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WORKING PAPER 4

**The International Politics of Democratization
from Portugal: A Reassessment (1974) to Iraq (2003)**

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I - Introduction

From the “revolução dos cravos” (April 1974) to the “liberation” of Iraq (April 2003) the so-called “third wave” of democratisations has triggered various types of “transition” from authoritarian (or even totalitarian) rule. Over the past thirty years this has affected almost half of the sovereign states recognised by the United Nations. In some countries a clear-cut episode of regime change separates an old (undemocratic) order from a new (more or less “consolidated”) electoral democracy. In many other cases the political trajectory has been more erratic and the outcome more ambiguous, but even so what has come to the fore has been the norms and structures of competitive politics within a relatively neutral institutional framework. There remain large regions that have proved resistant to this global tendency (most notably in the Arab world), and there have been a small number of significant reversals (e.g. Pakistan). In some cases democratisation has come about through delicate negotiations between rival domestically based political elites, but there are also numerous examples of regime change through rupture, perhaps precipitated by external crises or even (as in Iraq) imposed through military conquest. The old established democracies remain securely in place but there is quite widespread evidence of growing disenchantment with the functioning of “really existing” democratic politics, and in some important countries there have been some significant signs of “decay” in the observance of basic democratic norms. Quite a few of the new democracies display substantial levels of citizen disenchantment, and in some cases even of institutional dysfunctionality. Whereas the early democratisations of the 1970s all took place in long-established and securely implanted nation states, those of the 1990s were more likely to occur in institutionally fragile nations (perhaps newly created), where basic elements of the underlying political order remained subject to contestation. Overall, then, the record of the past thirty years presents a mixed picture. Democratisation has advanced, but initial theories and models of democratic transition have been stretched (and even undermined) by the resulting diversity of paths and outcomes.ⁱ

The early regime changes (such as Greece and Portugal) were rare, and seen as precarious. But as the “Third Wave” gathered momentum in the 1980s the perception grew that democratisation had become easy and perhaps even unstoppable. This optimism crested with the dissolution of the Soviet bloc after 1989. During the 1990s, however, impediments and uncertainties become more evident as the most recent claimants for inclusion in the list of new democracies tended to lack many of what earlier theorists had regarded as the basic “pre-requisites” for democratic stability (a minimum level of per capita income, literacy, urbanization, and a middle class, etc.). From Albania to Zambia the later democratisers presented a range of adverse characteristics that could help to explain why, as the “wave” spread the spectrum of processes has broadened and outcomes have diverged. What initially appeared as a relatively small and coherent cluster of cases suitable for tight comparative analysis (Portugal, Spain, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay, etc.) has recently become a sprawling, and perhaps unmanageable, crowd. Certainly the attempt to apply established categories and models to such recent instances of

“regime change” as Afghanistan and Iraq involves extrapolation on a heroic scale.

Nevertheless, the comparative study of democratisation process has developed into one of the most flourishing growth industries in comparative politics, and on some important topics this has generated substantial advances both in methods and in understanding. One area of methodological advance is of particular interest and relevance to the theme of this chapter – comparative historical analysis.ⁱⁱ This macro, and potentially holistic, perspective helps us to view each democratisation process as a long-term, multi-dimensional, and partially open-ended and perhaps even potentially reversible historical reality. It also facilitates theoretically informed comparison of analogous processes, undertaken with the principle aim of enhancing the understanding of each specific instance. From this perspective the test of a good comparison might not be whether it uncovered a “law-like” regularity applying to a multitude of cases, still less to “predict” outcomes, or to prescribe “best practices”. Rather, it would be to identify themes and hypotheses that merit further inspection when “telling the story” of each particular democratisation. Ideally, in addition, these themes might (if supported by detailed historical corroboration) generate tentative “middle range” generalizations applicable to suitably defined clusters of cases.

This is the approach guiding the rest of this chapter. The universe of democratisations subject to reassessment in what follows is all the attempted or achieved regime changes that began after April 1974 and before April 2003. Out of this large universe, attention will be focussed on a limited number of “telling” examples, cases where a historically grounded reconsideration uncovers hitherto underestimated indications of the importance of international variables and dimensions. The Óbidos conference contained several such studies (published elsewhere in this volume). In particular, the Portuguese regime change was reinterpreted as an episode of European decolonisation, and the reorientation of mainland Portugal away from its maritime empire (seen as a counterweight to Spain’s dominance of the Iberian hinterland) and towards full integration in a democratic European Union. Likewise, the democratisation of Spain following the death of Franco was also reinterpreted, uncovering historical evidence to demonstrate that this supposedly archetypal instance of a domestically driven “pacted” transition was also strongly conditioned by hitherto neglected international components. Thus, subsequent democratisations in say, Argentina, Poland, Taiwan or East Timor, can no longer be classified as mere “exceptions” to the general rule that international dimensions of regime change are typically of no more than secondary significance, since this new research demonstrates their centrality in even the classic initial cases. Moreover, Washington’s current ambition to bring democracy to the large world region it has recently constructed (the “Greater Middle East”, which extends from Pakistan to Morocco) underscores the continuing policy significance of comparative work on the international politics of democratisation.

