

Democracy for export: principles, practices, lessons

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The image of the past

The idea that freedom and democracy can be exported all over the world is an ancient dream. Athenian democrats, French revolutionaries, and Russian Bolsheviks, to mention only the better-known cases, were convinced that their own political system was good enough to be donated to all peoples. But not even the path to freedom is carpeted with rose-petals: enthusiasm is often mingled with fanaticism; idealism must come to terms with the harsh laws of *Realpolitik* (see Luciano Canfora, *Esportare la liberta* [1] [Mondadori, 2007]).

At the end of the second world war, democracy was a gift made by the Americans to the Europeans. An Italian cannot be unmindful of the glorious days of the summer of 1944 and the spring of 1945, when the main Italian cities were being liberated [7] by Allied troops. I use the term liberated because this was the feeling of the vast majority of Italians, who considered that the Allies' arrival marked the end of Nazi and fascist brutality, of civil war, and of the air raids. However, it is often forgotten that at the time the Allies referred to Italy as an "occupied" country; rightly so, since until only a few months before, it had been an active ally of Hitler's Germany.

But even if Italy had been the enemy until the day before, not a single shot was fired in anger against the Allies. As soon as the Allies arrived on the ground, hostilities ceased. The heavy Allied bombing of the Italian cities, which had caused numerous deaths among the civilian population comparable to the number of deaths caused by the ruthless Nazi reprisals, was immediately forgotten. On the ground, the Allies, and the Americans in particular, did not arouse feelings of fear but were immediately regarded as friends and brothers, who handed out cigarettes and joined in the dancing and singing. Above all, they spoke of freedom and democracy.

If the Italians welcomed the Americans so warmly, it was partly because Italian immigrants on the other side of the Atlantic had explained what the United States was like, but it was above all because the ant-Nazi and anti-fascist resistance had spread the idea among the population that the Allies were not enemies of the people but rather, as they had been promptly renamed, Allies - not just because the troops came from an alliance of countries but because they could be considered our allies against dictatorship.

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[5]Also by Daniele Archibugi in **openDemocracy**:

"What do to with the United Nations?" [5] (8 September 2005) - with Raffaele Marchetti

"Can democracy be exported?" [5] (1 November 2006)

This essay forms Chapter 8 of Daniele Archibugi's book *The Global Commonwealth of Citizens: Toward Cosmopolitan Democracy* [6] [Princeton University Press, 2008]. It is published here (with minor editorial adjustments) with the kind permission of the author and publisher.

In Germany and Japan [8] there was no civil war as in Italy, and the resistance was much weaker in those countries. Indeed, the Allies were not greeted there by a flurry of flags as they were in Italy, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, even though they were not actually attacked by anyone. In all three defeated countries, the winds of change were felt promptly because there was awareness that the occupation troops would be staying for only a brief period and that before leaving the country they would plant the seeds of a political system - democracy - that would benefit the whole population.

The idea that it was a matter of setting up not trusted regimes but rather democratic governments was much more deeply rooted in the Americans than in the British. Britain headed a world empire and was more interested in having faithful regimes than democratic ones. Despite the looming rivalry with the Soviet Union and its recent satellite states, the United States believed in the value of democracy for the purpose of consolidating the bonds among free peoples. Political parties, trade unions, information agencies, judicial apparatuses - all received substantial support from the American administration. Ever since, United States foreign policy has repeatedly declared that its objective is to spread democracy, often by means of armed intervention.

To export democracy has actually always been one of the declared priorities of US foreign policy (see Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* [9] [Princeton University Press, 2001]). The successes achieved at the end of the second world war gave rise to the idea that any military action could produce the same outcome. Not even years and years of supporting dictatorships (for instance, all over the Latin American continent at the time of Henry Kissinger), not even the CIA plots against elected governments, could erase from the mind of the American public opinion that its country was not only the freest in the world but also better able than any other to liberate the others.

Neither the isolationists nor the interventionists have ever denied the good intentions of the exporter and the advantages accruing to the importer: the American debate focused on whether it is in the country's interest to carry out these interventions (see Michael Cox, G John Ikenberry & Takashi Inoguchi, eds., *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts* [10] (Oxford University Press, 2000).

Yet, the sentiments expressed by the vast majority of world public opinion no longer supports the United States's concept of its mission. Since 1945, scepticism has continued to grow concerning the legitimacy and efficacy of external action. American intervention outside its frontiers is increasingly perceived as an imperial projection. As a result of the uncertain outcome of the mission in Afghanistan and the Iraq disaster, this scepticism has spread also to the American population.

