Freedom by Force:
Foreign-Imposed Regime Change and Democratization

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INTRODUCTION

The question of whether democratic states can effectively promote democracy abroad with the use of force has given rise to an interesting empirical puzzle, as well as a growing gap between the policies and pronouncements of democratic leaders and the findings of scholarly studies. Recent history reveals a wave of military interventions by democracies intended to empower democratic institutions in other states, including Grenada (1983), Panama (1989), Haiti (1994), Bosnia (1995-), Kosovo (1999-), Afghanistan (2001-), and Iraq (2003-). Democratic statesmen from Woodrow Wilson to George W. Bush have professed their desire to bring the virtues of democracy to people across the globe, often through the use of military force. This triumphalist rhetoric grew especially pronounced in the post-Cold War world, but may have reached its height during the Bush administration, which declared in the 2002 National Security Strategy that “freedom, democracy, and free enterprise” constituted the “single, sustainable model for national success,” a formula that is “right and true for every person in every society.”

Bush also committed the power of the United States to the mission of helping people in other societies throw off the yoke of tyranny, declaring in his second inaugural address in 2005 that “it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.”

A belief in the utility of military power in encouraging democratic reform is not limited to U.S. leaders. In announcing the start of an air campaign to enforce a no-fly zone over Libya in March 2011, French President Nicolas Sarkozy stated that, “In Libya, the civilian population, which is

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demanding nothing more than the right to choose their own destiny, is in mortal danger; it is our duty to respond to their anguished appeal.\textsuperscript{3}

Despite these recent pro-democratic interventions and policy pronouncements, the academic literature is divided on the question of whether sustainable democratic institutions can be imposed through military intervention. Many point to successful cases, such as the U.S. occupations of West Germany and Japan following World War II, as evidence that democracy can be engineered by outsiders through military intervention. Those in the pessimist camp view these as outliers from a more general pattern of failure typified by cases like Iraq, Afghanistan, or most U.S. interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean in the twentieth century. Indeed, recent studies have yielded relatively little support for the view that targets of democratic interventions experience much liberalization, concluding that intervention has either no effect or even a negative effect on a state’s subsequent democratic trajectory.\textsuperscript{4} A third view occupies a middle ground: these studies agree that in general democratic military intervention has little liberalizing effect in target states, but contend that democracies can induce democratization when they explicitly pursue this objective and invest substantial effort and resources.\textsuperscript{5}


Is military intervention an effective means of spreading democracy? Specifically, when democracies overthrow foreign leaders and empower new leaders or political institutions, does democracy follow as a result? The answer to this question is of great importance to U.S. foreign policy and the foreign policies of other democracies because regime change operations are often costly. The United States, by some estimates, has expended $3 trillion to bring democracy to Iraq after U.S. policymakers promised before the invasion that removing Saddam Hussein and democratizing the country could be done at minimal cost.\textsuperscript{6} Through mid-2011, U.S. military forces had suffered nearly 37,000 casualties in Iraq and close to 13,000 casualties in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{7} Despite these massive investments of blood and treasure, neither country has yet made a transition to democracy nearly a decade after the removal of their previous governments.\textsuperscript{8}

The efficacy of implanting democracy by removing foreign leaders is also important to citizens of countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, and similar states that might be targeted for transformative interventions. There is no doubt that the Taliban and Baathist regimes inflicted widespread suffering on their populations. The removal of these governments, however, triggered further agonies for the Afghan and Iraqi populations. Sectarian civil war and terrorism have taken over 100,000 civilian lives in Iraq since 2003; at least 11,000 Afghan civilians have been killed since 2001.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{8} Figures are as of August 1, 2011. See Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, available at www.icasualties.org.
We argue that previous attempts to determine the effect of military intervention on democratization have been undermined by three problems. First, previous studies have struggled to identify an appropriate universe of cases. Some tend to define intervention too broadly, including many cases that did not result in armed hostilities, an incursion by one state into the territory of another, or a dispute over the composition of the respective governments. These analyses thus likely include many irrelevant observations, which may skew the results. Other studies focus on the most encompassing forms of intervention—nation-building or military occupation—but ignore other instances in which democracies used less radical means of intervention to impose new leaders or regimes.

Second, some otherwise sophisticated existing studies may suffer from selection bias because they fail to account for the non-random nature of intervention. If states that are targeted for intervention systematically differ from states that are not in terms of their potential to democratize, then results from studies that do not correct for this tendency will be biased. This problem could run in either direction: states that initiate interventions may choose the easiest cases, or may resort to costly military interventions only after other options have failed, and thus choose the most difficult cases.

Third, many recent analyses emphasize the motives, incentives, and efforts of the intervening state in explaining democratization outcomes but neglect the importance of favorable

10 See, for example, Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, “Intervention and Democracy.”
11 For example, Dobbins et al., America’s Role in Nation-Building.
12 Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, “Intervention and Democracy”; and Pickering and Peceny, “Forging Democracy at Gunpoint.”
conditions for democracy—such as wealth and homogeneous populations—in target states. In perhaps the most prominent recent study, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and George Downs find that interventions by democracies lead only to superficial democratic improvements: targeted states become slightly more democratic on average, but remain firmly entrenched in the autocratic range of the combined Polity index, a commonly used measure of democratic institutions. Drawing on a broader theory of domestic political institutions and the incentives facing leaders, they argue that democratic leaders care foremost about succeeding in their foreign adventures, because policy success is what keeps them in office. Installing a pliant dictator who will implement the intervener’s policies is thus a better bet than empowering a democrat, who must respond to the whims of his own domestic audience, which may clash with the intervener’s wishes. Bueno de Mesquita and Downs therefore conclude that failure to impart democracy is no accident, but rather the product of deliberate policy choices by democratic interveners.

In this paper, we conduct a new analysis of military intervention and democratization that seeks to improve on these three shortcomings. First, we limit our study to the effect of interventions that actually change the effective leader and/or governing institutions in targets. The literature to date already indicates that intervention, broadly defined, fails on average to advance the cause of democracy, or does so only under restrictive circumstances. In most interventions, however, external actors do not actually bring new leaders (or institutions) to power; existing studies thus have little to say about efforts such as those underway in Iraq and Afghanistan to instill democracy by removing and replacing governments. We examine only this most direct type of military intervention: whether a state experienced a foreign-imposed regime change (FIRC), defined as the removal of the effective leader of a state at the instigation of

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14 Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, “Intervention and Democracy”; Pickering and Peceny, “Forging Democracy at Gunpoint”; and Dobbins et al., America’s Role in Nation-Building.
15 Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, “Intervention and Democracy.”
another state. Specifically, we look at the effect of FIRC by democracies between 1816 and 2008 on change in the level of democracy in target states, and the probability that targets experience a transition to consolidated democracy.

Second, to adjust for the possibility that states may select the easiest (or most difficult) cases to intervene in, we use an empirical strategy that identifies pairs of states that did and did not experience FIRC but were similar on a set of variables likely correlated with the propensity to democratize. This “matching” technique minimizes the risk that any empirical evidence linking FIRC and democratization—or the lack of any evidence—is biased by systematic differences in where democratic states choose to intervene.

Finally, we argue that in addition to the intentions or incentives of external actors, one must take into account domestic conditions in targets of FIRC to explain variation in democratization success and failure. A long and venerable literature in comparative politics maintains that there are several key internal factors that increase the likelihood that a state will eventually democratize, including the economic well-being of its citizens, the ethnic or cultural diversity of the population, the strength and robustness of state bureaucratic institutions, and previous experience with constitutional governance. The argument that democratic leaders promote dictators rather than democrats when they intervene abroad no doubt fits some democratic interventions—such as U.S. intercessions in Latin America and the Caribbean to empower friendly strongmen—but it ignores substantial evidence that democratic states have

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committed substantial amounts of blood and treasure to purvey democracy after intervening
abroad. These efforts sometimes succeed, as in West Germany and Japan after World War II,
or Grenada and Panama in the 1980s. Other times these efforts fail to establish sustainable
democratic institutions, unable to overcome unfavorable local conditions such as extreme
poverty, ethnic or religious hostilities among the population, or endemic corruption. The failure
of intervention to spur democratization in such cases, however, does not provide evidence for a
theory that argues that democracies discourage liberalization by design.

Our empirical findings support our theoretical expectations. When looking at the set of
cases restricted to actual regime change and implementing matching to obtain a most similar set
of control cases, states that experience FIRC at the hands of democracies on average receive little
democratic benefit over the ensuing ten years, and are not more likely to make a successful
transition to consolidated democracy. The average target of FIRC by a democracy remains
solidly autocratic. This result holds whether the intervener was the United States or another
democracy. When we differentiate FIRCs depending on whether the intervener took action to
liberalize the target’s institutions, however, we find that these “democratizing” FIRCs result in
significantly greater levels of democracy and an increased propensity to shift to fully
institutionalized democracy. In cases where interveners simply substituted one leader for
another, targets become significantly less democratic and are no more likely to democratize. The
caveat is that upon close examination, only three states—West Germany, Japan, and Panama—
successfully democratized after a democratizing FIRC, and each of these countries was relatively

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wealthy and ethnically homogeneous. Target states that were economically underdeveloped or had more heterogeneous populations experienced no significant democratic benefit. These findings support our argument that domestic conditions in targets of democratic FIRC strongly influence the extent to which liberalization occurs afterward. Contrary to the selectorate theory of intervention, democratic interveners sometimes attempt to instill democracy abroad; whether or not they succeed, however, depends on the preconditions for democracy in the target of intervention.

The paper unfolds as follows. First, we elaborate on the puzzle, the current literature on intervention and democracy, and our theoretical contribution. Second, we discuss our research design: we define foreign-imposed leader change, our measure of intervention; our indicators of democratic change and democratic transition; and the matching procedure we use to address selection bias. Third, we present the statistical results, and then conclude by discussing the implications of the findings and questions for future research.

THE DEBATE ABOUT INTERVENTION AND THE SPREAD OF DEMOCRACY

Although the literature on whether countries can be forcibly democratized from the outside-in is relatively underdeveloped,\(^{18}\) it can be divided between optimists, pessimists, and those who make conditional arguments.\(^{19}\) Many policy makers fall into the optimist camp, arguing that

\(^{18}\) As the discussion and critical evaluation below highlight, few systematic studies of the democratizing effects of military intervention exist. Those that do exist adopt different universes of cases and disparate definitions of the independent and dependent variables, making it hard to compare their results directly.