This overview chapter highlights three comparative and theoretical issues that have, in my opinion, so far received inadequate attention from the

democratisation studies community. With the benefit of thirty years of hindsight it would be illuminating to reassess prevailing interpretations of many key democratic transitions from an international politics perspective. More specifically, the chapter suggests the following three axes of comparative historical analysis: (i) the increasing emphasis on the links between democracy and security, in contrast to an earlier perception of democratisation as liberation; (ii) the associated possibility of a declining “counter-hegemonic” potential of democratisation; (iii) the narrower issue of whether democratisation alters a state’s foreign policy (and if so what parts of it, and how). The following three sections of this chapter outline an exploratory research agenda on these inter-related topics. It does not aspire to resolve the questions it raises (that requires more detailed historical analysis of key cases, as exemplified in other chapters of this volume), but only to stimulate further work (some of which should be presented to the Twentieth International Conference of IPSA, in Japan in 2006). The final section of the chapter sketches some provisional suggestions and conclusions.

II - Democracy as Security, or as Liberation

Every democratisation involves a change of political regime. Every regime change presupposes the demise of a prior regime. But, of course, an undemocratic regime can terminate without being replaced by any equally coherent successor regime; and a change from an authoritarian regime may not result in a democratic regime. Therefore every transition generates uncertainty, and raises the spectre of potential insecurity (both domestic and in relation to neighbours and allies of the authoritarian incumbents). Every regime change also raises fear of betrayal, reversal, or collapse. So those who struggle for a democratic regime change are aiming to introduce a new political order in which old authoritarian practices are permanently ended, not just temporarily interrupted. In this sense they aim for “liberation” of their society from its repressive traditions and heritage. This dialogue between hope and fear, between liberation and security, is inherent in all democratisations.

Even when a regime change does culminate in the establishment of a durable democracy this must nevertheless obey the logic of order that applies to the implantation of every effective political regime. Even democracy is a form of “domination”, in the sense that only certain patterns of political conduct can be tolerated. Others lie outside the range of what can be permitted by even the most liberal of constitutional orders. All beliefs and forms of peaceful expression may be allowed, but even then some more aggressive forms of behaviour will have to be prescribed, and even in the last analysis repressed. Those political actors who remain wedded to the promotion of outlawed behaviour will ultimately have to be sanctioned (always within the law, and subject to constitutional guarantees and due process, if the new regime is indeed to qualify as a fully fledged constitutional democracy). For example, those engaged in attempts to restore the previous authoritarian system in violation of the new rules will have to be restrained or

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ultimately punished. Similarly, those who welcome the breakdown of the old regime but refuse to accept constraints legitimately put in place to defend the new order will also have to be disciplined.ⁱⁱⁱ

So the dialogue between freedom and security in democracy always requires the striking of a balance. Within a democratic framework liberation cannot be confused with anarchy. But at the same time any incoming democratic regime will want to offer its newly enfranchised demos a menu of political and civic freedoms that were not previously available. This is the inherent “liberation” component of a democratic transition. Admittedly this terminology carries a baggage unacceptable to many contemporary liberals, who prefer to speak in terms of “building the rule of law” or “promoting the rights of citizenship”. But there is a cost to this substitute terminology. Correctly understood, “liberation” is an objective that people struggle for, rather than a target that is merely set for them from above.

Now let us put these theoretical reflections into some comparative historical perspective. Twenty years ago democratic transitions were infrequent, and their outcomes were uncertain. In a bi-polar world the two dominant blocs generally promoted loyal protégés, and discouraged the security risks associated with democratic experimentation. Political democratisation also raised anxieties about the stability of economic arrangements – as voters oscillated between left and right parties this might produce shifts between socialist and capitalist economic orientations. So democratisation was plausibly viewed as an uncertain undertaking, one that would have to be internally driven, one that was potentially counter-hegemonic, and therefore a project most likely to succeed when domestic strategic interactions favoured agreement, and when external destabilizing pressures could be minimized. The relevant unit of analysis was therefore the individual state (or national political regime), and attention was focused on those states that possessed sufficient internal autonomy to screen out international intrusions.

This panorama has now been transformed. Whereas in Cold War conditions the struggle for democracy often prioritised national liberation and downplayed the issue of security, in the post-Cold War world the balance of emphasis has swung in the other direction. There is currently one main source of political orientation (Washington) instead of two rival centres. During the 1990s, under Washington’s influence, democratisation was now more commonly viewed as the norm, rather than the exception (outside the Islamic world). Unsatisfactory outcomes are most often presented as temporary setbacks to a predetermined course. There has been an explosion of international political and economic incentives for states to qualify as “democracies”, and these external reinforcements are widely expected to “lock in” democratisation processes in most or all properly administered states. Where such expectations are clearly being frustrated, the leaders of international opinion reach for such labels as “rogue states”, or “collapsed” or “failed” states, etc. thereby paving the way for encroachments on state sovereignty. There has been a proliferation of so called “humanitarian interventions” that are supposed to end when transitional administrations construct new democratic regimes. This radical shift in the outlook of

international actors reflects the end of the bi-polar conflict and the discredit of socialist economic models. More recently it has been reinforced by a perception that western-led security interests are best served by managing the risks of controlled democratisation.

