Is It Possible to Export Democracy by the Use of Force?
Military Interventions in Iraq and Libya

Maria Helena de Castro Santos
(University of Brasilia)

Ulysses Tavares Teixeira
(University of Brasilia)

ABSTRACT

The recent American military invasions in the Middle East brought to the careful consideration of academia and policy-making the exporting of democracy as a U.S. foreign-policy pillar. The paper here proposed intends to analyze the foreign policy actions and doctrines of the last two American administrations related to the military interventions in Iraq and Libya. We seek to demonstrate that while the Bush Doctrine conferred to democracy an essential role in fighting terrorism in the rogue states, Obama’s foreign policy stated that America would not play an active role in the building of democracy in Libya, a task that should be left for the Libyans themselves. While the recent literature on exporting of democracy by the use of force still seems deeply normative and optimistic, the Foreign Imposed Regime Change (FIRC) literature is rather pessimistic, pointing to very few and specific variables that should be present in the target countries so that democratic interventions could work. Based on the FIRC literature we will assess which strategy – Bush’s or Obama’s – seems to work better.


I. INTRODUCTION

The recent American military invasions in the Middle East brought to the careful consideration of academia and policy-making the exporting of democracy as a U.S. foreign-policy pillar. The paper here proposed intends to analyze the foreign policy actions and doctrines of the last two American administrations related to the military interventions in Iraq and Libya.

---

1 This paper contains partial results of a broader research project. The most efficient research assistantship of Thais Soares Oliveira, Pedro Henrique Dias Alves Bernardes, Carolina Coelho Jordão and Vitória Sacramento Moreira are well acknowledged. The support of the National Research Council (CNPq) by means of undergraduate and senior researcher fellowships was essential to the completion of this article. CAPES also contributed to the research development with a doctoral fellowship.
We seek to demonstrate that while the Bush Doctrine conferred to democracy an essential role in fighting terrorism in the rogue states, Obama’s foreign policy stated that America should not play an active role in the building of democracy in Libya, a task that should be left for the Libyans themselves. Both Presidents, however, converge in the importance of ousting from power long-time autocratic leaders who work against liberty and provide safe haven for terrorists.

While the recent literature on exporting of democracy by the use of force still seems deeply normative and optimistic, the Foreign Imposed Regime Change (FIRC) literature is rather pessimistic, pointing to very few and specific variables that should be present in the target countries so that democratic interventions could work, such as the degree of prosperity, the level of ethnic and religious homogeneity and the previous experience with democracy. This literature also investigates the type of intervention, identifying if there occurred removal of the autocratic leader, the imposition of a new leader, the removal of autocratic political institutions and active intervener support to the building of new democratic institutions. The amount of the intervener efforts (resources and commitment) and the prospects for civil war in the target countries will as well be analyzed. We will further investigate the critical political cleavages in the aftermath, the new levels of economic development and the quality of democracy after intervention.

The first section will analyze Bush’s and Obama’s defense and foreign policies, assessing the relative emphasis on interests vs. values there displayed. The second one will briefly revise the importance of the external variables as compared to the internal one in the process of democratization. It follows a review of the FIRC literature and finally we will provide the mini-case studies of Iraq and Libya.

II. INTERESTS AND VALUES IN BUSH’S AND OBAMA’S FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICIES

II.1 GEORGE W. BUSH

When George W. Bush took office 2001 he, with his foreign policy team, decided that the liberal internationalist strategy which had prevailed in the previous government was no longer appropriate to represent the international aspirations of the American people. Marked by the promotion of an “Americanized” world order, Clinton’s grand strategy
believed that a strong set of multilateral institutions, and not America’s military predominance, was the key to creating a friendlier world order characterized by the spread of democratic governments and open markets.