\(^{19}\) This debate can be placed in the context of a broader literature on the different policy tools used by international actors to spur democratic development in undemocratic states, such as foreign aid, membership in international organizations, economic sanctions, civil society assistance, and policy diffusion. For recent research on these issues, see Jon C. Pevehouse, *Democracy from Above? Regional Organizations and Democratization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Steven E. Finkel, Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, and Mitchell A. Seligson, “The Effects of U.S. Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building, 1990-2003,” *World Politics*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (April 2007), pp. 404-439; Michael McFaul, “Ukraine Imports Democracy: External Influences on the Orange Revolution,” *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Fall 2007), pp. 45-83; and Beth A. Simmons, Frank Dobbin, and Geoffrey Garrett,
democracy is transferrable to any society or culture. Some leading academics, however, cast
doubt on these assertions, and even question whether democratic statesmen—despite their
rhetoric—actually want to implant democracy in countries where they intervene. Others argue
that outsiders can help sustainable democratic regimes take root only under certain conditions.
This section outlines and critiques the main positions in this debate.

INTERVENTION OPTIMISTS

Although international democracy promotion has historically been a central aspect of U.S.
foreign policy, since the end of the Cold War U.S. presidents have placed greater emphasis on
spreading democracy.20 Early in the 1990s, Bill Clinton pushed “democratic enlargement” as the
centerpiece of his administration’s post-Cold War foreign policy vision, and touted NATO
expansion into Eastern Europe as a means to lock in democratization in former Soviet satellite
states.21 For George W. Bush, spreading democracy took on added importance as a means to
combat the terrorist threat that he and others argued emanated from authoritarian states in the
Middle East. One of the principal justifications put forward for invading Iraq and toppling
Saddam Hussein was that democratizing Iraq would initiate a wave of liberalization in

2006), pp. 781-810. See also Whitehead, ed., International Dimensions of Democratization; and Laurence
Whitehead, “International Aspects of Democratization,” in Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and
Laurence Whitehead, eds., Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives (Baltimore: Johns
20 See, for example, Smith, America’s Mission, chap. 11; and G. John Ikenberry, Takashi Inoguchi, and Michael
Cox, eds., American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts (New York: Oxford University
Press, 2000). This commitment to democracy has not always been iron-clad. See Schmitz, Thank God They’re on
Our Side; and Schmitz, United States and Right-Wing Dictatorships.
No. 4 (Spring 2001), pp. 41-67.
surrounding Arab countries, removing repressive regimes and with them one of the main grievances fueling international terrorism.  

The belief held by the Bush administration that the United States could build a democratic state in Iraq was based in part on a set of neoconservative ideas about regime change through the use of force. Several elements define this approach. First, neoconservatism holds that the United States has not only a moral imperative to promote democracy but also a strategic interest in doing so because democracies do not fight one another. Second, neoconservativism is relatively optimistic about the possibility that military force can be an effective means to accomplish this goal. Power is seen as a central aspect of international affairs, and thus the application of force is often required to overcome a dictator or an entrenched illiberal regime. As Michael Ledeen put it, “The best democracy program ever invented is the U.S. army.”

Third, neoconservative optimism about regime change is based on the belief that democracy is transferrable to all cultures, regardless of obstacles such as poverty, social divisions, religious affiliation, or lack of experience with democratic institutions. Bush administration officials used this idea to build public support for the Iraq war in 2002 and 2003. As Bush stated in February 2003:

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America has made and kept this kind of commitment before—in the peace that followed a world war. After defeating enemies, we did not leave behind occupying armies, we left constitutions and parliaments...In societies that once bred fascism and militarism, liberty found a permanent home. There was a time when many said that the cultures of Japan and Germany were incapable of sustaining democratic values. Well, they were wrong. Some say the same of Iraq today. They are mistaken.27

The view that outsiders can democratize other countries through military force is not confined to U.S. policymakers, but has found some theoretical and empirical support in the academic literature. In recent years this literature has shown a greater interest in how international factors influence democratic transitions and consolidation.28 Democratization scholars have identified several causal pathways through which foreign intervention specifically can lead to positive democratic change.29 One line of argument suggests that outside intervention is often necessary to dismantle and remove abusive political and military institutions that have become entrenched against popular pressure.30 Others contend that military defeat can discredit ruling elites or lead to new elite bargains that favor democracy.31 Intervention and occupation by a democratic power can make it costly for the armed forces or other potential anti-democratic spoilers to use violence to challenge a new regime, and can establish and ensure civilian control.

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

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

INTERVENTION AND DEMOCRACY: THE SKEPTICS

Recent studies that attempt to determine systematically the impact of intervention on subsequent democratization have undercut the idea that democratic intervention can spur political liberalization. Realists, for example, suggest that states, and especially great powers, rarely subordinate their national interests to ideological goals such as promoting democracy. These

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32 According to Bermeo, “Institutional constraints on democratic spoilers were highly consequential for the postwar democracies of Japan, Germany, and Austria.” Bermeo, “Armed Conflict and the Durability of Electoral Democracy,” p. 73. See also Bermeo, “What the Democratization Literature Says—Or Doesn’t Say—About Postwar Democratization,” p. 163; and Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).
scholars therefore highlight the rarity of success, and argue that intervention is not only unlikely to result in substantial democratic improvement, but that it might be counterproductive as well.\(^{37}\)

One of the most rigorous attempt to examine this question to date is Bueno de Mesquita and Downs’s study of military intervention and democracy. This study compares the democratic trajectories of states that did and did not experience military intervention by a democracy between 1946 and 2001. The results are striking: whether the intervener is the UN, the United States, or some other democracy, targets of intervention experience no meaningful degree of liberalization between ten and twenty years following the intervention. The authors note that in states targeted for intervention, “the achieved level of democracy does not reach or exceed the commonly used and relatively weak threshold for defining democracy, let alone the upper bound that signifies a genuine, full-fledged democratic polity.”\(^{38}\) Similarly, Pickering and Peceny find hardly any successful cases of successful democratic transitions following military interventions by the United States, Great Britain, and France between 1946 and 1996.\(^{39}\)

Bueno de Mesquita and Downs attribute this result to the strategic incentives that democratic institutions provide for elected leaders in the intervening state. This argument is derived from a theory of the “selectorate” developed elsewhere by Bueno de Mesquita and colleagues.\(^{40}\) In this model, political institutions are differentiated by the size of the selectorate (S)—the number of people who participate in selecting the national leader—and the winning coalition (W)—the proportion of the selectorate whose support propels the leader into office and

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\(^{38}\) Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, “Intervention and Democracy,” 647.

\(^{39}\) Only intervention by the United Nations is unambiguously associated with an increased probability of transition to democracy. See Pickering and Peceny, “Forging Democracy at Gunpoint,” pp. 549-555.

keeps him there. In highly participatory states like modern democracies, $S$ approximates the adult population of the country and $W$—depending on the particular type of institutions that characterize the state—is a majority or plurality of $S$. Given the large size of $W$ in democracies, leaders cannot compensate supporters with private benefits; rather they must rely on the quality and success of their public policies to retain supporters. By contrast, in states where $W$ is small, policy success matters little because leaders can reward the small number of individuals whose support is necessary to keep them in office with private goods. Because policy success is the key to retaining office in democracies, leaders are cautious to avoid foreign policy failures and try hard to ensure that ventures they do undertake yield the benefits promised.

According to the argument, these incentives related to the nature of a leader’s selectorate can have consequences for the outcomes of foreign interventions. Democratic leaders care most about their own political survival, and institutionalizing a democratic system in another state after an intervention does not serve this goal. From the perspective of a democratic leader in an intervening state, democracy induces uncertainty because “there is no guarantee that a candidate sympathetic to the policy goals of the intervener will even be running much less be victorious.” It is thus “safer and less costly” to empower a dictator because autocratic leaders do not have to cater to the whims of their population, they can undertake policies that benefit the intervener.41 As long as democratic leaders face these incentives, military intervention is unlikely to be a reliable mechanism for exporting democracy.

BETWEEN OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM: CONDITIONAL ARGUMENTS

A third group of analysts eschews categorical judgments in favor of identifying the factors associated with better or worse democratic outcomes among countries that experience

intervention. Perhaps the leading explanation for variation in the success or failure of interventions concerns the level of effort put forward by the intervening state(s). This argument has emerged most prominently from the recent literature on nation-building, typically defined as “a deliberate process of democratization administered through foreign intervention.” A study of U.S. nation-building operations led by James Dobbins at RAND, for example, argues that although a number of factors contribute to nation-building success, the single most important variable “is the level of effort the United States and the international community put into their democratic transformations....This higher level of input accounts in significant measure for the higher level of output measured in the development of democratic institutions and economic growth.” Dobbins and his colleagues show that Germany, one of the clearest success stories, had by far the highest number of U.S. occupation troops per capita of any U.S. nation-building effort in the last sixty years. Germany also received the largest total amount of aid of all cases in the first two years of its occupation, although not the largest in per capita terms. Two cases that the RAND team considers to be partial successes—Kosovo and Bosnia—had the second and third largest number of occupying troops per capita, respectively, and were also the top two recipients of aid per capita and as a percentage of gross domestic product. Haiti, by contrast—a clear failure of nation-building—had one of the smallest numbers of troops and lowest levels of monetary aid per capita.