In the 1990s an academic consensus argued that democracies do not go to war with one another, and therefore that democratisation is a means to abolish war. This justified democracy promotion as a policy that was both virtuous and cost effective, (on the “all good things go together” principle). But with the passage of time this automatic linking of democracy with security has been seen to be simple-minded. The emphasis has therefore shifted to more intrusive forms of western intervention that may promote security in troubled regions without necessarily cherishing democratic values, although official discourse still assumes the promotion and pro-western security through controlled withdrawal, supposedly leaving new democratic regimes in place after the intervention ends. Although this is mainly a western (above all US-led) approach to democratisation it has been taken up by the United Nations and so has acquired the status of a new international orthodoxy.

This was not the way democratisation was viewed in the early (Cold War) stage of the “Third Wave”. At that time given its confrontation with the Soviet Union the West embraced quite a few clearly undemocratic regimes, and disavowed many of their typically democratic opponents as either willing or naïve agents of Soviet imperialism. In response emerging democratic coalitions in Southern Europe and Latin America tended to view authoritarian rule and the violation of human rights as a tolerated expression of western security interests. In consequence, when opposition forces argued for democratisation and the return of the military to barracks they tended to associate regime change with a certain degree of “liberation” from the straitjacket of repressive anti-communism. More concretely, democracy might require the legalisation of an outlawed Communist Party, and a return of exiles, and even a reassessment of the role of military bases and external security alliances (which could only be renewed subject to popular democratic endorsement). In the Soviet-controlled countries of Eastern Europe the association of democratisation with “liberation” was even more direct and indeed stark. Since a transition from communist rule would mean escaping Soviet control, it almost inherently involved “national liberation”.

Since the end of the Cold War this logic has faded. Now that the richest, most powerful, and most secure nations of the world are so predominantly rated as democracies, it became possible to forge agreements between leading states in the international system which has extended “democratic conditionality” to a widening range of regional and functional arenas. The intention was to press the remaining (mostly poor, weak, and insecure) nations to conform to standard set by these leading nations (not themselves necessarily subject to much external scrutiny). So during the 1990s the idea that international organisations should attach a higher priority to democracy promotion than in the past became increasingly fashionable, at least in the West. This probably also reflected the increased proportion of member states in most such organisations that are, at least formally, now classified as

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“democracies”, and that gain international prestige and even benefits from such a status. It also reflects the fact that some international organisations include commitments to democracy (or failing that at least to some basic universal values concerning human rights and respect for international law) among their goals. Increasingly, they even make democracy a requirement for membership. In addition, since the end of the Cold War, if not before, western liberal thinkers have tended to downgrade the claims of “national sovereignty” and “non-intervention”, and to extend the scope attributed to shared international norms as arbitrators of the conduct of nations.

For a mixture of these reasons the international community has over the past decade or so become increasingly committed to democracy promotion, and these practices are becoming more institutionalised and perhaps more effective. Even before the end of the Cold War the five permanent members of the Security Council had begun coming round to a more positive view of the possibilities for promoting both political reform and regional conflict resolution through the UN system. (The 1988 Namibia agreement provided an early indication of this new trend).

Following the end of the Cold War the Security Council has been much freer to authorize “humanitarian interventions” which start with the determination (under Chapter VII of the UN Charter) that there is a threat to international security justifying the temporary suspension of state sovereignty until the fault has been corrected. International interventionism is therefore conceived as no more than an interlude to be accompanied by a variety of measures, including the convoking of a competitive election, prior to the withdrawal of UN or other internationally mandated forces. The key point to notice here is that democracy promotion is typically embedded in a broader set of conflict-resolution objectives, rather than pursued in isolation. There may well be a tension between the UN desire to terminate its peace-making activities and withdraw its forces (which implies the early convening of an election, even though conditions for a durable democratisation may not be present) and the goal of democracy building. It is also important to note that the typical arenas of such UN operations are centres of international turbulence which may well consist of very weak, or even “failed” states. This is neither the most representative nor the most propitious setting for democratisation. At times the UN has also found itself drawn into democracy promoting activities in states where the Security Council has not determined that there was any threat under Chapter VII (Kosovo, for example). In some cases the UN has felt obliged to terminate a democracy-promoting mission on the grounds that the local situation had become too unstable (as in Angola in 1999 and Haiti in 2000, for example).

Since September 11th 2001 the international agenda has shifted once again, and the United Nations has become a critical arena in the west’s new “war on terror”. In this new context the notion of the UN taking responsibility for the administration of “failed states” that can only be restored to independence once they have been “democratised” has attracted new sources of support. It has also stirred up new sources of anxiety. First in Afghanistan and then in Iraq the UN has been called upon to legitimise the installation of new and

purportedly “democratising” governments in the wake of external invasions and “liberations”. But the basic tests of procedural democracy (a level playing field, a fair count, etc.) are subordinated to the security interests of the occupation forces.