This essay re-examines the question of the exportability of democracy in the light of the cosmopolitan project. Unlike humanitarian intervention - discussed elsewhere in the book on which on which the essay draws - exporting democracy involves not only preventing acts of genocide but also imposing a specific regime: democracy. It is proactive and not just interdictive (see *The Global Commonwealth of Citizens: Toward Cosmopolitan Democracy* [12] [Princeton University Press, 2008).

This essay is a contribution to an international debate [10] on democracy support co-hosted by Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance [11] (International IDEA) and **openDemocracy**

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Vidar Helgesen, "Democracy support: where now? [11]" (17 November 2008)

Rein Müllerson, "Democracy: history, not

The question raises much greater conceptual problems: while it is only to be expected that all individuals wish to survive, it cannot be taken for granted that they wish to participate in the management of public affairs. A humanitarian intervention by definition refers to political communities in which peaceful coexistence has ceased; while an intervention to export democracy can also be directed toward communities that, although authoritarian, guarantee their citizens' security. Anyone wishing to export democracy must therefore be sure that their intervention will be appreciated and not perceived by the population as merely replacing one internal authoritarian regime with another imposed from the outside.

This essay asks whether it is legitimate, and what means may be used, to bring about a regime in autocratic countries in order to convert them to democracy. The cosmopolitan project holds that all political communities can embrace the values and rules of democracy; but who can legitimately and effectively extend the values of democracy geographically, and how can they do so? The following section considers the theoretical implications of exporting democracy; the next addresses the available ways and means, and their efficacy in this perhaps decisive issue; the last assesses the role played by international organisations (IOs) in fostering democracy.

Regime change as power-act

Why should democracies be concerned with exporting their own system instead of enjoying its fruits in their own home? Imposing a regime from the outside is above all an act of power, and democratic countries are certainly not the only ones to be led into temptation. The most frequent reasons that convince a political community to invest its own resources to change a regime elsewhere are its own interests and the hope to acquire resources from other societies. In some cases, this offensive inclination involves annexation and the subjugated peoples will claim self-determination; in other cases, a state may attempt to achieve its objectives by imposing from the outside a given internal regime by setting up "puppet" governments.

A wide-ranging historical review covering the past five centuries has taken into consideration nearly two hundred cases of countries imposing internal institutions on other countries from the outside (see John Owen, "[The Foreign Imposition of Domestic Institutions \[13\]](#)" [*International Organization*, 52/2, 2002]). A report on such heterogeneous cases that covers a long period of time helps to frame the problem in a perspective that is less dominated by contemporary ideology.

It is not surprising to find that the countries imposing the change are usually the great powers, while the countries whose regime is changed through external imposition are the less powerful ones: you cannot impose if you do not have the power to do so. The cases reviewed show that whenever a country set about imposing regimes from the outside, it tends to do so repeatedly.

The regimes imposed from abroad vary widely, ranging from absolute monarchies to republics, from constitutional monarchies to democracies, from nationalist dictatorships to communist systems. As might be expected, the regime promoted tends to correspond to that of the promoting power, although there is no general rule. In many cases, a political community imposes a different regime, sometimes one of an opposite political nature, as is demonstrated by the colonial domination of the European powers.

The external imposition of internal regimes tends to be concentrated into given historical periods characterised by massive ideological confrontations, such as the European wars of religion of the early 17th century, the disorders following the French revolution, and the period after the second world war. Those favourable to the stability of the international system understandably are concerned over these upheavals, and it is not surprising that after a period of furious conflicts arising out of the desire to dominate from the exterior there are attempts to dampen

enthusiasm by boosting the principles of national sovereignty, non-interference, and self-determination. The Treaty of Münster [14] (1648), the Congress of Vienna [15] (1814-15), and the San Francisco charter [16] (1945) may all be viewed as attempts to set up counterbalancing forces by treaties, rules, and institutions designed to safeguard each player's autonomy.

Is there any substantial difference in imposing a democratic regime rather than a Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, communist, or fascist regime? Today the democratic countries are politically dominant and could, like any other regime, feel tempted to expand their own geographic area of influence out of self-interest. A democratic country could, for example, consider that states having a similar regime are more reliable trade partners and less inclined to start a war or to threaten their security, as well as being probable allies in the case of conflict. In other words, a democratic state might have a vested interest in living in a condominium of democratic states simply in view of the benefits involved. If these are the reasons, there would be no greater legitimacy underlying the intention of exporting democracy than there would be in imposing any other regime. The attempt to export democracy would represent a new version of undue interference of one state in the internal affairs of another.