A second conditional argument in the literature maintains that the pro-democracy intentions of the intervener are the critical variable. Several studies from the 1990s argued that U.S. military interventions exert a positive effect on democratization, but only when the

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objective of these interventions was explicitly to liberalize the target state. In an examination of twenty-seven U.S. interventions from 1950 to 1990, James Meernik found that intervention by itself had little discernible impact on subsequent levels of democracy in target states. When “the U.S. president declared democracy was a goal of the intervention,” however, these operations resulted in positive democratic change.\textsuperscript{44} Similarly, Mark Peceny’s study of twentieth century U.S. military interventions concluded that although pro-liberalization interventions were relatively rare—constituting only one-third of all cases—when the U.S. sought to promote democracy “at the point of bayonets,” it generally succeeded, as targets of liberalizing interventions were significantly more likely to become consolidated democracies afterwards.\textsuperscript{45} Hermann and Kegley, looking at American interventions since 1945, also found evidence that interventions intended to promote democracy led to an improvement in the target’s Polity score, whereas “American interventions that were not focused on governmental reform…resulted in the target state becoming more autocratic.”\textsuperscript{46}

A final set of arguments identifies conditions in the target state as the key variables influencing the success or failure of military interventions in producing democratic change. This view draws on the comparative politics literature on democratization outline above, which seeks to identify factors associated with democratic transition, consolidation, and breakdown, such as a state’s level of wealth, the extent of ethnic or social divisions in a society, whether a state has any prior experience with democracy, or a state’s level of external and internal security threat.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{44} Meernik, “United States Military Intervention and the Promotion of Democracy,” p. 399.
\textsuperscript{45} Peceny, Democracy at the Point of Bayonets, chap. 7.
\textsuperscript{46} Hermann and Kegley, “The U.S. Use of Military Intervention to Promote Democracy,” p. 98. Several historical works support the broadly positive democratic impact of U.S. occupation in two critical post-war cases, Japan and West Germany. See John W. Dower, Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II (New York: Norton: 1999); and John D. Montgomery, Forced to be Free: The Artificial Revolution in Germany and Japan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).
\textsuperscript{47} Geddes, “What Do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years”; Lipset, “Some Social Requisites of Democracy”; Przeworski, et al., Democracy and Development; and Huntington, Third Wave.
Several scholars argue that these factors also strongly influence the likelihood that foreign intervention will result in sustainable democratic change.\textsuperscript{48} Andrew Enterline and Michael Greig, for example, examine the survival of imposed democracies, defined as “democratic governments installed by a foreign power in which the foreign power plays an important role in the establishment, promotion, and maintenance of the institutions of government.”\textsuperscript{49} Such governments may be brought to power by a departing colonial power, or by overt or covert military intervention in an already independent state. Enterline and Greig find that the level of wealth in imposed democracies and the degree of ethnic or religious fractionalization affects the survival of these regimes: only 40 percent of imposed democracies with high levels of ethnic fractionalization survive their first decade, and just one-quarter of the poorest such states last for twenty years.\textsuperscript{50}

**CRITICAL EVALUATION**

The evidence behind each of these views has important weaknesses. For democratization optimists, the difficulty is the historical rarity of successes. One study of nation-building, for example, counts only four successful cases of democratization out of sixteen attempts, a success rate of 25 percent.\textsuperscript{51} Aside from West Germany and Japan after World War II, there are few positive outcomes to point to, and hardly any in less-developed countries.


\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., pp. 335-339.

\textsuperscript{51} Pei and Kasper, *Lessons from the Past*. 
More generally, democratization optimists have produced few sophisticated studies to counter Bueno de Mesquita and Downs’ evidence that democratic interventions produce essentially nothing in terms of democratization. Meernik’s study, for example, is limited to a small sample of U.S. interventions and tracks democratic change for only three years afterwards.52 Peceny’s work includes more interventions and covers a longer time period, but is limited to U.S. interventions.53 Both studies also acknowledge that pro-liberalization interventions constitute a minority of all cases.

Democratization pessimists initially appear to be on firmer ground, yet several questions remain. Bueno de Mesquita and Downs advance an elegant theory and there are obvious cases where democracies have imposed autocratic strongmen in other states. Yet there are also enough cases of democracies intervening and setting up democratic systems by force to raise questions about whether Bueno de Mesquita and Downs’s theory is generally valid. For example, upon entering World War I, Britain made the removal of the Prussian military class and the democratization of Germany one of its principal war objectives.54 In World War II, Britain and the United States demanded the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers, and supervised the thorough-going transformation of Italy, Japan, and the western half of Germany into democracies. For Japan, the terms of surrender agreed to by the allies at the Potsdam conference in July 1945 included the demand that “The Japanese Government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people.”55

52 Meernik, “United States Military Intervention and the Promotion of Democracy.”
53 Peceny, Democracy at the Point of Bayonets. Peceny also looks at democratization outcomes decades after U.S. intervention, which increases the likelihood that factors other than intervention are responsible for political liberalization.
recently, the United States turned out Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega and facilitated his replacement by a democratic system; negotiated the Dayton Peace Agreement that installed democratic institutions (however dysfunctional) in Bosnia; and overturned repressive regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq and brought representative government to those countries. Although the jury is still out on the democratic transformations in Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, the actions of U.S. policy makers in these cases defy Bueno de Mesquita and Downs’s logic. Because they argue that democratic leaders intentionally empower autocrats after interventions, the failure of certain countries to democratize supports their theory only if the intervening democracy purposefully empowered non-democratic elites. If democracy failed to take root in spite of the interveners’ efforts to facilitate democracy, that does not constitute evidence for Bueno de Mesquita and Downs’s argument, but rather for arguments about the conditions under which imposed democracy succeeds or fails.

A second issue with the pessimists’ position concerns the appropriateness of their research designs. The principal problem is that the independent variable—intervention—is loosely operationalized. Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, for example, in addition to using data on UN peacekeeping and intervention in civil wars, code as interveners “any state with a Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) hostility level score above 1; that is, any state that actively participated in a militarized dispute provided it is not coded as the initiator in the MIDs data.”

No effort is made to determine whether interveners in these cases made any changes to leaders or

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57 Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, “Intervention and Democracy,” p. 637. The MID hostility-level variable ranges from 1 to 5; only levels 4 and 5 involve the actual use of military force. Levels 2 and 3 are defined respectively as “threat to use force” and “display of force.” Faten Ghosn and Glenn Palmer, “Codebook for the Militarized Interstate Dispute Data, Version 3.0,” April 14, 2003, available at http://correlatesofwar.org/. Threats of force are self-explanatory; displays of force include actions like alerts, mobilization of forces, fortification of borders, and border violations. Of the 1,456 countries in the MID data with a hostility level of 2 or 3, only 23 of them (1.6 percent) experienced any fatalities. Figures are calculated from version 3.10 of the participant-level (MIDB) dataset.
governing institutions. Pickering and Peceny use a more appropriate measure of intervention consisting of the “movement of regular troops or forces (airborne, seaborne, shelling, etc.) of one country inside another, in the context of some political issue or dispute.” Although these data track the direction of intervention—supportive of, or in opposition to, a target government—they do not indicate whether interveners actually overturned—or otherwise tried to change—leaders or governing institutions in the target state.

Each of these studies contains over one thousand cases of intervention. Disputes over government composition, however, or actual foreign removal of leaders, are exceedingly rare. A mere 205 of the 5,600 dispute participants (3.7 percent) in the MID dataset, for example, are coded as making demands that involved changes in the adversary’s regime or government. Similarly, the most authoritative collection of information concerning how leaders leave office identifies only 72 who were removed by foreign actors (2.4 percent of over 3,000 leaders) between 1875 and 2004. In other words, very few interventions actually attempt—or result in—regime change. The Bueno de Mesquita and Downs and Pickering and Peceny studies are thus likely filled with many false cases of intervention.

Finally, studies that make conditional arguments regarding post-intervention democratization encounter several problems. The conclusions of studies of nation-building, for example, rest on case study evidence from states in which nation-building occurred; there is no comparative analysis of the democratic development of similar states that did not experience foreign occupation. Furthermore, the evidence for the expenditure-of-effort argument is far from

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58 Many of these interventions are actually cases of cross-border aerial, naval, or artillery bombardment rather than troop incursions, but Pickering and Peceny write that they exclude “air and naval incursions, no matter how frequent or relentless.” Pickering and Peceny, “Forging Democracy at Gunpoint,” p. 546.
clear-cut. Japan, for example, is an anomaly for the argument, as it was garrisoned by low levels of troops and received a small amount of aid in relation to the size of its population, yet emerged as one of the few unqualified successes. Even Germany—the other big success—obtained far less aid per capita than did Bosnia and Kosovo, and only marginally more than Haiti, the biggest failure. The classification of the two Balkan states as successes (even partial ones) is also dubious; Edelstein, by contrast, remarks that the missions in these places “have largely stagnated with hardened ethnic divisions remaining in place.” According to a 2006 report by the Congressional Research Service, Iraq has received comparable levels of aid to Germany and twice the amount of aid as Japan received from 1946 to 1952, and was the largest recipient of U.S. official development assistance from 2004-2008. The evidence that investment of time and effort is the key to nation-building success is thus more mixed than Dobbins and company indicate.

Studies of imposed democracy, on the other hand, lump together two types of imposed polities that are actually quite different: former colonies where an independent government is put in place for the first time, and previously independent states where one government is forcibly replaced with another. From a current policy perspective, the interesting question is whether outsiders can successfully remove one set of rulers or institutions and install another in a state that otherwise remains independent. Although the democratic trajectory of imposed regimes in former colonies is interesting (as is the more general question of the influence of colonial

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61 Dobbins et al., America’s Role in Nation-Building.
62 Ibid., pp. 150-158.
legacies on the institutions and development of post-colonial states), it is less relevant to contemporary policymakers contemplating regime change as a solution to enduring conflicts with other states. Eighty-six percent of the states in Enterline and Greig’s analysis are former colonies; only six of the forty-three cases of imposed democracy they identify occurred in states that were already independent.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOMESTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF TARGET STATES

As mentioned, democratization scholars have identified several domestic factors broadly associated with democratic transition and consolidation. We argue that these factors are important intervening variables in explaining when FIRC by democracies is likely to result in positive democratic change. In this paper we focus on two particular variables.

First, many democratization scholars posit a strong relationship between the level of economic development and democratic institutions. Although the link between development and democracy is complex, economic growth is associated with several social and political changes that appear to favor democracy, including rising personal incomes, greater access to education, an expanding middle class, and a stronger civil society and independent media. States that are more advanced economically may also have more developed bureaucratic institutions, another factor that is associated with greater potential to democratize. As a result, wealthier

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66 Enterline and Greig, “Against All Odds?” p. 326.
67 As discussed in our review of the literature, several scholars have previously advanced conditional arguments based on domestic characteristics of states targeted for intervention. This work has been dominated either by qualitative studies focusing on single cases, such as Iraq (e.g., Byman, “Constructing a Democratic Iraq”), or by studies that use a different universe of cases (e.g., Enterline and Greig, “Against All Odds?”, and Pei and Kasper, Lessons from the Past). Systematic evidence on the impact of domestic variables in the context of foreign-imposed regime change and democratization is thus lacking.
68 See the works cited in note 16.
autocracies may be more likely to transition to democracy, and may be less at risk of backsliding once they make the transition.\footnote{The former is known as “endogenous” democratization (ibid.); the latter is called “exogenous” democratization. Compare Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, “Endogenous Democratization,” \textit{World Politics}, Vol. 55, No. 4 (July 2003), pp. 517-549, and Przeworski et al., \textit{Democracy and Development}.} According to Larry Diamond, “the notion that there is a strong association between a country’s level of economic development and its likelihood of being a democracy has been one of the most prominent theories of the social sciences, and one of the best sustained by the evidence.”\footnote{Diamond, \textit{Spirit of Democracy}, p. 96.} We therefore hypothesize that the more economically developed the target state, the more likely it is that regime-changing interventions by democracies will lead to democratization. These states possess the most important building-block for democracy, and thus should be the most likely to make significant democratic gains following intervention.

open electoral competition, particularly in the absence of strong state institutions or constitutional limits on the exercise of power by the majority.