So although the assault of September 11th 2001 has elicited a new enthusiasm for UN-led transitional administrations followed by democratisations in some quarters, this security-driven logic has also elicited new sources of resistance in other parts of the international community. None of the permanent members of the UN Security Council need envisage a diminution of their sovereignty as a result of the new logic, since they all enjoy the right of veto over initiatives that might otherwise adversely affect them (e.g. in Chechnya, Tibet, Corsica, Guantánamo, or indeed Gibraltar). But of course all those UN members that are listed as “rogue” or “failed” states are bound to take a much more critical view. In addition quite a few other governments and currents of opinion will require considerable reassurance before they can overcome their hesitations about this new orthodoxy. Thus, most governments in the Middle East are bound to wonder about the selective application of this doctrine (even if they can be persuaded to accept its basic rationale).

Another area of anxiety concerns the dynamics of a UN transitional administration, once an international intervention has been sanctioned and carried out. Cambodia, Namibia, and East Timor all offer relative reassurance that – at least in the limited number of suitable cases – the process can be kept on track, and the outcome can be achieved with reasonable punctilio, at a bearable cost, and without adversely affecting the basic security of neighbouring states. But these were all “post-Cold War” episodes, and even that category contains some less reassuring experiences – in Angola, for example, or arguably, in Kosovo. Afghanistan, by contrast, is the first of the new “war on terror” international interventions, and the sceptics see the implications of generalising this type of operation as considerably more troubling. If the result is to bring peaceful and legitimate authority to post-intervention Afghanistan, and to remove the country as a source of instability and security threat to its neighbours and the world, the UN is entitled to receive some of the credit. But equally, if warlordism and narco-criminality prevail, if Afghanistan remains a “failed state”, and if its neighbours continue to experience spill-over disturbance from its unresolved internal tensions, then the UN’s pacifying and democratising credentials will be impaired. At the time of writing the UN seems to be facing an even more acute dilemma over Iraq, where elections will lack credibility without its endorsement, but where UN officials dread further identification with forces that the Secretary General has described as engaging in an “illegal” occupation. A discredited UN would open the door to competitive unilateralisms all round the globe.

To conclude this section we can now revert to the more theoretical considerations introduced at the outset. Authoritarian regimes typically promise to strengthen security, and ask in exchange for heightened discipline and the reduction of personal freedoms. In reaction against such regimes, democratic transitions are typically associated with increased uncertainty, and

perhaps even insecurity, compensated by a restoration of lost liberties. This exchange was a familiar feature of past democratisations, and it still has some currency even today. But durable and legitimate democracies require a firm basis of public security, where it is not present it must be created, and where present it must be preserved. However, especially since September 11th 2001, the liberating dimension of regime change has been downgraded, replaced by a new emphasis on security. Security concerns have the potential to crowd out procedural democracy altogether, but in current conditions the greater danger could be that they merely drain it of deliberative content. Electoral processes may still allow some limited freedom of choice, access to information, and the right to organize and petition, all freedoms lacking under authoritarian rule. But the freedom to choose may be limited to a narrow range of safe alternatives; the information available may well be manipulated to serve the requirements of order and stability; and the right to organize and petition may be kept selective and incomplete. Only those portions of the national territory most “securely” under the control of the central authorities may be allowed to vote, thus unbalancing the outcome to the advantage of foreign-backed incumbents.

This confirms the broader point that debates about democratisation are also invariably about what kind of democracy is desired, or considered to be feasible. The early “transitions” literature, with its focus on strategic interactions between opposing currents of domestic opinion, privileged a version of democracy structured around the building of consent, and the establishment of local credentials of political authenticity. This was a “dialogical” as well as a domestically oriented conception of democracy. But other conceptions of democracy are also possible. Democracy can be conceived as the expression of a majority will to affirm collective values, and to silence discordant challengers. In that case those who control the state apparatus and define the official discourse can use the argument from security to exclude opponents as troublemakers. Democracy can be characterised as at the opposite pole from “liberation”. This shift from an emphasis on building consent to one of exerting control seems to be occurring not only within some new democracies, but within some old ones as well. And it occurs not only within individual countries, but also at the international level.

III - Declining “Counter-Hegemonic” Potential?

As the focus of attention shifts from well-established nations to weak or even “failed states”, and as western and UN-led suspensions of sovereignty come to precede democratisation, the international security imperative tends to over-ride the domestic drive for liberation from authoritarian constraints. In this context it would not be surprising if the resulting “democratic” regimes were to prove compliant or indeed subordinate to their external mentors. If so, the post-Cold War democratisations would tend to display less “counter-hegemonic” potential than their pre-1989 precursors.

Certainly since the early 1990s the structure of the international order has shifted. Many campaigners for democracy in Southern Europe and elsewhere in the 1970s and early 1980s thought that they might also renegotiate their country's place in the international alliance system, and even that a democratic electorate might also exercise the option to practice re-distributive economic policies, both internally and internationally. But since the mid-eighties international economic arrangements have become more universal, rule bound, and – at least for most new democracies –constraining than the *ad hoc* arrangements that used to precede “globalisation”. The scope for domestically driven policy experimentation has accordingly been reduced. Where sovereign democratic rights are respected they are accompanied by powerful associated obligations and responsibilities. This applies to political alliances and military security arrangements as much as to economic commitments.