For these reasons, it is necessary to assess the intentions of not only those offering to carry out an intervention but also those living in the political community where the intervention is intended. It seems logical to attach greater weight to the wishes of those who intend to "import" democracy than to those who wish to "export" it. The exporter should ask himself whether signals exist on the interior that indicate a wide-spread desire for regime change.

From insurrection to interference

Interference may be justified in support of peoples seeking to free themselves from an authoritarian system, but why would a people need an external intervention instead of taking its destiny into its own hands? If a people are under the yoke of an authoritarian government, they can revolt against it and set up a government that complies more closely with their desires. When the social contract between a government and its people is broken, until an open contrast becomes apparent between the government in power and the rebels, it can be expected that external forces may take sides with one of the factions without foreigners being accused of upsetting the state of peace or of interfering in another country's internal affairs. But in the absence of any overt or at least latent rebellion, external intervention will verge on undue interference. Above all, it is difficult to ask the citizens of the democratic countries to put their lives at risk and to put their hands in their pockets to provide a more satisfactory government to citizens who are unwilling to do the same for themselves.

An overt rebellion does not necessarily signify a commitment to democracy by the rebels. History is filled with revolts that have replaced an authoritarian regime with one that is even more authoritarian. In the many cases in which a people is split into several factions, the main aim of external intervention must therefore not be to support one of the warring factions but to find an agreement among them all. For pacification to be effective, the conflicting parties must also agree on how to manage public affairs, and democratisation becomes the principal instrument for doing this. Rather than as an ally of one of the factions, external intervention is required to act as a mediator or arbitrator (see Michael W Doyle & Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations* [17] [Princeton University Press, 2006]). However, in these cases, the external intervention takes place when a civil war is already under way; those who intervene from the outside cannot be blamed for breaking the state of peace.

It might be expected that democratic countries would unconditionally support those struggling for democracy. Historical experience shows, however, that this is not a general rule. Just as the

very Catholic France supported the Dutch Protestants against the very Catholic Habsburgs and the French monarchy supported the Republican rebels against the British monarchy, the United States supported General Augusto Pinochet [17] rather than the elected Chilean government of Salvador Allende. During the Spanish civil war, Germany and Italy consistently supported Francisco Franco, while Great Britain and France were much more ambivalent in their actions. No unequivocal solidarity seems to emerge between democratic governments and movements fighting for democracy.

Regime-change after aggression

Regime change often occurs as the result of a compulsory transition after a war. A government that starts a war of aggression and loses it also loses its legitimacy as a member of the international community and in the eyes of its own subjects. In such circumstances it is not surprising that internal and external pressures combined can lead to a radical change of regime. One typical case occurred in the post-1945 years. The Allies deemed it necessary to remove all traces of national-socialism from Germany and its allies. This policy was legitimised not only by the crimes against humanity carried out by Nazism but also by the obvious argument of self-defence: that is, to prevent the same regime from committing new acts of aggression.

However, the action taken by the Soviet Union was opposite to that of the Allies: while in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) a government was set up under direct Soviet control, the Allies expressed complete confidence in West Germany's capacity for self-government, provided that West Germany carried out a radical and irreversible regime change. The Allies decided implicitly not to blame German citizens for the crimes committed by their government and concentrated instead on the individual prosecution of those who were directly involved with the crimes of the old regime. Recognition of individual responsibility for the crime of aggression or for crimes against humanity was used to provide legitimacy for a new leadership based on completely different values.

The approach taken by the victors of the second world war was quite different to that followed after the first world war. At the Paris peace conference [18] of 1919, the victorious powers imposed sanctions and reparations on Germany, implicitly considering the German people fully responsible for their government's actions. These powers also implemented a number of "containment" actions aimed at preventing Germany from ever again representing a threat to its neighbours. The democratic institutions of the Weimar republic failed to mitigate the victors' claims. The disastrous outcome of the Treaty of Versailles [19] induced the Allies to radically change tack after 1945.

Unfortunately, these long-standing lessons were ignored at the end of the Gulf war in 1991: after winning the war, the allied countries left power firmly in the hands of the existing ruling class, further isolating Iraq from the international community and weakening it by implementing "containment", thus making the country's oppressed citizens pay a higher price than the regime's ruling class (I therefore believe, unlike Michael Walzer, that "containment" is the policy least likely to encourage regime change; see "Regime Change and Just War [20]" [*Dissent*, 52/3, summer 2006]).