When an external actor forcibly overthrows the government of another state, civil conflict is likely to erupt, which could in turn hinder democratization. This seems especially likely in heterogeneous societies, since FIRC may touch off a struggle for power among contending groups or result in a reversal of status for the group that was displaced from power, which may fight to regain its previous position. This is exactly what happened in Iraq and Afghanistan—both highly heterogeneous countries—and the resulting insurgencies have slowed democratic transitions in those countries to a crawl. Foreign-imposed regime changes may thus be most likely to foster democracies in countries that are ethnically or culturally homogenous.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This section presents the research design we employ to measure the effect of foreign-imposed regime change on democratization. We begin by defining our independent and dependent variables. These sections are followed by a detailed discussion of the matching method we use to account for the reality that interventions are not randomly assigned.

DEFINING AND CODING FOREIGN-IMPOSED REGIME CHANGE

As we highlighted earlier, one of the most important drawbacks in the literature on intervention and democratization is the imprecise manner in which intervention is measured. Existing


quantitative studies fail to capture whether interveners actually change targets’ leaders or institutions.\footnote{Some readers might be concerned that using this narrower definition of intervention could bias our results against finding a positive effect of democratic intervention on democratization. This would be the case if less intrusive forms of intervention were more successful at encouraging liberalization. Our discussion in the previous section, however, demonstrated that existing studies use very broad conceptions of intervention, but find little democratic improvement afterwards in targets. See Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, “Intervention and Democracy”; and Pickering and Peceny, “Forging Democracy at Gunpoint.” This non-finding indicates that our more specific definition of intervention does not bias our results.}

The measure of intervention that we propose in this paper, therefore, is foreign-imposed regime change, which is the removal of the effective leader of one state—which remains formally sovereign afterward—at the instigation of the government of another state.\footnote{W. Michael Reisman, “The Manley O. Hudson Lecture: Why Regime Change is (Almost Always) a Bad Idea,” \textit{American Journal of International Law}, Vol. 98, No. 3 (July 2004), p. 516.} This definition includes several key elements, the most important of which is that an external actor must be primarily responsible for deposing the ruler of the state. The typical method interveners use is to launch an invasion with their own military forces, such as the United States did in late 1989 to apprehend Panamanian President Manuel Noriega. In a few instances, the threat of force is enough to prompt a leader to relinquish power, as when Haitian junta leader Gen. Raoul Cedras agreed to step down with U.S. Marines poised to come ashore in October 1994. Finally, external actors may work behind the scenes to overthrow the targeted regime using their intelligence agencies or by providing critical aid to domestic actors. This category can be ambiguous regarding the extent to which the resulting change of regime can be attributed to external versus domestic forces. For a change of government to qualify as a FIRC in these circumstances, we require evidence that the foreign government officially made removing the target regime its objective, and that the extent of the aid that outsiders provided to the rebels be of such a magnitude that regime change would have been very unlikely to succeed absent that
support. Carlos Castillo Armas, for example, stood little chance of overthrowing Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala without U.S.-provided airpower—and the Guatemalan officer corps’ belief that the United States would intervene directly if the army repelled Castillo Armas’s rag-tag invasion force. The Brazilian Army, by contrast, received no U.S. aid when it toppled President João Goulart in 1964. President Lyndon Johnson wanted Goulart removed, members of his administration discussed this preference with Brazilian officers, and Johnson ordered a U.S. naval task force to head for Brazil, but the Brazilians needed little encouragement, received no U.S. weapons, and the coup occurred before any U.S. ships arrived in the vicinity.

Second, for foreign-imposed regime change to be possible, the target must be an independent, sovereign state. We do not consider the imposition of regimes on newly-independent states by their former colonial masters, for example, to constitute FIRC.

Third, just as targets of FIRC must be independent states beforehand, they must retain at least nominal sovereignty after regime change occurs. Targets of intervention that are formally annexed to an intervener’s metropole or empire—such as Prussia’s absorption of small German states between 1866 and 1871, or Britain’s conquest of Burma in 1885—are excluded from the universe of FIRC. The rulers and governing structures of states that are conquered and absorbed by others are changed as a matter of course, but these changes are simply a by-product

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77 Although regime change must be officially adopted as the objective, this goal need not be stated publicly. In cases that are not publicly declared, state objectives are determined by examining government documents or secondary literature that has consulted such documents.


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

80 As noted above, the majority of the cases in studies of “imposed democracy” or “imposed polities” are former colonies. See Enterline and Greig, “Beacons of Hope?” and “Against All Odds?”, as well as Enterline and Greig, “Perfect Storms? Political Instability in Imposed Polities and the Future of Iraq and Afghanistan,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 52, No. 6 (December 2008), pp. 880-915.

of conquest rather than an effort to establish a new regime in an independent state. This does not mean that interveners may not temporarily govern a state whose leader they have overthrown, as long as the assumption of power is not intended to be permanent. Examples include the U.S. occupations of Haiti (1915-34) and the Dominican Republic (1916-24). Interveners may also install puppet regimes and garrison target countries with troops, as Germany did in Norway, Yugoslavia, and Greece during World War II.

Fourth, for a case to constitute FIRC it is only necessary that an intervener change the leader of the target government; it does not need to impose entirely new institutions. Enterline and Greig, by contrast, define an imposed polity as involving “not merely encouraging or facilitating leadership change, but rather a complete restructuring of the domestic political system in the target state. In doing so, the existing political structure in the target state is dismantled and remade by an intervening state, and new political leaders are installed to head these institutions.” Foreign-imposed regime change is thus less encompassing than an imposed polity: only the effective ruler must be changed. Interveners may also replace the governing institutions of the target, but this choice is not built into the definition.

Finally, external actors need only be responsible for overthrowing the old ruler for a case to be considered an instance of FIRC; they need not necessarily also determine his or her successor. In most cases of FIRC, interveners have someone in mind as a preferred replacement for the leader they aim to depose. When the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia on Christmas Day, 1978, for example, their “intent was to strike a quick and fatal blow to the Khmer Rouge

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


84 Below, however, we divide democratic FIRCs depending on whether they installed new leaders only or whether they also liberalized targets’ political institutions and assess their effects separately.
leadership … and place their man, Heng Samrin, at the head of a puppet government.”85 By contrast, when British Gen. Frederick Roberts deposed Yakub Khan during the Second Afghan War in 1879, he had no replacement in mind and could locate no takers for the job. According to Arnold Fletcher, in the midst of a popular anti-British uprising “it was … impossible to find a puppet for the Afghan throne,” which remained vacant for nine months.86

Why should FIRCs like these be included? First, excluding “removal-only” cases would mean forsaking the opportunity to compare whether cases where the intervener installs a replacement of its choosing have different consequences than those where the external actor does not designate a successor. Second, omitting removal-only FIRCs would preclude the ability to examine cases of imposed democracy. In most such cases, interveners put in place a set of institutions rather than a particular individual. The institutions—often after a lengthy occupation—then produce a leader that is not hand-picked (in theory, at least) by the external actor. For these reasons, we prefer to cast a relatively wide net, including all cases where a leader was removed by an external actor. According to this definition, there were 98 cases of FIRC between 1816 and 2008. These cases are shown in Table 1.

In this paper, we are primarily concerned with the liberalizing effects of foreign-imposed regime changes implemented by democracies. We therefore begin by differentiating FIRCs

86 Arnold Fletcher, Afghanistan: Highway of Conquest (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1965), p. 135. The British eventually agreed to allow Abdur Rahman, a grandson of former Afghan Amir Dost Mohammed who had spent many years in exile in Russia, to take power. Cases like these resemble assassination or the strategic bombing strategy known as decapitation. Had U.S. smart bombs succeeded in killing Saddam Hussein during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, for example, this would have been a successful instance of decapitation as well as a removal-only case of FIRC. In all likelihood, one of Saddam’s sons (Uday or Qusay) would have taken over. Decapitation seeks to kill an existing leader in the hope that whoever assumes power in his stead will be more accommodating, but does nothing to determine who the next leader will be. See Robert A. Pape, Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).
undertaken by democratic interveners from those carried out by non-democracies. We code the Polity scores of states that enacted FIRC in the year of intervention.\textsuperscript{87} Interveners that rank 17 or higher on the Polity index—Polity’s threshold for consolidated democracy—are assigned a value of 1 on a dummy variable for intervener democracy.\textsuperscript{88} Interveners with Polity scores less than 17 are coded as autocratic interveners. Because transitions to democracy may unfold over time, however, it makes little sense to look at democratic change only one year after a country experiences FIRC. We therefore code all FIRCs as 1 in the year that they occurred and also for the ensuing ten years to enable us to detect the effect of FIRC on change in Polity score and the probability of undergoing a democratic transition over an extended period of time.\textsuperscript{89} A ten year window allows sufficient time for democratic reforms to be implemented and take hold, but remains short enough such that democratization can still be attributed to FIRC. In the case of change in Polity score, it also allows us to track and account for variation in democratic change that may occur following FIRC, which we would not be able to do if we looked at targets’ Polity scores at particular intervals post-FIRC. In 1995, for example, France intervened in the Comoros Islands to overturn a coup by French mercenary Bob Denard. The country’s Polity score initially held steady at 15, but then fell to 9 after another coup before rebounding in the mid-2000s until the Comoros became a consolidated democracy in 2004. Although nearly one hundred FIRCs occurred in our period of analysis, a few states suffered multiple FIRCs in a single year (Afghanistan 1879, Peru 1881, Guatemala 1954, and Czechoslovakia 1968), and several others experienced FIRC shortly before exiting the international system (Tuscany, Parma, and Modena 1859; Korea 1907; and Montenegro 1916). Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) are dropped

\textsuperscript{87} We discuss the Polity index in detail in the next sub-section.
\textsuperscript{88} Varying this threshold by one point in either direction has little effect on the results.
\textsuperscript{89} In cases where a second FIRC occurred before the initial ten-year period elapsed, we code the period of the initial FIRC as ending in the year before the new FIRC. We then code a new ten-year period as beginning in the year of the second FIRC, and a dummy variable is coded with the regime type of the second intervener.
because Polity has been unable to code the regime types of these countries. These omissions leave the number of FIRCs in the analysis at 87, and the number of FIRC years at 778. Democracies enacted 26 of these FIRCs (30 percent) and account for 258 of the 841 FIRC years (31 percent) in the dataset.