In this way, for example, the voters of say newly democratic Mexico or Turkey find their international options to be substantially limited (by NAFTA and the EU respectively), and even their internal socio-economic choices are hedged in by manifold external restrictions. Perhaps some such constraints were always present, but under the preceding authoritarian regime it was possible to hope that with the removal of artificial internal restraints on citizen pressures and demands there would be some increased scope for choice at the international level. Illusions of this kind have typically been dashed by recent experiences of democratisation. If this is true even for such major and weighty players as Mexico and Turkey it is all the more evident in lesser and more fragile democracies (think of Benin, or East Timor, or Nicaragua). Some observers may consider such constraints to be reassuring, or even as aids to the stabilization of democracy. For others they may be less welcome, since they undermine the authority and perhaps even the legitimacy of locally elected governments. Whichever view one takes, this shift over the past thirty years would seem to constitute a major and durable change in the international politics of democratisations as the “third wave” has progressed.

Afghanistan and Iraq are so recent, and so controversial that it may seem polemical to cite them in evidence here. But their significance should not be overlooked. As mentioned in the previous section, the claim that the military interventions there are paving the way for “transitions to democracy” is heavily contested, and at least for the time being lacks empirical support. At the time of writing neither the Karzai nor the Allawi administrations can claim electoral legitimisation. They were both ratified in office by handpicked assemblies that were convoked during continuing civil conflict under the supervision of foreign occupying armies. From these externally created positions controlling state patronage they plan to convene elections, which seem designed to confer a mantle of electoral legitimacy on those most loyal to the occupiers. If these processes succeed the international community will be invited to classify them as further examples of “democratisation”. But this either involves stretching the term to cover outcomes far different from an earlier period, or it is a straightforward misnomer.^v Only time and future scholarly analysis will reveal which. In either case these are telling cases for

analysts interested in the declining counter-hegemonic potential of contemporary democratisations. If the term can be stretched to embrace the election of Karzai and Allawi these will be limit cases of democratisations tailored to reinforce a prevailing international hegemony (a military supremacy at that, rather than a broader-based political hegemony). If not, then the “counter-hegemonic” potential of regime change in Afghanistan and Iraq will involve the expulsion of the occupation forces. It is questionable whether such a regime change could now take a democratic form.

Afghanistan and Iraq inevitably colour contemporary debate on the broader issue. They could be aberrations, but they could also foreshadow further regime changes along the same lines. That at least is what the Bush administration’s “Greater Middle East” initiative seemed to promise. (Whether it will materialise is another matter). For the purposes of this chapter a thirty-year time horizon introduces some necessary perspective. But how much counter-hegemonic potential did the earlier democratisations really contain? If that potential declined after 1990, how, and why, and with what implications for our general models of democratisation?

These latest examples are not historically unique. The 1966 elections in the Dominican Republic (following the US-led invasion of 1965) provided a clear precursor. In that case it is arguable that democratisation came to the country not in 1966, but in 1978, when the party representing the losers from the US intervention won a majority and (narrowly) secured the right to take office. In this case the Cold War shaped the security agenda, just as the so-called “war on terror” intervenes in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Dominican Republic was close to communist Cuba, and the US intervention was motivated by a determination to block all possibility of a second Castro-type takeover in the Caribbean. For that reason only protégés of the invading force could be allowed to win the 1966 election. In 1978 it was (narrowly) decided that an electoral victory by the opposition party of the democratic revolution would not constitute an unacceptable rebuff to Washington. Thereafter the US came to view competitive electoral politics in the Dominican Republic as the best way to insulate that nation from the temptations of Castroism.

As the “third wave” gathered momentum in the late 1970s and early 1980s an increasing number of democratisations began to generate demands for the renegotiation of Cold War security commitments. Greece and Portugal always remained formally within NATO, but their commitment to the alliance was questionable during the early years of these new democracies. Newly legalised left-wing parties drew attention to the complicity linking the NATO authorities to previous anti-communist military authoritarianism. Similarly in Spain (which had a military alliance with the USA, outside the framework of NATO) the incoming Socialist party was initially opposed to membership of NATO – a policy that the party subsequently reversed through a democratic referendum. In the Philippines the fall of dictator Marcos led to an upsurge of opposition to US military bases. Similar security doubts arose concerning Argentina after the Falklands war, South Africa after apartheid, etc. It is true that over time nearly all these new democratic regimes became reconciled to the western security system, but this was brought about through processes of

democratic deliberation, and was justified in terms of the modifications that could be secured, to adjust western defence priorities in accordance with pluralist politics. The “counter-hegemonic potential” of the democratisations may thus have helped to reform and liberalise the western alliance system at a time when the Cold War was in any case winding down.