The lesson that may be learned from the second world war is that if a country suffers an aggression, it acquires the right and the duty to set up a different regime in the defeated country, if for no other reason than self-protection. However, this does not represent a specific justification for exporting democracy; otherwise a state having suffered an aggression for religious reasons could, if it won the war, claim the right to remove the religious institutions underlying the aggression.

Three intentions

Does the conclusion necessarily follow that exporting democracy has no greater legitimacy than exporting any other regime? Some claim that it is not possible to achieve democratisation if there is no internal pressure: that democracy can be imported but not exported (see, for example, Sunil Bastian & Robin Luckham, eds., *Can Democracy be Designed? The Politics of Institutional Choice in Conflict-Torn Societies* [21] [Zed Books, 2003]; and Nadia Urbinati [22], *I confini della democrazia* [23] [Donzelli editore, 2007]). This does not alter the fact, however, that the international framework plays a decisive role, although no general rule can be established.

Exporting democracy can gain legitimacy provided that it is based on three intentions (see Laurence Whitehead ed., *The International Dimensions of Democratization: Europe and the Americas* [24] [Oxford University Press, 2001]). The first intention is related to the willingness to sound out the intentions of the peoples of third states with regard to a democratic regime. It must be assumed not only that it is in the interest of these peoples to have a democratic government, but also that peoples may not succeed in attaining their objective because they are repressed by the ruling government. A democracy-exporting agent acting in good faith should, in other words, give priority to the importer's reasons over the exporter's own reasons. Otherwise, one of those typical cases arises that (in Robespierre's words) reflects the mania to make peoples happy against their will. In some cases, the intentions of a people may be explicit, for instance, when a government in power refuses to step down after losing free and fair elections, as happened in the Philippines in 1986 and Myanmar in 1990. In these cases, international law has begun to be used to safeguard internal norms (see Thomas M Franck, "The Emerging Right to Democratic Governance" [*American Journal of International Law* [25], 86/1, 1992]).

The second intention is related to giving the population freedom of choice regarding its own form of government. It is clearly anti-democratic to want to export democracy without allowing the people to decide which constitutional form they prefer. Exporting democracy means giving people the chance to decide which constitutional form to apply.

What can be exported from the outside is the power of self-government, while the specific democratic form must be decided on the inside. The third intention refers to the way of assessing the political regimes involved. Since exporting democracy requires the existence of at least two agents, the importer and the exporter, it would be necessary to perform an independent assessment to establish whether the importer actually needs a change of regime and whether the exporter is in a position to develop an alternative regime.

It has already been seen how controversial it is to assess democratic regimes and how reluctant also consolidated democracies are to accept external assessments. Ideally, only global legislative and judiciary institutions can legitimately define such criteria and apply them (see Gregory H Fox & Brad R Roth, eds., *Democratic Governance and International Law* [26] [Cambridge University Press, 2000]). In the absence of such power, the would-be exporter of democracy would have to rely on the opinion expressed by existing institutions or third-party organisations.

The means of export

The discussion presented in the preceding section may seem abstract. Indeed, much of the controversy arising over the idea of exporting democracy is not related to its theoretical legitimacy but to the means used. While few would deny the utility of exporting democracy through persuasion, the matter becomes much more controversial when it is intended to use coercive means. What are the consequences of using coercion (the stick) instead of persuasion and incentives (the carrot)?

The stick

The means of coercion *par excellence* for exporting democracy is war, as in Afghanistan and in Iraq. In this case, the means (war) is clearly in conflict with the end (democracy). The violent means represented by war does not involve despots alone but inevitably ends up affecting also the individuals who are expected to benefit from the regime change. The use of such means is the least suitable for effectively promoting a regime based on non-violence and for protecting the citizens' interests. Rather than establishing a ruling-class alternative to the one in power, a war of aggression creates a vacuum and only aggravates local conflicts. In the case in which the public expresses an explicit will in favour of a democratic government, this does not mean that the same public will accept a military invasion.

The case of Panama in May 1989 is instructive. The then president Manuel Noriega and his regime, after losing the elections, refused to hand over power. Although Panamanian citizens had expressed their desire to have a different government, they feared an armed intervention by the United States to overthrow Noriega. This was a classic case in which the population would have preferred external help of the non-violent kind - for instance, a naval blockade (see Eytan Gilboa, "The Panama Invasion Revisited: Lessons for the Use of Force in the Post Cold War Era [27]" [*Political Science Quarterly* [28], 110/4, 1995]).