We also code two dummy variables denoting whether or not the intervening democracy instituted FIRC with the aim of liberalizing the target government institutions. As noted above, some studies have found that democratic interventions purvey democracy only when specifically intended for this purpose. These two variables allow us to differentiate the effects of democratic FIRCs that only change leaders from those that also change institutions. It is obviously important to code the institutions variable based on objectives specified for an intervention and concrete actions taken by interveners rather than on the positive or negative consequences for democracy in the target. For many of our U.S. cases we relied on Peceny’s coding of whether U.S. leaders adopted prolberalization or nonliberalization policies.90 Other cases were coded based on our reading of the secondary literature or government documents.

Finally, although assessing the effect of FIRCs by the United States is not our primary concern, we recognize that readers may be interested in the democratizing effect of U.S. interventions. Some argue, for example, that crusading for democracy abroad has been a consistent theme in U.S. foreign policy, whereas others stress the anti-democratic nature of U.S. interventions and America’s willingness to work with dictators.91 Accordingly, we differentiated FIRCs carried out by the United States from FIRCs enacted by other democracies.

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90 Peceny, Democracy at the Point of Bayonets, pp. 20-21. Peceny defines prolberalization policies as “the combination of active support for free and fair elections with active promotion of at least one of the following: centrist political parties, reformist interest groups, reductions in human rights abuses, and/or formal subordination of the military to civilian authority.” Ibid., p. 15.
91 Compare Smith, America’s Mission, and Schmitz, United States and Right-Wing Dictatorships.
DEPENDENT VARIABLES

There is no perfect way to measure democracy or democratization. Scholars disagree not only about what democracy consists of, but also whether it is a dichotomous (yes or no) or continuous (more or less) phenomenon. Although we cannot resolve this debate, we use the leading dataset of democracy in international relations—the Polity index—to create two dependent variables that capture both change in a state’s level of democracy and whether a state crosses the threshold of consolidated democracy.92

The Polity index is a widely used measure of the level of democracy in a political system.93 The index is made up of several components that take into account how political leaders are recruited, whether there are institutionalized constraints on executive power, and the degree of political competition. The Polity2 variable ranks states on a twenty-one point scale by subtracting each state’s autocracy score from its democracy score; the resulting variable ranges from -10 (most autocratic) to +10 (most democratic), with states scoring +6 or higher considered to be consolidated democracies. For ease of interpretation, we transform the index to make it strictly positive by adding eleven; the resulting variable ranges from 1 to 21, with the threshold for consolidated democracy at 17.

The first dependent variable we use measures the change in a state’s Polity2 score from one year to the next. For example, the dependent variable for Uganda in 1985 is the difference between its Polity score in 1985 and its Polity score in 1986. The resulting variable ranges between -20 and +20, although in our dataset the largest change in either direction is 19. The

92 To ensure that our results do not depend solely on Polity’s codings, we check for robustness below using data on democracy from other sources.
The rationale for this coding is that we are interested in testing whether FIRC increases or decreases targets’ level of democracy rather than predicting states’ absolute levels of democracy.

The advantage of a continuous measure of democracy is that it captures not only dramatic changes in a country’s level of democracy, but also tracks finer-grained variation as well. We recognize, however, that on a broad scale like Polity, minor changes up or down the spectrum may not be meaningful in substantive terms. Ultimately what matters is whether a country makes a successful and lasting transition to institutionalized democracy. The second dependent variable we use, therefore, codes whether a state experienced a democratic transition in a particular year, after which democracy lasted at least five years. In other words, a country must shift from less than 17 on the Polity index to 17 or above, and then remain at that level for five years. Uruguay, for example, experienced a transition from autocracy to democracy in 1984, moving from 4 to 20 on the Polity index. Uruguay remains a democracy today, and thus is coded one on this variable in 1984. By contrast, the Dominican Republic was unable to sustain the democratic transition that followed the assassination of longtime dictator Rafael Trujillo in 1961. Elections brought Juan Bosch to power and the country achieved a Polity score of 19 in 1962, but Bosch was overthrown in a military coup the next year and the Dominican Republic returned to the ranks of autocratic states. The Dominican Republic is thus coded zero on the democratic transition variable in 1962. After a state experiences a democratic transition, we code the variable zero because democracies sometimes backslide to autocracy, such as Uruguay in 1971 and Chile in 1973, and then may experience another democratic transition.

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CONTROL VARIABLES

It is obviously important to control for other determinants of democracy. We include variables to capture the effects of the following factors previously shown to be correlated with democracy.

**Economic Development.** As noted, many democratization scholars posit a strong relationship between levels of societal wealth and democratic institutions. The usual indicator of wealth is gross domestic product per capita, but obtaining data for all countries is problematic given our extended time period. One proxy that others have used that is available for most states from 1816 to the present is the sum of states’ iron and steel production and energy consumption. These data, measured in the year prior to the year of observation, summed, and then logged, are taken from the Correlates of War National Material Capabilities data.

**State Age.** There is also a strong secular trend towards greater democracy over time. Others argue that states become more stable as they grow older and are thus more likely to have conditions favorable to the development of democracy. To account for these effects, we include a year counter for each country, starting at zero in the year it enters the dataset.

**Previous Experience with Democracy.** States that have had democratic institutions at some point in the past may be more likely to transition to democracy in the future. Previous democratic regimes may have laid an institutional foundation, such that states can make use of structures that already exist rather than build entirely new institutions. Populations that have had some previous experience with democracy may be more likely to demand greater political

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95 Enterline and Greig, “Perfect Storms?”
96 Available at http://www.correlatesofwar.org. When only iron and steel production or energy consumption was available, we used that figure. Results using historical GDP data collected by Carles Boix were highly similar. Carles Boix, “Economic Roots of Civil Wars and Revolutions in the Contemporary World,” *World Politics,* Vol. 60, No. 3 (April 2008), pp. 390-437.
97 Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, “Intervention and Democracy.”
participation and be more likely to overthrow despotic rulers who deny them popular sovereignty. Political elites may have previously been socialized into a political system characterized by norms of compromise and the non-violent resolution of political disputes. Following an imposed change in regime, states that have had some experience with democratic institutions in the past may therefore be more likely to sustain them in the future.

Capturing this effect empirically is not straightforward, since coding a dummy variable 1 if a state was a democracy in the past will mostly capture the effect of states that are already democratic. We follow Pickering and Peceny by coding a variable that counts the number of years since the state last equaled or exceeded 17 on the Polity index, the assumption being that the more time that has elapsed since a country experienced democracy, the more difficult it will be to effect a transition.\textsuperscript{100}

\textit{British Colony}. Previous studies suggest that former British colonies possess greater potential for democratization.\textsuperscript{101} We include a dummy variable to indicate countries that are former British colonies.\textsuperscript{102}

\textit{Ethnic Fractionalization}. Democracy may be more difficult to sustain in countries that are more diverse in terms of ethnicity and religion. We include the ethno-linguistic fractionalization index to detect any negative effect of social heterogeneity on democracy. These figures are available for a limited time period.\textsuperscript{103}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{101} Przeworski et al., Democracy and Development.
\textsuperscript{102} This variable is also coded one for states that Britain administered under a League of Nations mandate, such as Israel and Iraq.
\textsuperscript{103} Commonly employed in studies of civil war after 1945, ELF is actually measured twice, in 1961 and 1985. Countries for which data are available thus have at most two values on ELF. We extend the earlier measure of ELF back to 1920 under the assumption that ethnic composition changes slowly. For a precedent for this, see Enterline and Greig, “Against All Odds?” Data are from Philip G. Roeder, “Ethnolinguistic Fractionalization Indices, 1961 and 1985,” February 16, 2001, http://weber.ucsd.edu/~proeder/elf.htm.
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Interstate and Civil War. Involvement in either interstate or civil war could retard the development of democracy by causing the power of the executive branch or the military to increase, or by prompting governments to crack down on civil liberties and restrict political participation. We include dummy variables to indicate whether a state participated in an interstate war or suffered a civil war in a given year.¹⁰⁴

Interactive Effects. To assess whether the effects of FIRCŞœs carried out by democracies are contingent on the target state’s level of economic development or ethnic heterogeneity, we generate interaction terms by multiplying our measures of these factors by the variables for democratic FIRCŞœs and democratizing FIRCŞœs.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS
We have assembled a country-year dataset that begins in 1816 and ends in 2008. We use two types of statistical analysis that correspond to our two dependent variables. To analyze change in level of democracy, we follow recent methodological advice and use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression with standard errors clustered by country and the Prais-Winsten method to correct for autocorrelation in the dependent variable.¹⁰⁵ In our analysis of democratic transitions, we must face the issue that democratization is an extremely infrequent occurrence (less than one percent of all observations). Standard logit models overestimate the probability of rare events like this, so we use a rare events logit (Relogit) model with clustered standard errors to

¹⁰⁴ Data are taken from the Correlates of War project (v3.0); http://www.correlatesofwar.org.
¹⁰⁵ See Pickering and Peceny, “Forging Democracy at Gunpoint,” pp. 548-549. We use this technique instead of OLS regression with country fixed effects and a lagged dependent variable. For a discussion of the differences between these two methods, see Thomas Plümper, Vera E. Troeger, and Philip Manow, “Panel Data Analysis in Comparative Politics: Linking Method to Theory,” European Journal of Political Research, Vol. 44, No. 2 (March 2005), pp. 327-354. Because our dependent variable is change in Polity score from year to year rather than actual Polity scores, we find little evidence of autocorrelation in our models.
compensate for the highly skewed distribution of this dependent variable.\textsuperscript{106} As is standard practice in binary time-series cross-sectional analysis, we also include a variable that counts the number of years since the occurrence of a democratic transition for each country as well as three cubic splines to account for temporal dependence.\textsuperscript{107}

\textbf{ACCOUNTING FOR SELECTION EFFECTS WITH MATCHING}

Some studies of military intervention and democratization are biased because they look solely at democratization outcomes in countries that experienced intervention, failing to compare those outcomes to countries where intervention did not occur. Recent studies avoid this problem by including all states regardless of whether they experienced intervention, but are susceptible to a different form of bias stemming from non-random selection. The gold standard in scientific research is randomization, whereby participants in a study are selected to receive a treatment on a random basis. Randomization ensures that the treated group and the control group do not differ in any appreciable or systematic way on factors that might affect the outcome of the study. The difficulty in estimating causal effects in social research outside the laboratory is that randomization is often not possible. In the study of whether intervention affects democratization, the researcher obviously cannot randomly select some countries for intervention and compare them to another random sample that did not experience intervention. When treatment assignment is not randomized, however, the danger arises that countries that are selected for intervention are systematically different from those that are left alone. Any difference in democratization outcomes that is subsequently observed may not stem from the treatment but could be caused by

some other factor that is shared among the treated cases but which is absent from the control cases. For example, if states tend to intervene in wealthy countries with robust institutions and high levels of ethnic homogeneity, we might wrongly attribute positive democratization outcomes in these states to intervention when they are actually the product of shared prerequisites for democracy. On the contrary, intervention may be more likely to occur in countries that are economically underdeveloped, ethnically heterogeneous, or experiencing armed rebellion. In this scenario we could draw the erroneous conclusion that intervention undermines democracy when the real culprit is an inhospitable domestic environment for democratic reform. When treated and control cases fail to overlap sufficiently—as when the treated cases are very different along several parameters from the control cases—statistical results become highly dependent on the particular way the researcher chooses to specify the model.  