In East-Central Europe no such negotiated repositioning was on the agenda. For understandable reasons (including the use of Soviet tanks in Budapest in 1956 and in Prague in 1968) democratisation included freeing these countries from the military, political, and economic domination of Moscow. Here (and in the Baltic states) the “counter-hegemonic” content of democratisation was not just potential, but integral. Throughout the successor states to the former USSR democratisation was similarly identified with escaping control from Moscow.

However, after 1990 subsequent democratisations took place not in a bipolar, but within a basically unipolar international security framework. In this changed setting “counter-hegemonic potential” would involve democratising regimes against the wishes and interests of the USA. Although Washington took care to minimise the scope for such possibilities this was not a purely hypothetical contingency. In Mexico, for example, to have accepted the outcome of the 1988 presidential election might have complicated the Reagan administration’s regional security agenda, most notably in Central America. By contrast, in 2000, when an opposition victory in a Mexican presidential election was finally recognised as legitimate, the democratisation of Mexico was no longer a security problem for the USA. Similar points could be made concerning the democratisation of El Salvador in the early 1990s. More generally, by the end of the Cold War new democratic regimes (whether post-communist or post-authoritarian rightist) were increasingly enmeshed in networks of economic and political obligations to their neighbours, and to the international community, that limited their room for destabilising policy discretionality, and that therefore diminished their “counter-hegemonic potential”.

An important test case for this general thesis would be the democratisation of Turkey. Here the victory of a moderate Islamic party could (on some interpretations) be seen as an affirmation of national aspirations in the face of western disapproval. After all, the Turkish parliament voted down a proposal to send troops to Iraq and Washington accepted this decision as a free choice of a democratic parliament. So some leeway is still possible, although Turkey’s wish to join the EU exerts a powerful constraint on its policy discretionality in most arenas (even on such improbable topics as the outlawing of adultery).

IV - Democratisation and Foreign Policy

This section tackles the question “How may democratisation affect a country’s foreign policy”? Note that the enquiry concerns a relatively uncertain “may”, and not a tightly causal “does”. In principle foreign policy could be reshaped as a consequence of a regime change. But much depends on the international context. Some states have low profile foreign policies, and some enjoy a considerable degree of foreign policy discretion. If democratisation occurs in this kind of setting, there may be significant scope for foreign policy variation in response to a shift in the internal political balance. But high profile foreign policy commitments may be less optional. The international balance of forces may leave little scope for innovation. Alternatively, democratisation may be driven more by external than a by internal dynamics (the lifting of an external veto, or even democratisation as a result of invasion). In these cases, the same forces that produce the democratisation may determine the re-orientation of foreign policy, and we would be mistaken to refer to the former as causing the latter. For all these reasons, a comparative historical analysis should explore possible linkages, rather than causal necessities.

When addressing this broad question it could be helpful to distinguish between negotiated democratisations and regime changes brought about through “rupture”. April 1974 in Portugal, the defeat of the Greek colonels later that year, or of the Argentine Generals in 1982 all led to major domestic turbulence (“regime change” in the strong sense) and foreign policy was transformed as an almost inevitable counterpart. The same was true of the “triple transitions” in post-communist Eastern Europe in 1989. But negotiated (or “pacted”) democratisations may be much more carefully controlled, with foreign policy disruptions thereby excluded from the agenda for change. Thus, for example, in the 1980s and 1990s South Korea achieved a negotiated transition to democracy without in any way altering its security alliance with the USA (necessitated by its still unresolved state of belligerence with North Korea). Over a similar period Chile and Mexico both democratised gradually and without disturbing basic foreign policy alignments, etc.

The example of South Korea highlights the fact that foreign policy may sometimes be so heavily intertwined by external necessity that domestic regime change can have little impact. This leads to a third area of clarification. There are many dimensions to a country’s foreign policy, and we need to be clear which aspects are to be included in our “dependent variable”. This section focuses on “general foreign policy orientations”, and not on key detailed or specialised sub-fields (voting patterns at the UN Commission on Human Rights, etc.), unless these acquire a broader significance. In addition, foreign policy can be roughly divided into “process” and “outcome”, both of which could be affected by democratisation. The questions of most interest here normally involve elements of both, and that is how the issue is addressed in what follows.

In synthesis, then, the impact of democratisation on foreign policy may be examined under five subheadings: what follows the opening question is disaggregated into five sub-sections: types of democratisation; components of democratisation; foreign policy instruments; foreign policy areas; and discretionary outcomes.

Types of Democratisation - A distinction has already been made between pactured or negotiated democratisations and those brought about through rupture. But other typologies are also relevant for the purpose of deducing foreign policy effects. If the outgoing authoritarian regime had been a national security type military government, then its international alignment would be likely to shift as its external sponsors or protectors came to terms with the demotion of their preferred protégés or assets. Similarly if the preceding regime had been a Communist Party-led government democratisation might be expected to include a switch from an eastward to a westward foreign policy orientation, as well as a switch from state ownership to market, and from one party politics to competitive elections (the so-called “triple transitions” of Eastern Europe). If the authoritarian regime had suppressed regional minorities (say in the Baltic, or in Bosnia, or in East Timor) then democratisation might well lead to the rewriting of territorial boundaries, and the break-up of the dominant state would probably generate new foreign policy problems with unsettled neighbours. If democratisation has been strongly encouraged by a regional association of democratic states (the EU, Mercosur, the OAS, etc.) then domestic regime change might be integrally linked to a project of regional integration with strong foreign policy implications. This list is illustrative rather than exhaustive, but should suffice to demonstrate that different types of democratisation would well have substantial and varied foreign policy consequences.