But as well as representing a clear-cut contradiction between means and ends, historical experience shows that only in rare cases can a democratic regime be set up using external military means. What happened in Germany, Japan, and Italy in 1945 represents a unique experience that is unlikely to be repeated. A survey by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace dedicated to US involvement in military operations abroad in the 20th century indicates that only rarely was democratisation the result (see Minxin Pei & Sara Kasper, *Lessons from the Past: The American Record on Nation Building* [29] [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003]). In the first half of the century, the failed military operations involved countries that were neighbours of the United States and apparently easy to control: such as Panama (1903-36), Nicaragua (1909-33), Haiti (1915-34), the Dominican Republic (1916-24), and Cuba (1898-1902, 1906-09, and 1917-22).

Other military occupations, such as in Korea in the 1950s and South Vietnam and Cambodia in the 1960s and 1970s, were dictated mainly by the intention to block communist expansion, and democratisation was not even attempted. Since the end of the cold war, the US administration has not achieved any lasting success even in Haiti (see Karin Von Hippel, *Democracy by Force: U.S. Military Intervention in the Post- Cold War World* [30] [Cambridge University Press, 2000]). After the second world war, evident successes have been Panama (1989) and Grenada (1983), two small states closely linked to the US economy and society. In the case of Panama, a heavy price was paid.

Even more discouraging is the record of the two old European colonial powers, France and Britain. France and Britain almost never explicitly intended their military interventions abroad to favour democratic forces but rather to follow the traditional logic of maintaining political influence. French and British interventions after 1945 almost always led to reduced political liberalisation and to support of the existing regimes, even when those regimes were oppressive (see Jeffrey Pickering & Mark Peceny, "Forging Democracy at Gunpoint" [*International Studies Quarterly* [31], 50/3, 2006]). The problems and failures in Afghanistan and in Iraq have numerous precedents. How can such disappointing results be accounted for?

One of the first ingredients that seems to be missing in the attempt to export democracy is the determination of the exporters, who are more often inclined to promote reliable and faithful regimes than to allow the self-determination of peoples. In a situation in which the intentions are

controversial and the successes (to say the least) questionable, it is understandable that the developing countries should view with some distrust the good intentions of western countries, especially when they propose using coercive means; and that even the greatest champions of the democratic cultivate this distrust.

When the intention is to export democracy using coercive means, another decisive aspect is overlooked: namely, the consequences that involvement in a war has for the exporter. In war each state is compelled to forgo some of its own freedom. The citizens are sent to war, civil freedoms are reduced, the relative weight of the strong powers (army, secret service, and security apparatus) increases at the expense of transparency and control. Democracies that are perpetually at war develop chronic diseases.

The United States and Britain, which have been involved in a never-ending series of high- and low-intensity conflicts since 1945, have so far resisted incredibly well in preserving their own democratic system at home. But not even these two states have been able to avoid sacrificing part of their own democratic institutions on the altar of national interest. In the state of necessity produced by war, torture and the killing of unarmed prisoners have been committed and justified; these would have never been tolerated by public opinion in peacetime. Exporting democracy by military means also signifies reducing democracy on the home front.

At the height of the enthusiasm for the export of freedom at bayonet-point, at the beginning of the French revolutionary wars, a few wise voices were raised to warn against the looming dangers. One of them said:

"Invincible within, and by your administration and your laws a model to every race, there will not be a single government which will not strive to imitate you, not one which will not be honoured by your alliance; but if, for the vainglory of establishing your principles outside your country, you neglect to care for your own felicity at home, despotism, which is no more than asleep, will awake, you will be rent by intestine disorder, you will have exhausted your monies and your soldiers, and all that, all that to return to kiss the manacles the tyrants, who will have subjugated you during your absence, will impose upon you; all you desire may be wrought without leaving your home: let other people observe you happy, and they will rush to happiness by the same road you have traced for them."

These words date from 1793 and belong to the Marquis de Sade. Perhaps because they were contained in a book whose raving author had been consigned to an institution, they had little effect at the time. But it is never too late to meditate upon them.

The carrot

Must it therefore be concluded that nothing can be done to export democracy outside one's borders; and, as the Marquis de Sade suggests, that the only useful thing left for democratic countries to do is to perfect their own political system to the degree that other peoples will want to imitate them?