One increasingly popular way to address the issue of non-random selection without introducing bias is to use a technique known as matching to select control cases based solely on how well they correspond to treated cases on other (pretreatment) independent variables associated with democratization. According to Gilligan and Sergenti, “The idea is to compare cases where all other causal variables are as similar as possible so that any difference between the cases can be attributed to the treatment.” By squeezing out variance among possibly confounding covariates across groups,” writes Jason Lyall, “matching simultaneously reduces

108 As Ho and colleagues put it, “the presence of control units far outside the range of the treated units” forces statistical models to extrapolate “over a range of data that do not include treated and control units,” making estimation “exquisitely sensitive to minor modifications in the statistical model.” Daniel E. Ho, Kosuke Imai, Gary King, and Elizabeth A. Stuart, “Matching as Nonparametric Preprocessing for Reducing Model Dependence in Parametric Causal Inference,” Political Analysis, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Summer 2007), p. 211.
109 Using variables that are a consequence of the treatment introduces bias; all variables used for matching must be temporally prior to the treatment, in this case, FIRC.
bias in our estimates of treatment effects and model dependency because it removes ‘extreme counterfactuals,’ that is, control observations with no analogue among the treated cases.”111 Using this procedure, we construct a dataset in which the set of FIRC cases is matched with a set of cases that on the whole look very similar in terms of their pre-intervention values across a range of factors, except that these cases did not experience FIRC.112 These factors include state age, economic development, time since previous experience with democracy, Polity score, population, region, ethnic heterogeneity, and British colonial legacy. This procedure—as we discuss in detail below—yielded datasets with highly similar distributions across treatment and control variables.

Three points about our matching procedure bear emphasizing. First, to avoid the possibility that non-FIRC years from states that experienced FIRC at some point in their history would show up in our control group, we dropped all such years prior to performing matching. Often the closest matches for state X in year Y come from state X in year Y–1, but if states that endure FIRC are systematically different than states that do not, including state-years from countries that undergo FIRC at some point could introduce bias into our control cases. Second, to avoid the potential for post-treatment bias, we use FIRC only in the year that it occurred as our treatment variable rather than FIRC, t0 – t10. Using the latter could introduce post-treatment bias if, for example, FIRC affected a state’s level of economic development. In that case, matching would be performed using a variable the values of which were (at least partially) a consequence of FIRC. To avoid this possibility we matched on the state-years in which FIRC took place. After

112 As with most applications, exact matches for many variables were not available in our data (but see our discussion of regional variables below). However, it is only necessary for the distributions of treatment and control cases to be matched very closely. Ho et al., “Matching as Nonparametric Preprocessing,” p. 212. Matching performed on our data yields very similar distributions, as shown below.
the matching procedure was completed, we added the ten years following each case of FIRC back to the dataset and did the same for each control case selected by the matching algorithm.\textsuperscript{113} Third, we prioritized achieving exact matches on five dummy variables corresponding to different regional groupings.\textsuperscript{114} Finding regional matched pairs helps control for factors common to different regions that might be relevant to democratization, such as shared cultural characteristics.

We used the \textit{MatchIt} program to create five matched datasets using different types of FIRC as the treatment: FIRCs by democracies, FIRCs by democracies explicitly intended to liberalize the target, FIRCs by democracies with no intention to enact democratization, FIRCs by the United States, and FIRCs by other democracies.\textsuperscript{115} In every case matching produced a substantial improvement in balance between treated and control cases; that is, it greatly reduced the difference in means of all the variables included in the analysis. Table 2, for example, shows pre- and post-matching values, as well as the percentage that matching reduced the difference between treated and control cases, for the matched dataset with FIRCs by democracies as the treatment variable.\textsuperscript{116} Matching clearly paid major dividends with these data: balance on every variable improved more than 80 percent, and the overall balance between treated and control cases.

\textsuperscript{113} Note that we are not arguing that FIRC does not have a downstream effect on other variables like economic development. We are simply saying that by not using those potentially contaminated observations after FIRC in our matching procedure, we avoid introducing bias. In some cases it was not possible to add ten years following each control case, either because the algorithm selected years from the same state that were less than ten years apart, or because it chose a state-year close to 2008, the last year for which the dependent variable is coded. The number of control cases is thus not the same as the number of treatment cases.

\textsuperscript{114} The five regional groupings are Europe, North Africa/Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

\textsuperscript{115} On \textit{MatchIt}, see Ho et al., “Matching as Nonparametric Preprocessing.” Of the various matching techniques we tried, only one-to-one genetic matching with replacement yielded a large improvement in balance between treated and control cases as well as perfect matches for the regional dummy variables. Other forms of matching (such as nearest neighbor) also greatly improved balance, but the individual matches produced by these alternative techniques were less plausible because they did not produce perfect matches on region. Results using datasets obtained by other forms of matching do not differ appreciably from those reported here.

\textsuperscript{116} Space precludes us from providing detailed balance statistics for all of the matched datasets we analyze below. Overall improvement in balance, however, was very good, ranging between 89 and 99 percent. Tables will be made available in an online appendix upon publication.
cases improved over 95 percent. Not only did matching greatly improve balance, but the means of the treated and control variables are very similar: none differ by more than 5 percent of a standard deviation.\textsuperscript{117}

[ Table 2 about here ]

In the next section we present our results. For both change in level of democracy and democratic transition we compare the results of a naïve regression that does not deal with selection bias to results obtained after matching was performed.

\textbf{ANALYSIS AND RESULTS}

Table 3 presents our results for how foreign-imposed regime change affects democracy in target states. To economize on space, only the coefficients for the FIRC variables are shown.\textsuperscript{118} The left side of the table contains results for the first dependent variable—change in Polity score—whereas the right side shows results obtained using transition to consolidated democracy as the dependent variable. Models for each type of FIRC were run first on the complete dataset, then a second time using the matched dataset with that type of FIRC as the treatment variable to deal with the problem of non-random selection.

[ Table 3 about here ]

\textsuperscript{117} This measure is known as standardized bias; it is obtained for each variable by dividing the difference in means of the treated and control cases by the standard deviation of the treated cases.

\textsuperscript{118} Complete tables will be available in the online appendix. Coefficients for variables on which matching have been performed are not meaningful because matching has eliminated most of the variation in them. They are included in the models, however, because matching is not perfect. In the naïve analyses, three models were estimated for each dependent variable: one that included democratic FIRCs, a second that included democratizing and non-democratizing FIRCs, and a third including U.S. FIRCs and FIRCs by other democratic. In the analyses of change in Polity score, economic development and years since previous democracy were significantly related to positive democratic change, former British colony significantly decreased levels of democracy, and state age, interstate war, and civil war had no effect. In the naïve analysis of democratic transition, only economic development significantly increased the probability of democratic transitions. State age was positive and significant at the 90 percent level in two out of three models.
Examining the results for change in Polity score after FIRCs carried out by democracies—shown in the left side of the first row of the table—reveals that this type of intervention leads to little discernible improvement in democracy in target states before or after matching. In both models the coefficient for democratic FIRC is small and insignificant. States that experience FIRC at the hands of a democracy on average register a barely perceptible yearly gain in their own level of democracy of roughly one-tenth of a point on the Polity scale. Given that the average Polity score of a state that experiences FIRC by a democracy is 8.7, such a gain would place these states close to 10 on the Polity index after ten years. In other words, targets of democratic FIRCs on average are firmly autocratic when they undergo intervention, and experiencing FIRC at the hands of a democracy hardly changes that status.\textsuperscript{119}

At first glance, however, FIRCs by democracies are positively associated with democratic transitions: the Relogit model on the full dataset shows a large positive and significant effect of this type of FIRC on shifts to consolidated democracy. Matching shows this relationship to be a mirage. Running the same model on the matched dataset cuts the coefficient from 1.69 to 0.04, indicating that the effect of democratic FIRC was largely a function of the inclusion of many states in the overall dataset that were very dissimilar to the states in which democracies intervened. When a set of most similar states is examined, the effect of democratic FIRCs disappears.

In sum, our results show that on average, FIRC implemented by democracies results in little positive democratic change in target states and has virtually no effect on the likelihood that targets transition to democracy over the following ten years.

\textsuperscript{119} Autocratic FIRC also has little effect on target democracy. The coefficient is -0.03 with a standard error of 0.07.
DEMOCRATIZING AND NON-DEMOCRATIZING FIRC

Previous research suggests that democratic intervention results in positive political liberalization only when the intervening democracy explicitly declares this to be its intent and exerts effort to bring it about by changing targets’ institutions. Accordingly, we divided democratic FIRCs into two types: those intended to democratize the target, and those where democratization was not an aim. Our results suggest that democracies can in fact bring about liberalization when they put their mind to it—but with a significant caveat. The second row of Table 3 shows a consistently positive and significant effect for democratizing FIRCs on democratic change and the likelihood of a democratic transition before and after matching. For instance, democratizing FIRCs generate an increase in Polity score of between eight and ten points over a ten year period. Similarly, states that undergo a democratizing FIRC are ten times more likely to have a democratic transition over the next ten years.\(^{120}\)

The caveat to this rosy finding is that all of the countries that experienced large democratic gains or successfully democratized following a democratizing FIRC share very specific attributes. Countries that underwent democratizing FIRCs are listed in Table 4 along with their overall democratic gains ten years later and whether they transitioned to consolidated democracy. The first thing to notice is that democracies sometimes intervene to restore democracy in countries that were previously democratic rather than to transform autocracies into democracies. These cases—particularly France and Norway after World War II—do not provide good evidence for the liberalizing power of FIRC because these states simply reverted to their

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\(^{120}\) Calculations were performed using CLARIFY after running a probit model on the matched dataset, setting continuous variables to their mean values and dichotomous variables to their modes. Michael Tomz, Jason Wittenberg, and Gary King, *CLARIFY: Software for Interpreting and Presenting Statistical Results*, ver. 2.1, http://gking.harvard.edu/clarify.
earlier democratic status once Nazi puppet regimes were overthrown.\textsuperscript{121} Haiti had also undergone a transition to democracy in 1990 with the election of Aristide to the presidency, although it lasted only a year before military leaders ousted him in a coup. The U.S.-led intervention in 1994 restored Aristide and democracy to Haiti, again providing limited evidence for the liberalizing force of democratizing FIRC. Moreover, by 1999 Haiti had slipped from the ranks of consolidated democracies and thus cannot be considered a success.