Components of Democratization - Thus far “democratisation” has been treated as a holistic process. But from the foreign policy standpoint it may be equally important to consider its distinct institutional components, and their respective international consequences. For example, under democratisation it is normal for the executive to lose its hitherto exclusive control over foreign policy, and to be required to share responsibility for key operations (the ratification of treaties, the appointment of ambassadors, the casting of votes in international organizations) with the Congress. Where bi-cameralism prevails it is typically the Senate or the Upper House that is assigned the major formal foreign policy prerogatives. But the lower house may control the power of the purse, and also take an active interest in the more controversial issues of international and diplomatic action. Another significant component of democratisation may be the communications media. Under authoritarian rule their coverage of international politics and foreign policy is typically constrained by the need to endorse official government stances, whereas in a more pluralist and competitive political environment the incentives may shift towards a much more critical treatment of the official line and much more

independent coverage of alternative perspectives. Reports concerning human rights, humanitarian interventions, and electoral observation overseas may be particularly affected. Authoritarian regimes are usually defensive about such forms of international monitoring, but official attitudes can change drastically following a transition. By taking a “forward line” on such issues both domestically and internationally a new democratic government may hope to capitalise on its new legitimacy and to underscore the moral superiority compared to its predecessors. If so, this is likely to be expressed through other components of democratisation, such as the incoming government’s relations with both domestic and international NGOs. There may also be significant legal repercussions (such as the ratification of international legal instruments protecting human rights of domestic citizens, changed expectations of the domestic courts concerning immunity for past violations, etc.). Under democratisation the security forces are also likely to lose some autonomy, with consequences for that dimension of foreign policy as well.

It should not be imagined, however, that all democratisations produce equally strong effects across all these various components of regime change. Indeed the courts and the military may both be much slower to adopt than the Congress and the media, if only because whereas the latter see new opportunities for themselves in the course of democratisation the former may fear institutional damage.

Foreign Policy Instruments - Under authoritarian rule foreign policy is usually controlled by a small closed elite which aims to monopolise information about the issues at stake, and which may be under very little constraint to explain or justify its decisions to the wider society. Democratisation tends to broaden the range of foreign policy decision-makers, and to open up the relevant sources of information to wider scrutiny. It may also require much more negotiation, persuasion, and formal justification. International commitments that were previously opaque and potentially unlimited may have to be reformulated in more precise language and with clearly specified time limits and procedures for review. As individual foreign ministers (or trade ministers, or ambassadors, or economic negotiators) rotate in office the commitments they enter into have to be made more impersonally binding on their successors (who may come from different party political backgrounds). State governors and opposition candidates for national office may acquire their own foreign policy voices and may need to be included in the machinery of decision-making (at least in a subordinate role). The differences between competing agencies and bureaucracies operating on the same international agenda may have to be more formally aired and arbitrated. The whole ethos of foreign policy-making may therefore become more complex and more impersonal.

However, democracies may also engage in personalist diplomacy, at least on those fronts where electoral competition can be affected by a candidate’s image or international stature. This is especially true of presidentialist democracies.

Foreign Policy Arenas - Under conditions of electoral competition what counts as the most salient issues in foreign policy may shift, in accordance with voter preferences. In Hungary, for example, the shift to democracy uncovered a strong sentiment of solidarity with those “ethnic Hungarian” minorities in neighbouring countries whose misfortunes became a domestic political issue (as they had not been at least to the same extent, under communist one party rule). Similarly, in democratic South Africa international criticisms of Mugabe’s Zimbabwe is an issue of substantial internal political significance, and has to be treated accordingly. Thus the change to a democratic regime may enhance the salience of some foreign policy arenas, and may downgrade others. Where the dominant party, or the outgoing military, conducted its own foreign policy outside formal channels these sources of expertise and orientation may be disbanded, or at the very least demoted. Where opposition constituencies such as the church, or the labour unions, or the academics had previously been excluded from foreign policy-making, under democratisation they can no longer be silenced and may promote influential new arenas of action, with alternative sources of information and hitherto unconsidered proposals for foreign policy innovation.

Again, these potential shifts in emphasis are not automatic or uniform. Old agencies may find ways to reposition themselves to avoid demotion. Not all new voices will succeed in creating effective arenas for action to change foreign policy priorities. These processes may be contested and delayed. But democratisation can certainly produce foreign policy effects through this medium.

