracy via military intervention (Owen (2000)). Where democratisation has been most successful it has avoided entering into a nation piecemeal. This is evident in Afghanistan and Iraq where elections have taken place but the selection processes for leadership have been structured and influenced to favour those candidates that were the most favourable to the interveners' interests. In both countries, regulation and judicial balances are still under development and lack robustness. Botswana and Gambia are both examples of how the extensive and early adoption of civil rights support longer-term democracy and its robustness. In both cases the implementation of fuller democratisation and wider-ranging freedoms supported an open and democratic avenue for dissent and co-option of opponents into the system and thereby enhanced the acceptance and buy-in of the newly democratised regime (Enterline and Greig (2008)).

The rationale behind the intervention, including the motivations and methods of the intervener, also plays a major part in the success of a fledgling democracy over the longer term. For many the thought of forcing a nation or people to be free and fighting a war in order to end war is itself morally contradictory (Gleditsch (2007)). In fact, many take issue with implementing democratic regimes through military intervention both practically and morally (Russett (2005)). In contrast, powerful democracies are more likely to exhibit greater numbers of intervention both in regards to their expansive interests, be that in geo-political or historical factors in the form of colonial legacies, and in their actual

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capability to undertake military intervention (Russet (2005)). Since the fall of communism, democracy has expanded into areas that were previously seen as being out of reach, such as Eastern/Central Europe and the Middle East, previously under the aegis of the former Soviet Union. This is perhaps heralding in what Fukuyama (originally in 1989) termed 'The End of History', where liberal democracy had become dominant over all other rival forms of governance (Fukuyama (2006)).

The removal and weakening of a previous regime, its supporters and its elite, is the most productive thing any military intervention can hope to achieve as the future regime is beyond the intervening parties' control (Williams and Masters (2011)). It is worth noting, as Tures (2005, cited in Russett 2005) argues, that any military intervention increases the likelihood that an autocratic state would emerge even if a democracy is set in place. In the case of Iraq the removal of the existing elite and its supporters led to the disenfranchisement of the bulk of the military and a number of former regime members. Peace-building efforts post-intervention need to take into account the prior regime's supporters, combatants, draft policies and incentives for the former supporters to disarm, demobilise and re-integrate into the post-intervention state, whether that is politically or militarily (Russett (2005)). This would have proved valuable in the case of Iraq as many disenfranchised former supporters of the Baathist regime turned to civil insurrection in order to continue their fight as they felt side-lined from the political transformation of the state.

In the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, both countries are still within the formation period of their democratization. Although things are looking bleak, this would not be counter to the majority of empirical data utilised in compiling this essay. A key watershed from the work of Enterline and Greig (2008) is the ten year period of maintenance for a democracy and the mean period for the failure of democratic states – around 13 years. The first watershed has been passed and both Iraq and Afghanistan are inching towards the mean-point in 2016 and 2014 respectively, but time will tell on the success or failure of their democratic status in the longer term.

Both Enterline and Grieg (2008) and Pickering and Peceny (2006) base much of their data on studies of imposed democracies, to provide a more robust view and test the correlation of democracy and military intervention. A further comparison should also be made with data from non-imposed democracies.

Most scholars doubt that military intervention can lead to democracy (Pickering and Peceny (2008)). They see the formation of democracy as being an internal phenomenon and argue that its implementation can only occur in fertile ground. However, where intervention has been successful it is clear that there have been in place certain factors which if combined can create a more favourable grounds for democratisation. Democratisation needs to be an integral facet of planning, enacting early adoption of significant civil rights and freedoms. Any action should avoid being unilateral and come under the aegis of IGOs, either global or regional. Action should also include the removal and/or weakening of the existing political elites and include steps and policies to reconcile, integrate and where possible co-opt supporters/combatants of the previous regime. These factors aid in improving the legitimacy of the intervention and the buy-in of locals in the subsequent installation of new governments. Without this, any change is likely to fail. Key on-the-ground issues include the relative level of prosperity and its dispersal amongst the citizens. Prosperity has a major role in success and contributes significantly to overcoming internal barriers and impediments, such as cultural homogeneity and religious/ethnic fractionalisations, as they can be major barriers for change and can lead, if unchecked, to resistance (Lipset (1959)). Therefore investment both economically and intellectually is imperative, as is continued security and support of the nation post-intervention as it will need the security and apparatus for longer-term stability and success, especially if it is in an undemocratic region and has had little or no experience of democracy.

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