There is no reason to be so sceptical. If democratic states support the self-determination of other peoples, they will soon discover that other peoples want to participate in the way power is managed in their own society. The error implicit in the mania to export democracy refers solely to the means, not to the end. If the end is legitimate, what instruments are therefore available to the democratic states?

The first and most obvious instrument is linked to economic, social, political, and cultural incentives. The present-day domination of the west is so widespread that, if its countries' priority

is truly to expand democracy, they ought to commit more resources to the effort. The facts suggest otherwise: in 2005, the United States's defence [31] appropriation amounted to more than 4% of its gross domestic product, and that of the European Union countries to more than 2%. By comparison, the amounts dedicated to development aid are small change: currently around 0.1% of the US's GDP and 0.3 % of that of the EU (see the World Development Indicators [32], World Bank 2005-08). Moreover, only a meagre proportion of these funds are explicitly earmarked for encouraging democracy.

But the carrot does not consist solely of economic aid. Economic aid can be effective but may also be perceived as a form imposition by a rich and powerful state on a small and weak one. The logically most convincing way to export democracy is to have it transmitted by the citizens of the democratic countries opening up direct channels between themselves and the citizens of the authoritarian countries. Professional and cultural associations and other transnational organizations play an important role in connecting citizens. During the cold war, these channels proved fundamental in supporting the opposition in the Soviet-bloc countries and in forming an alternative ruling class (see Mary Kaldor & EP Thompson, eds., Europe from Below: An East-West Dialogue [33] [Verso, 1991]).

These channels are often politically weak and easy to counter: the leaders of the opposition that maintain personal contacts are often placed under surveillance and are the first to be repressed. The governments in power are capable of brushing off for decades all requests for political liberalization; this is exemplified in the case of Burma and the persecution suffered by the opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, even in the face of a pressing international-solidarity campaign. Yet the political importance of these channels cannot be discounted. At least they demonstrate to the oppressed inhabitants of authoritarian regimes that political societies expressing solidarity for their aspirations exist. Without this solidarity, Vacláv Havel [34], Nelson Mandela [34], and Lech Wałesa [35] would never have been transformed from political prisoners to heads of state.

Using persuasive means also reinforces instead of weakening democracy in the exporting countries. Involving civil society in foreign-policy choices - for example by directing trade, tourism, and economic aid flows toward countries that respect human rights and where self-government prevails - helps the populations of democratic countries to pursue the values underlying their own social contract. If the citizens of these countries become ambassadors for their own political system and plead its cause abroad, they thus come to embody and project the democratic values that underpin their societies.

It is equally important to offer countries that might choose democracy the chance to join the club of democratic states on equal terms, rather than establish an explicit hierarchy in which a state deems it can export its own system instead of allowing different states to participate in a political union where the various systems are compared and reinforced. If democracy can be defined as a journey, some peoples could benefit from travelling together. It is therefore not surprising that international organisations continue to play an extremely useful role in spreading democracy.

The role of "internationals"

International organisations (IOs) act on behalf of democratisation by exerting pressure on authoritarian governments: this is true both of those which accept as members regimes of very different character (as in the case of the United Nations) and of those which accept only democratic states (as in the case of the European Union). The UN exerted weak pressure in the direction of democratisation in the 1960s and 1970s; this pressure has increased considerably since the 1990s, in part because the number of the UN's member-states that are democracies

has gradually increased. A virtuous circle has been set up in which the greater the number of democratic states, the tougher it has become for the others not to be democratic.

The capacity of regional organisations may become extremely strong, even though they depend on the nature of their membership and the available incentives (see Jon C Pevehouse, *Democracy from Above? Regional Organizations and Democratization* [36] [Cambridge University Press, 2005]). The EU has a greater force of persuasion than the Arab League, for example, both because it may reach a greater degree of consensus on democratic values and because it has more instruments and resources to commit. International organisations can influence internal democratisation through at least three channels: stable centre of gravity, crafting of rules, and economic integration.

The IOs often represent a point of reference and stability during the transition process. The elites in power often fear that regime change will be accompanied by a violent change in the economic and social base, will wipe out their acquired privileges, and will expose them to reprisals. In many cases they fear that the regime they control may be replaced one that is equally authoritarian one; this can make the ruling classes extremely reluctant to liberalise the political system, and induce them to defend the existing regime even at the cost of unleashing a civil war.