That was not, however, the way Bush thought about how the world worked. He criticized his predecessor for engaging in nation-building and humanitarian interventions overseas. Among his several campaign promises, he stated he would be more selective in relation to the use of force, and called for a less interventionist approach with regard to internal affairs of other countries. Bush was skeptical of multilateralism and unrelenting toward potential adversaries. He and his advisors argued, for example, against negotiations with North Korea, for a more detached approach to Russia, and for treating China as a “strategic competitor” instead of a “strategic partner” (RICE, 2000). They also made explicit their concern over any erosion of American sovereignty through potential membership to multilateral agreements such as the International Criminal Court or the Kyoto Protocol. The administration adopted strategic adjustments that focused on supposedly “vital national interests”, towards a more realist foreign policy strategy.

There were certainly different understandings of the international system inside the government, and the press talked about divergences between the State Department and the Pentagon (PATRICK, 2001). The well-known neoconservative movement was strongly represented in the administration, especially by Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Armitage, Douglas Feith, John Bolton, Elliot Abrams and Lewis Libby. But they were not able to influence the foreign policy doctrine in their favor in the first few months of the Bush government. Other presidential advisers, such as Collin Powell, Richard Hass and Condoleezza Rice were openly against idealistic campaigns in foreign policy issues. Above all, the President showed little interest in the radical and aggressive neoconservative political agenda.

Every debate and criticism ceased, however, on the day of the terrorist attacks to New York and Washington. From that point on, American foreign policy would change its world view. After a dramatic review of his grand strategy, Bush decided to adopt the neoconservative approach embracing a far-reaching and proactive foreign policy based on American military power. The interventions in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003),
although important in themselves, are even more noteworthy as manifestations of this new strategy which became known as the Bush Doctrine.

This strategy represented a radical change in the President’s initial world view and, as synthesized on the 2002 National Security Strategy’s foreword, it proposed that America should “defend the peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants…, preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers…, [and] extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent” (Foreword, p. i).

Obviously influenced by September 11, Bush’s first innovation was to identify both terrorists and tyrants (and a connection between them) as the new threats. The excitement brought by victory on the Cold War has diverted American leaders from confronting threats posed by this new type of enemy, whose weapon of choice (terrorist attacks), where not understood properly by a defense system prepared for the conventional war. Weapons of Mass Destruction were the last resort during the Cold War, while today, the NSS points out, “our enemies see weapons of mass destruction as weapons of choice” (p. 15).

Since containment and deterrence would not work against this new threat, an element of preemption had to be added to the defense strategy:

Given the goals of rogue states and terrorists, the United States can no longer solely rely on a reactive posture as we have in the past. The inability to deter a potential attacker, the immediacy of today’s threats, and the magnitude of potential harm that could be caused by our adversaries’ choice of weapons, do not permit that option. We cannot let our enemies strike first… We must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today’s adversaries. Rogue states and terrorists do not seek to attack us using conventional means… As was demonstrated by the losses on September 11, 2001, mass civilian casualties is the specific objective of terrorists and these losses would be exponentially more severe if terrorists acquired and used weapons of mass destruction… To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively. (NSS, 2002, p. 15)

The National Security Strategy also included a preference for multilateral action: “The United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community”. Multilateralism, however, which eventually assumed the form of a “coalition of the willing”, was never a real prerequisite of the doctrine. Actually, the American government was determined to act unilaterally whenever necessary: “we will
not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country” (p. 6). To do that, defense spending increased dramatically for the first time since the 1980’s, reaching U$400 bi in 2003. Assuring American hegemony became necessary to put into work a foreign policy doctrine based on unilateral preemptive action.

At last, the Bush Doctrine pointed to the only definitive solution to the problem of terrorism and tyranny: democracy. The principles and values of liberal democracy, as described by Castro Santos (2010), were not seen as ideals, but as effective and pragmatic tools against such threats. The American Liberal Tradition (HARTZ, 1955) once more prevailed, this time embodied in a most radical strategy: preemptive war. Only in a democratic environment the United States would be really safe:

> The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world. (...) Advancing these ideals is the mission that created our Nation. It is the honorable achievement of our fathers. Now it is the urgent requirement of our nation’s security, and the calling of our time. So 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. (Inaugural Speech, 2005)

This direct connection established by Bush between promoting democracy and assuring American national interests became indispensible to justify his foreign policy doctrine in general, and the Iraq war in particular. Exporting democracy to the Middle East was the single solution to every identifiable threat (terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, tyranny). This idea was repeatedly defended by the President in his speeches to the Congress and to the Nation. It started on September 11, 2011, soon after the president learned about the attacks, when he already interpreted the phenomenon in liberal terms saying that “Freedom, itself, was attacked this morning by a faceless coward, and freedom will be defended” (Remarks at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, on the Terrorist Attacks), and continued through both of his terms: “The advance of freedom is the surest strategy to undermine the appeal of terror in the world. Where freedom takes hold, hatred gives way to hope” (Address to the Nation on Iraq From the U.S.S.