Discretionary Outcomes - As already noted, in some countries there may be very little scope for policy discretion on issues of external relations. So when we consider the impact of democratisation on foreign policy processes and outcomes we need to focus on the limited areas where some discretion is available. One outcome of particular interest would be the decision to work more closely with an international community of democratic states, and to make the support of democracy elsewhere one of the new objectives of foreign policy action. A related outcome could be to stress the value of international law and of international organisations as sources of orientation in world affairs. Linked to these two could be an enhanced emphasis on voluntary multilateralism as opposed to the unilateral pursuit of national objectives in the external arena. There could also be outcomes related to redefinitions of the conditions under which force would be used to pursue foreign policy objectives, and also the renegotiation of security arrangements (bases, alliance links, membership of denuclearised zones, etc.), insofar as these can be varied by domestic choice.

As noted under previous sections of this chapter, it should not be assumed that the installation of a democratic regime necessarily or immediately

generates large effects in these areas of discretionary choice. Nor should it be assumed that eventual changes are necessarily unidirectional. A democratic regime might be more reckless than before in its military deployments (e.g. the Poles in Iraq), and the electorate of a new democracy may favour more intense security commitments (Baltic states in NATO), rather than neutrality.

V - Reassessing Democratisations from an International Politics Perspective

This chapter has revisited the international political dimensions of the “third wave” of democratisations that took place between 1974 and 2003, highlighting three relatively neglected issues – the shift from a conception of democracy as liberation towards one stressing security; the associated declining counter-hegemonic potential of recent “democratisations” (especially those induced by military intervention since 2001); and the foreign policy changes associated with democratisation. It has sought to illustrate the range and importance of these neglected issues, but it has painted with a broad brush. More conclusive reassessments would require detailed re-evaluation of critical cases, some of which can be found elsewhere in this volume.

In conclusion, as new experiences destabilise initial theories and interpretations, and as older episodes of democratisation are re-interrogated in the light of current concerns, the international politics of this type of regime change is acquiring heightened prominence. This shift in perspective is important for scholarship, and it is also of considerable policy significance. What can we expect of regime changes when these are justified in the language of democracy, but are imposed by coercive means that generate anxieties about their security implications? What is the value of democratisation that leads to a policy straitjacket, in which newly enfranchised electorates may conclude that their margins of choice have been constrained to vanishing point by internationally imposed limitations? Do such democracies develop foreign policies that are in any way different from (better than) what would otherwise have been adopted? Such questions touch on quite profound theoretical problems. The sovereignty and discretionality of “really existing” democracies affects the moral basis of their claims to legitimacy. The idea that international politics can be made better by the dissemination of such regimes, and the displacement of authoritarian alternatives, rests on certain assumptions about what democratic regimes are like, and how they behave, assumptions that seem to require critical re-examination in the light of recent developments.

These international political dimensions of democratization require extended re-evaluation, of the type initiated in this volume. But this is not the only area of comparative democratisation studies requiring further consideration. Elsewhere,^{vi} I have identified two other relatively neglected fields of enquiry that could change our analysis and prescriptions. These are “lustration” (the degree to which democratic state institutions are “purged” of

individuals and groups associated with the previous undemocratic order); and “epistemic communities” (the extent to which under democratic conditions key areas of policy making is guided and filtered by open and pluralist communities composed of “experts” – i.e. those with the requisite minimum levels of technical understanding required for effective modern government in each area).

This is not the place for further elaboration of these topics, except insofar as they bear on the international political dimensions treated in this chapter. But it is worth noting certain interconnections. Thus, key arenas for lustration would include the intelligence apparatus, the security forces, the apparatchiks of the ruling party, and the foreign service personnel. The extent to which these are replaced, retrained, or allowed to continue with their previous practices, will have a profound effect on the balance between “liberation” and “security” in a new democracy, and may well bear on its “counter-hegemonic potential”. Similarly, the capacity of a new democratic regime to undertake effective foreign policy innovations (supervised by congress, monitored by an independent press, accountable to an informed electorate, etc.) may be strongly affected by the presence (or absence) of an appropriate “epistemic community” in this field. “Expertise” in foreign affairs is a scarce resource, and not all democracies can count on a ready public understanding of the issues involved. Thus, the comparative study of democratisations can be reinvestigated by fresh thinking and new research in three separate fields – international dimensions; lustration; and epistemic community building – with the contributions from each of these reassessments feeding into parallel work in the other two areas.

Notes

ⁱ This theme is more fully elaborated in the final chapter of my *Democratization: Theory and Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2002).

ⁱⁱ For a good recent survey see James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds.) *Comparative Historical Analysis* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

ⁱⁱⁱ At first there may be negotiation over just how much leeway to allow those who contributed to the downfall of the old regime. New rules may be leniently applied until the transition to democracy is complete. But eventually even the most generous of democratic regimes has to take a stand if some of its initial backers press an incompatible project too far.

^v E.g. Iraq’s interim Prime Minister Allawi is reported as stating on September 11th that the elections planned for January 2005 will go ahead whatever the security situation. “If, for any reason, 300,000 people cannot have an election, if – a very big “if” – then frankly 300,000 is not going to alter 25 million voting” (*Financial Times*, 13th September 2004).

^{vi} In my keynote address to the Associação Brasileira de Ciencia Politica, Rio de Janeiro, July 22nd 2004.