In this context, IO membership may instead prove useful in defining the future rules of coexistence, for example in helping to allow the ruling faction to become one of the political parties represented in the new regime. The other member-states can act as models on which to base the future regime. Likewise, once political liberalisation has been achieved, the IOs can contribute to stabilising the existing political regime and sheltering it from attempted *coups d'état*. Not surprisingly, countries increase their propensity to participate in IOs after democratisation (see Edward D Mansfield & Jon C Pevehouse, "Democratization and International Organizations" [*International Organization* [37], 60/1, 2006]). Several IOs have in the past undertaken to suspend countries whose governments seized power in a coup. Article 30 of the statute of the African Union [38], for example, states: "Governments which shall come to power through unconstitutional means shall not be allowed to participate in the activities of the Union."

One typical case in which the effectiveness of IOs can be appreciated is the design of constitutional systems and electoral assistance (see Peter Burnell, *Democracy Assistance: International Co-operation for Democratization* [39] [Frank Cass, 2000]).

In the transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic one, the parties and factions involved distrust each other. A supranational institution can not only certify the outcome of the electoral process but also contribute to planning the constitutional system. Precisely because IOs are multilateral, they are less likely to dominate one state or to be perceived as an instrument of domination. It is therefore not surprising that the UN electoral-assistance office has become increasingly active and that numerous IOs, including the Organisation of American States [40] (OAS) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe [41] (OSCE) receive a growing number of requests for collaboration in organising or certifying elections. Among NGOs, the action of the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance [42] (International IDEA) is particularly dynamic and effective (see *Electoral Management Design: The International IDEA Handbook* [43] [IDEA, 2006]).

The IOs open up channels of communication among states, involving not only governments but also enterprises. IOs whose principal aim is free trade boost the dialogue between players operating in different countries, making it more difficult for authoritarian regimes to control economic agents (see Bruce Russett & John R Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy,*

interdependence, and international organizations [44] [WW Norton, 2001]). Furthermore, a growing number of IOs tie free-trade agreements to the existence of democratic regimes. If a democratic regime were overthrown, the enterprises could have their access to foreign markets revoked, which for purely economic reasons would induce them to defend the democratic institutions.

After the military coup in 1967, Greece was suspended from the Treaty of Association with the European Community, which exerted considerable pressure inside Greece to restore democracy, an aim achieved in 1974. Similarly, the attempted coup in Spain in 1981 was resisted by enterprises owing to the consequences the coup would have had on Spain's proposed membership of the European Community. Other regional organisations such as Mercosur, which are open solely to democratic countries, are also helping in consolidating democracy (see Francisco Domínguez & Marcos Guedes de Oliveira eds., *Mercosur: Between Integration and Democracy* [45] [Peter Lang AG, 2004]).

The EU represents the most successful case of an international organisation setting up and consolidating democratisation. The EU has some of the toughest membership criteria of any organization: countries must attain a given level of democracy and maintain it over time. In two distinct historical periods, and in completely opposite international climates, the EU has played an extremely useful role in launching democratisation.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the EU played a central role in allowing southern European countries (Greece, Spain, and Portugal) to emerge from fascist regimes. In the 1990s and 2000s it played the same role for Europe an countries in the Soviet bloc. The EU has also very effectively promoted democracy outside its own continent (see Richard Youngs, *The European Union and the Promotion of Democracy* [46] [Oxford University Press, 2002]). The fact that the EU is a "civil power" composed of numerous countries often in disagreement among themselves has meant that the EU's interventions were perceived not as imposition but as collaboration (see Mario Telò, *Europe, a Civilian Power? European Union, Global Governance, World Order* [46] [Palgrave, 2006]).

While much attention has been focused on economic incentives, as represented by access to the largest market in the world, the political incentives have often been underestimated. As soon as new members are admitted to the club, they enjoy the same status as founder members. Romania, admitted only in 2007, has a larger number of deputies in the European parliament than the Netherlands, which is one of the six founder members. Even though each country has a different amount of economic muscle, each country has the same clout in defining institutional politics and foreign policy. Exclusion from the EU is in itself already a severe penalty. The EU does not simply give lessons in democracy, but once new members have been admitted, those new members define common policies jointly and democratically.

Europe must reproach itself for not having played the membership card when the former Yugoslavia broke up in the early 1990s. Perhaps it would have been possible to avoid the savage wars in Yugoslavia if the EU had demanded that each ethnic community should break off hostilities and be rewarded by being given a fast-tracked admission to the EU. It would thus have been possible to reduce the importance of the fight to delimit the frontiers, as EU membership would have guaranteed free circulation of persons, goods, and capital and the protection of human rights for each ethnic group. In that case, the EU failed either to offer a carrot or to use the stick. It was a failure, but the only one.