---

Abraham Lincoln, May 1st, 2003); “Our security is assured by our perseverance and by our sure belief in the success of liberty” (Address to the Nation on the Capture of Saddam Hussein. December 14, 2003); “The only force powerful enough to stop the rise of tyranny and terror and replace hatred with hope is the force of human freedom” (State of the Union, 2005); “[T]he most realistic way to protect the American people is to provide a hopeful alternative to the hateful ideology of the enemy by advancing liberty across a troubled region” (Address to the Nation on the War on Terror in Iraq. January 10, 2007); “[A] free Iraq is critical to the security of the United States. A free Iraq will deny Al Qaida a safe haven,... will counter the destructive ambitions of Iran,... will marginalize extremists, unleash the talent of its people, and be an anchor of stability in the region” (Address to the Nation on the War on Terror in Iraq. October 13, 2007); “[F]or the security of America and the peace of the world, we are spreading the hope of freedom” (State of the Union, 2008).

II.2 BARACK H. OBAMA

If Bush focused his presidency after September 11 on ending tyranny and promoting democracy in the world, Obama assumed in 2009 with the clear intention to pull back from this freedom agenda. The objective was no longer to transform domestic societies and establish democratic governments in rogue states but to prevent al Qaeda or other extremist elements from regrouping in these countries, carrying out violent attacks against the United States or its allies. When announcing his first new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan in March 2009, for example, the president showed that America had “a clear and focused goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future.” (Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, March 27, 2009) He narrowed this goal even further when he announced his second new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan in December 2009: “We must deny al Qaeda a safe haven. We must reverse the Taliban's momentum and deny it the ability to overthrow the government” (Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan, December 1, 2009).

Obama has played a much more interest-based foreign policy – as opposed to the value-based Bush Doctrine – in other parts of the world as well. In every instance, security
interests surpassed human rights and democracy promotion. In major foreign policy speeches in the beginning of his first term, he adopted a very distant approach to democracy. In Prague he declared that “freedom is a right for all people, no matter what side of a wall they live on, and no matter what they look like” (Remarks by the President in Prague, April 5, 2009), but he often started his talks with apologies for the American democracy promotion strategies from the previous administration, like in Cairo: “I know there has been controversy about the promotion of democracy in recent years, and much of this controversy is connected to the war in Iraq” (Remarks by the President on a New Beginning, June 4, 2009). He also acknowledged problems in the American democratic example, as done in Moscow: “By no means is America perfect” (Remarks by the President at the New Economic School Graduation, July 7, 2009). The general tone was that democracy was a cherished value, but there was no special role for America to spread it by force, as he stated in Ghana: “Each nation gives life to democracy in its own way, and in line with its own traditions ... America will not seek to impose any system of government on any other nation.” (Remarks by the President to the Ghanaian Parliament, July 11, 2009).

Perhaps because of the electoral necessity to distance himself from President Bush, when Obama became president in January 2009, he had already developed an activist vision of his foreign policy. The idea was to restore the United States' image abroad, especially in the Muslim world. To do that, the president planned to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, close the detention center at Guantanamo Bay, end the practices of extraordinary rendition and enhanced interrogation, show a greater respect for civil liberties domestically, open dialogues with Iran, “reset” relations with Russia as a step towards nuclear disarmament, convince the Chinese to cooperate on global issues, and make peace in the Middle East.