Second, the United States attempted to democratize the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua in the early part of the twentieth century, perpetrating a total of five FIRCs in those countries. In no case did these FIRCs have the desired effect. The United States overthrew three Dominican governments in succession in 1912, 1914, and 1916, and proceeded to occupy the country from 1916 to 1924.\textsuperscript{122} Not only did the Dominican Republic make no headway in its level of democracy, the government the Americans left in place was overthrown six years later and the country’s Polity score plummeted to 2 under the dictator Rafael Trujillo. Similarly, Nicaragua gained little democratic benefit from U.S. interventions in 1909 and 1910 that ousted Liberal leaders José Santos Zelaya and José Madriz and empowered Nicaragua’s Conservative party.\textsuperscript{123} After a lengthy U.S. military occupation, and a protracted insurgency led by Augusto Sandino, Nicaragua descended into forty years of dictatorship under the Somoza family.

The only real success stories for FIRCs intended to democratize target states are West Germany and Japan following World War II, and Panama after the removal of Manuel

\textsuperscript{121} Belgium was occupied by Germany during World War I, but is coded by Polity as maintaining its democratic status.
Noriega. These three states were characterized by relatively high levels of income (GDP per capita between $3,000 and $6,000 in the year prior to intervention, in 1996 dollars) and very low levels of ethnic diversity (ELF scores between 0.01 and 0.21). Germany and Japan were also highly developed bureaucratic states with industrial economies. Germany was a democracy for a decade in the Weimar period, but all three states had experience with constitutional rule in the past. In short, the major successes for democratizing FIRC each occurred where the grounds for liberalization were highly fertile. The failures, by contrast, occurred in poor countries with long histories of dictatorial rule and violent leader transitions.

These patterns are confirmed by Figures 1 and 2, which show the marginal effect of democratizing FIRC on target states’ ensuing levels of democracy as targets become more economically developed and more ethnically heterogeneous, respectively. To perform this test, we generated interaction terms, multiplying democratizing FIRC by the log of iron and steel production and energy consumption, on the one hand, and ethnolinguistic heterogeneity on the other. Because the substantive effect and statistical significance of interaction terms are not easily discerned by examining coefficients and standard errors, we use graphs to evaluate these terms. The solid lines in both figures indicate the marginal effect of democratizing FIRC; the dotted lines graph the 95 percent confidence interval. The effect is significant when these dotted lines are each above (or below) zero. If the hypothesis that FIRC specifically intended to liberalize targets leads to better democratization outcomes in more developed states were correct, the line in Figure 1 should be upward-sloping. As is evident from the figure, this is indeed the

124 Grenada would constitute a fourth success, but it is not included in the Polity dataset owing to its small population.
case. States that are the least developed economically, such as the Dominican Republic in the second decade of the twentieth century, receive no significant democratic benefit from liberalizing FIRCs. The effect quickly becomes significant, however, and by the time a country reaches Japan’s level of industrialization in the 1940s, it gains on average 1.25 Polity points per year after a democratizing FIRC.

[Figure 1 about here]

Figure 2 graphs the marginal effect of democratizing FIRC on democratic change in the target as ethnic heterogeneity increases. The figure provides solid evidence that democratization outcomes are better when target state populations are highly homogeneous. States that are at or near zero on the ELF index (the most homogenous) improve on average nearly 1.2 points annually on the Polity index after experiencing a democratizing FIRC. Japan’s ELF score in 1945, for example, was 0.015, while West Germany’s was 0.026. This democratic benefit declines and becomes insignificant at about the midway point (0.47) of ELF. The evidence thus supports the conjecture that the liberalizing effects of FIRCs undertaken to democratize target states are contingent upon the ethnic diversity of targets.126

[Figure 2 about here]

Interestingly, when democracies intervene to overthrow foreign governments and are not interested in fostering democracy, FIRC actually has a negative effect on target democracy. As shown in the third row of Table 3, non-democratizing FIRCs reduce targets’ Polity scores between three-tenths and four-tenths of a point, and have essentially no effect on the probability

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126 Tests indicate that the outcomes of all democratic FIRCs—not only democratizing ones—are dependent on targets’ levels of wealth and ethnic heterogeneity. Graphing the interaction between democratic FIRC and economic development shows a positive slope, but the effect is never significant. The joint effect of democratic FIRC and heterogeneity, however, shows that homogeneous states experience a (statistically significant) gain of nearly one Polity point per year, whereas the most heterogeneous states lose a similar amount annually, an effect that is also significant. There is thus some evidence that all FIRCs by democracies have better liberalizing outcomes where the conditions for democratization are promising.
of a democratic transition. Exemplary cases of this type of intervention include U.S. regime change operations in Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954), Britain in Iraq (1941), Belgium in Congo (1960), and France in Central African Republic (1979).

To sum up the evidence presented in this sub-section, democratizing FIRCs tend to succeed only in those places where the prospects for democracy are already good. FIRC is unable to effect democratic transitions—even when the intention of the intervening state is specifically to bring about political liberalization—when domestic conditions in the target are not amenable to democracy. Foreign-imposed regime change by democracies where no effort is made to liberalize the target has no effect on the likelihood of democratic transitions and significantly reduce its level of democracy.

U.S. VERSUS OTHER DEMOCRATIC FIRC

What does the historical record demonstrate regarding the democratization impact of U.S. interventions as opposed to interventions by other democracies? The United States has been the leading practitioner of FIRC since 1816, toppling twenty-one leaders in nineteen separate cases, compared to nine by other democracies.¹²⁷ To answer this question, we recoded democratic FIRC according to whether they were carried out by the United States or some other democracy. Results are shown in the fourth and fifth rows of Table 3. As should be evident from the table, FIRC by neither the U.S. nor by other democracies exert a significant effect on targets’ level of democracy: both coefficients are small and insignificant before and after matching. Regime changes carried out by the United States initially appear to increase the likelihood of democratic transitions, but matching shows this to be a function of the presence of many dissimilar control

¹²⁷ In Guatemala in 1954, the United States is coded as removing three leaders in quick succession: Jacobo Arbenz, Carlos Enrique Díaz, and Elíegio Monzon.
cases in the complete dataset. After matching, U.S. FIRCs have no significant effect on democratic transitions. Regime changes by other democracies may have a small, marginally significant effect on transitions to democracy. Three countries became consolidated democracies after FIRC by democratic states other than the United States: Greece (democratized in 1925), Norway (1945), and the Comoros (2004). Matching failed to produce any control cases that underwent democratization, meaning that the regression model could not produce estimates. A t-test shows that given the sample size, FIRCs by other democracies increase the likelihood of democratic transitions, but the significance level is questionable (p = 0.09). Moreover, as discussed above, the Norwegian case restored a previous democracy and thus is not good evidence in favor of the democratizing effect of FIRC. The other two cases—Greece and the Comoros—fall in the non-democratizing FIRC category, meaning that the interveners did nothing to liberalize these states. Indeed, the Polity score of the Comoros remained the same for several years and only attained the level of consolidated democracy after a coup that dropped the country from 15 to 9 on the Polity index. A closer look at the evidence thus suggests that neither FIRCs by the United States nor those by other democracies have much effect on targets’ level of democracy or chances of becoming consolidated democracies.

ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

We subjected our basic results to a number of robustness checks to answer possible questions about our analysis. Readers might wonder, for example, what the results would look like if we restricted the analysis to the twentieth century, since there were no democratic FIRCs before that.
time.\textsuperscript{129} If we examine only the years after 1900 rather than the entire dataset, the results remain the same: democratizing FIRC\textsc{s} significantly increase targets’ Polity scores, while democratic FIRC\textsc{\textsc{s}} and FIRC\textsc{\textsc{s}} by the United States or other democracies have no impact.\textsuperscript{130} Limiting the analysis to the post-World War II years also does not change the results.

Second, despite recently expressed reservations about it, we tried the standard model for panel data in political science, a fixed effects model with a lagged dependent variable.\textsuperscript{131} To run this model, we used states’ Polity scores as the dependent variable rather than change in those scores from year to year. This method also produced a set of results highly similar to our preferred technique.\textsuperscript{132}

Third, we experimented with alternative time periods for the effect of FIRC. For example, we employed five-year dummies for each type of FIRC rather than covering ten years. This change did not affect the results.

Finally, to ensure that our results are not driven by Polity’s particular way of coding democracy, we used Tatu Vanhanen’s \textit{Polyarchy} data to generate two alternative dependent variables.\textsuperscript{133} Vanhanen, like Robert Dahl, conceives of democracy along two dimensions: degree of participation and degree of competitiveness.\textsuperscript{134} The former is measured by the proportion of

\textsuperscript{129} This is according to the Polity coding of democracy; other sources would consider Britain a democracy for much of the nineteenth century, and its two FIRC\textsc{s} in Afghanistan were dismal failures that resulted in no democratic change.

\textsuperscript{130} All forms of FIRC by democracies increase the likelihood of a democratic transition, but we have already shown that matching eliminates this effect for all but democratizing FIRC\textsc{\textsc{s}}.

\textsuperscript{131} Plümper, Troeger, and Manow, “Panel Data Analysis in Comparative Politics.” Fixed effects models include dummy variables for every country to control for unmeasured factors specific to each country. The lagged dependent variable is included to control for auto-correlation, the fact that a country’s level of democracy score in any given year is highly dependent on its score in the previous year. These models tend to explain a very high amount of the variance in the dependent variable, but this is because of the lagged dependent variable.

\textsuperscript{132} We also looked at states’ Polity scores twenty years later, with no change in results. A third test we performed was to look only at Polity scores in the tenth year after FIRC, rather than Polity scores for all ten post-FIRC years. This, too, did not alter the results.