It may justly be objected that so far the EU has accepted new members from among countries that, owing to their economic level, infrastructures, and social capital, were considered likely to democratise (see Adam Przeworski, *Sustainable Democracy* [47] [Cambridge University Press,

1995]). The next years will show if the EU is able to take in countries that are culturally different and/or have substantially lower income levels. The lesson to be learned from the EU, however, is that as soon as a state takes seriously the political destiny of another community, that state should be coherent enough to bound with the other to form an institutional union.

Since no one offered Afghanistan and Iraq the opportunity to become the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth members of the EU - not to speak of the fifty-first and fifty-second states of the United States - the scepticism of those who believe that these wars do not encourage self-government is further reinforced.

After Iraq, what is still possible?

The war in Iraq has reaped an unquantified but growing number of victims on the ground, made international relations stormier, and caused the west to forgo the role of leader among the developing countries that it had acquired thanks to its material and cultural resources. The war in Iraq has had another detrimental effect: it has shown the world's peoples that the west has not shaken off the habits of old colonialism and new imperialism, aggravated by its use of the noble values of freedom and democracy as a rhetorical screen behind which to conceal the interests of restricted elites in power.

Inside the west, this has produced a dramatic rupture between democratic governments and, at the same time, between governments and their own publics. Since the west possesses the resources and the will to export democracy, the Iraqi adventure is destined to have a decisive impact on the agendas of the future.

A long list of factors explains why democratising Iraq and Afghanistan has proved so much more difficult than democratising Germany, Italy, and Japan. Among the ones most commonly invoked are that Iraq and Afghanistan did not satisfy minimum conditions regarding income level and political and religious culture; that a complete defeat of the previous regime is necessary to allow the transition to take place; and that numerous errors were made in the way the transition administration was handled (see Thomas Carothers et al., *Multilateral Strategies to Promote Democracy* [48] [Carnegie Council, 2004]; and Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq* [49] [Times Books, 2005]).

All these arguments are valid, but none seem decisive. I claim that a war of aggression is a means that contradicts its end - and that this, more than any other factor, explains why the Iraqi people, instead of accepting a regime imposed by occupation forces, launched into a stubborn resistance.

The damage was done far beyond Iraq. Just as the Vietnam war discredited the leadership of western countries and for more than a decade pushed many developing countries and national-liberation movements toward political systems that were antagonistic toward those of liberal democracies, the Iraq war created an opposition to the foreign policy of western countries that will have unpredictable consequences.

The wave of democratisations that started in 1989 has come to a sharp halt, and there are even dangers of regression: after 2003, and for the first time since 1990, the number of democracies has decreased rather than increased. It will take a long time and a lot of patience before the democratic countries regain the authority on the international scene that has been dissipated by George W Bush and Tony Blair. Yet it would be mistaken to believe that the civil wars in Iraq and Afghanistan signal that there are people who are not "mature" enough for democracy or that the international context cannot contribute to its spread and consolidation.

This essay has revealed that the opportunity for self-determination may be exported, while the specific form of democratic government can only be imported; that is, the democratic government needs to be formed starting from a suitably endogenous political fabric. This rules out the possibility that democracy can be exported militarily, unless the attempt takes place after democratic countries have been attacked.

The historical experience considered confirms that the cases of successful export of democracy were carried out by means of persuasion, incentives, and international collaboration. In this case there is no dilemma regarding the choice of means and ends: the aim of democracy is achieved much more easily when coherent means are adopted. This lesson is fully compliant with the cosmopolitan project outlined herein: the external conflict reinforces the authoritarian regimes, while an international system based on peace and collaboration makes life difficult for despots and encourages the internal oppositions required for an effective political liberalisation.

The policy of persuasion, incentives, and sanctions is not always effective and is rarely timely. South Africa's apartheid regime, in spite of its extensive international isolation, remained in place for several decades before being removed; the despotic regimes in Burma and many other countries are still under the yoke of dictatorships. However, the carrot has a huge advantage over the stick: it does not cause any damage or harm for which the democracies have to take responsibility. No collateral damage is caused by the attempt to convince other countries to become democratic. At a time in which there is no certainty that evil means allow desirable goals to be achieved, it is wise to refrain from carrying out actions that compromise the democratic cause.

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