\textsuperscript{134} Dahl, \textit{Polyarchy}. 
the population that votes in a given election; the latter consists of the percentage of votes won by political parties other than the largest party. These two figures are multiplied together (and then the product is divided by 100) to obtain an index of democratization. We use this index as one alternative dependent variable. For a second alternative variable, we code transitions to democracy from year to year according to Vanhanen’s criteria.  

Results obtained using these dependent variables were largely consistent with our core Polity results: democratic FIRCs had no significant effect on level of democracy, whereas both democratic and democratizing FIRCs significantly increased the likelihood of democratic transitions. Examination of the cases, however, again showed only three successful democratic transitions after democratizing FIRCs: Grenada, West Germany, and Japan. We thus conclude that our results are robust to alternative conceptions of democracy.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this paper we highlighted the gap between optimistic policy pronouncements by democratic leaders regarding the possibility of spreading democracy and the rather pessimistic conclusions of scholarly studies of the reality of forceful democracy promotion. These studies, however, have tended to use inexact proxies of their independent variables. We therefore examine the effect of foreign-imposed regime change—specifically FIRC by democracies—on subsequent levels of democracy in states targeted for such intervention.

Our findings provide both support for, and add further nuance to, those of existing studies. In support of the pessimistic view, we find that on average, states that are subjected to

135 Vanhanen considers a country to be a democracy if at least 10 percent of the population votes, 30 percent of the votes were won by smaller parties, and the country exceeds 5 on the combined index. Vanhanen, “A New Dataset for Measuring Democracy,” p. 257.

136 Democratizing FIRCs, however, did not significantly increase targets’ level of democracy using the Polyarchy data, and non-democratizing FIRCs did not significantly lower it.
FIRCs at the hands of democracies experience little democratic gain, remaining firmly rooted in the authoritarian segment of the Polity index. Adjusting for possible selection bias in the states that are targeted for intervention, states that have their governments removed by a democracy gain no significant democratic benefit compared to similar states that do not experience intervention.137 By contrast, our findings provide little support for the optimist view of democratic intervention. Although we find that FIRCs specifically intended to democratize targets have a positive effect, in reality only those countries with preconditions favorable to democracy make significant liberalizing gains. Thus, our findings lend support to conditional arguments that the effect of democratic intervention depends on levels of economic development and ethnic heterogeneity in the target.

Our findings that democratization outcomes vary depending on wealth and population heterogeneity of target states also challenge the selectorate argument that democratic statesmen have no incentives to install democracy in countries where they intervene, and, as a rule, prefer to install autocrats. If democratic leaders uniformly preferred to empower unaccountable leaders, there would be few cases of democratizing FIRC; instead, half of all cases of FIRC by democracies are meant to liberalize targets. There would also be little variation in subsequent democracy across states with different domestic preconditions; instead, we find evidence that democratization outcomes vary with targets’ domestic characteristics. Clearly there are some cases when leaders of democracies find it in their interest (or their country’s interest) to democratize other states. Our findings beg the question of under what circumstances do democratic leaders seek to impart democracy when they intervene? We readily agree that in many of the cases of FIRC by democracies, the intervener showed little interest in effecting real

137 Our study is more optimistic than that of Easterly, Satyanath, and Berger, however, who conclude that intervention by both democracies and autocracies has a significant deleterious effect on target democracy. Easterly, Satyanath, and Berger, “Superpower Interventions and their Consequences for Democracy.”
democratization in the target. Yet in many other cases, there was at least some effort put forth to liberalize the targeted country; sometimes an enormous effort was put forth. Our results indicate that these efforts were more likely to meet with success when the target was wealthy and ethnically homogeneous. These kinds of cases—where intervening democracies (at least officially) intend to promote democracy when they effect regime change—seem increasingly to be the norm. If democracy still fails to take root in places like Afghanistan and Iraq despite the good intentions of the intervener, such outcomes would support the poor preconditions argument over the selectorate argument.

Finally, these findings bear on several aspects of the debate over forcible regime change as a policy tool to promote democracy. First, evidence from past experience suggests that imposed regime change by democratic states is unlikely to be an effective means of spreading democracy. These regimes rarely become institutionalized democracies after ten years and exhibit no improvement when compared to similar regional states that did not experience intervention, although certain prior conditions may increase the odds of success. Second, the victims of intervention on average are likely to end up in the center of the Polity scale, containing elements of both democracy and autocracy (sometimes referred to as “anocracies”). Several scholars have argued that mixed regimes or partially democratized states may be more war-prone (both externally and internally) and destabilizing than fully autocratic states.¹³⁸ If so, no democratization may be preferable to partial democratization in many cases. Third, any democratic improvements in a state’s political system achieved through military intervention

must be weighed against the costs. As noted above, in recent interventions, these costs have been high. In Iraq, for example, the U.S. Department of Defense reports the number of Coalition military fatalities at 4,800 (of which nearly 4,500 are American), while conservative estimates place the total number of Iraqi civilian deaths from violence since 2003 at around 100,000.\textsuperscript{139} Stiglitz and Bilmes estimate the total financial cost of the war at $4.5 trillion, including the cost of funding military operations, interest payments on the debt incurred, and long-term medical care for injured veterans.\textsuperscript{140} At the same time, according to Freedom House’s \textit{Freedom in the World} survey, Iraq made minimal democratic gains, moving from scores of 7 on political rights and civil liberties in 2003 (the most oppressive) to a score of 5 on political rights and 6 on civil liberties in 2010.\textsuperscript{141} Even if democratic gains are possible under some circumstances, military intervention may not be worth the price.


\textsuperscript{140} Stiglitz and Bilmes, \textit{Three Trillion Dollar War}.

\textsuperscript{141} Freedom House, \textit{Freedom in the World 2011}.  

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TARGET INTERVENER</th>
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<td>Dominican Republic U.S.</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Francisco Henriquez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montenegro Austria</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Nikola I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece UK/France</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>King Constantine I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium UK/France/U.S.</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Von Faulkenhausen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary Romania</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Bela Kun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia USSR</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Elbek-Dorzhi Rinchino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Japan</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Chang Tso-lin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia Italy</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Haile Selassie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Japan</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Chiang Kai-shek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania Italy</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>King Zog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway Germany</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Johan Nygaardsvold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg Germany</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Pierre Dupong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands Germany</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Dirk Jan De Geer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium Germany</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Hubert Pierlot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TARGET</td>
<td>INTERVENER</td>
<td>YEAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yugoslavia</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>UK/USSR</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>U.S./UK</td>
<td>1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>U.S./UK</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>U.S./UK/USSR</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>1953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Vietnam</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile*</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comoros</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaire/Congo</td>
<td>Rwanda/Uganda</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Summary of Balance Between Treatment and Control Cases Before and After Matching  
(Treatment Variable is Foreign-Imposed Regime Change by Democracies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean Treated</th>
<th>Mean Control pre-Matching</th>
<th>Mean Control post-Matching</th>
<th>Mean Difference post-Matching</th>
<th>Percent Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distance</td>
<td>0.0121</td>
<td>0.0031</td>
<td>0.0117</td>
<td>0.0004</td>
<td>95.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Count</td>
<td>73.2308</td>
<td>55.2244</td>
<td>72.6154</td>
<td>0.6154</td>
<td>95.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>5.7804</td>
<td>6.7929</td>
<td>5.7211</td>
<td>0.0592</td>
<td>94.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polity Score</td>
<td>9.1154</td>
<td>10.8074</td>
<td>9.4231</td>
<td>-0.3077</td>
<td>81.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocratic Years</td>
<td>46.6154</td>
<td>31.4021</td>
<td>48.1923</td>
<td>-1.5769</td>
<td>89.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>8.4400</td>
<td>8.8239</td>
<td>8.3666</td>
<td>0.0734</td>
<td>80.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELF†</td>
<td>0.4801</td>
<td>0.4808</td>
<td>0.4808</td>
<td>0.0007</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Colony</td>
<td>0.0385</td>
<td>0.2756</td>
<td>0.0385</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interstate War</td>
<td>0.1923</td>
<td>0.0588</td>
<td>0.1923</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil War</td>
<td>0.3077</td>
<td>0.1053</td>
<td>0.3077</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>0.1923</td>
<td>0.2431</td>
<td>0.1923</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Africa/Middle East</td>
<td>0.0769</td>
<td>0.1452</td>
<td>0.0769</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>0.1538</td>
<td>0.1994</td>
<td>0.1538</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>0.1154</td>
<td>0.1807</td>
<td>0.1154</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>0.4615</td>
<td>0.2316</td>
<td>0.4615</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† Variable was omitted from matching because difference between treated and control cases was already minimal.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Change in Polity Score (Prais-Winsten Regression)</th>
<th>Probability of Democratic Transition (Rare Events Logit)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Data N</td>
<td>Matched Data N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic FIRC</td>
<td>0.14 (0.18)</td>
<td>13,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratizing FIRC</td>
<td>0.83** (0.24)</td>
<td>13,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Democratizing FIRC</td>
<td>-0.33* (0.15)</td>
<td>13,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. FIRC</td>
<td>0.21 (0.25)</td>
<td>13,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Democracy FIRC</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.23)</td>
<td>13,283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cell entries are regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on each country in parentheses. Control variables included but not shown are state age, economic development, years since the country was last a consolidated democracy, former British colony, interstate war involvement, and ongoing civil war. In the rare events logit models, years since democratization (and three cubic splines) to control for temporal dependence in the dependent variable are also included. Italics indicate that rare events logit cells for non-democratizing and other democracy FIRCs contain means and standard deviations of t-tests for those variables because there were no democratic transitions among the control cases, which made it impossible for the regression model to produce estimates.

† = p < 0.10; * = p < 0.05; ** = p < 0.01; *** = p < 0.001
‡ Dummy variable denoting former British colony was omitted from the regression because no former British colonies appear in the sample.
Table 4. Democratization in Targets of Democratizing FIRC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Increase in Polity Score over Ensuing Ten Years</th>
<th>Successful Democratic Transition over Ensuing Ten Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>No†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No‡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Yes†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Republic of Germany</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Yes‡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† Target of FIRC was a democracy that experienced a coup or was occupied by a foreign power, and was thus in the middle of an autocratic interregnum in what was previously a democratic state. Intervention restored democratic institutions rather than creating democracy anew.
‡ Target of FIRC was occupied but remained democratic.
Figure 1. Marginal Effect of Democratizing FIRC as Target’s Level of Economic Development (Log of Iron and Steel Production + Energy Consumption) Increases
Figure 2. Marginal Effect of Democratizing FIRC as Target’s Level of Ethnic Heterogeneity Increases