He has indeed accumulated some notable successes, including significantly weakening Al Qaeda (Bin Laden’s death being a fact worth noticing), managing relations with China (not competitors, but partners), ratifying the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) with Russia, promoting a UN Security Council resolution imposing sanctions on Iran, completing new free-trade agreements, and withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq. There have also been some notable letdowns, including little progress on creating peace in the Middle East (with overlapping civil wars in Syria and Iraq, and a new flare-up of violence between Israel and Palestinians); very little action
on combating climate change; increasing frictions in U.S.-Pakistan relations; Iran still focusing on acquiring the means to produce nuclear weapons; a North Korea still developing its nuclear arsenal; the handling of the Syrian, Egyptian and Ukrainian situations; the approval of the expansion of NSA’s global surveillance programs; and the negotiations with the Taliban for prisoners’ exchange (ROGIN, 2010; ROTHKOPF, 2014).

All things considered, Obama’s behavior does not seem to meet his rhetoric. Indeed, his actions are much closer to Bush’s. Regarding the Muslim world, for example, Obama always intended to continue combating terrorism, and although he did not embrace Bush’s concept of a global war on terror, he has framed the conflict with al Qaeda as a war (DESCH, 2010), rather than a criminal matter, and has treated it as such: “We are at war. We are at war against al Qaeda, a far-reaching network of violence and hatred that attacked us on 9/11, that killed nearly 3,000 innocent people and that is plotting to strike us again” (Remarks by the President on Strengthening Intelligence and Aviation Security, 2010).

In this new approach, he took the emphasis away from the ongoing campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan and focused on attacking al Qaeda operatives – mainly in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The media soon announced the end of “Bush’s war” and proclaimed a transformation from hard power to soft power, from military action to diplomacy – even when the Obama administration sent 30,000 troops to Afghanistan, significantly expanded drone attacks in Pakistan and agreed to a timetable for drawing down troops in Iraq scarcely distinguishable from what the Bush administration had proposed3 (and he kept the same Secretary of Defense).

Afghanistan’s and Pakistan’s stability are also uncertain, and it is not yet clear if the president will be able to exit the wars without leaving behind a situation worse than the one that existed before the American intervention. The president did, however, devote more resources than his predecessor to both Afghanistan and Pakistan. But the very nature of the problems there and the divisions within the administration over how to

3 The US-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement (official name: “Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq On the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities during Their Temporary Presence in Iraq”) was an agreement between Iraq and the United States, signed by President George W. Bush in 2008. It established that U.S. combat forces would withdraw from Iraqi cities by June 30, 2009, and all U.S. forces will be completely out of Iraq by December 31, 2011.
handle them, have prevented success. Divergent strategy proposals have confused the local populations over the American intentions about staying or leaving and about their mutual perceptions as friends or adversaries. This led to a situation of increased tensions and mistrust (INDYK et al., 2012).

The Arab Spring was probably the biggest and most unexpected event Obama had to deal with. The president has managed it by recognizing that the revolutionary demonstrations were not about the United States and that he therefore had limited ability to affect their outcomes: “How this incredible transformation will end remains uncertain. But we have a huge stake in the outcome. And while it's ultimately up to the people of the region to decide their fate, we will advocate for those values that have served our own country so well” (State of the Union, 2012). The president has rhetorically supported the demands for freedom and democracy across the Arab world and assisted in overthrowing unpopular dictators in Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, without losing sight of U.S. interests in stability in the Gulf. There have been some tactical failures, like the humiliation of the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, the failure to seize the opportunity to push for meaningful reforms in Bahrain, and the slowness to push for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's ouster (CAROTHERS, 2013). His actions certainly represent a new balance between American values and strategic interests in the region.

In Libya, Obama helped achieve the relatively low-cost overthrow of a dictator supporting the military intervention of his European allies, which had a greater stake in the outcome. But there were indirect costs. By repeatedly calling for Muammar al-Kaddafi's overthrow when the UN Security Council resolution that justified the military intervention did not support it, Obama confirmed the Chinese and Russian fears that NATO would distort the intentions of UN resolutions on the matter for its own purposes. The consequence was that China and Russia, as well as other regional powers with temporary seats on the Council (like Brazil, India, and South Africa), became less willing to approve resolutions that could lead to military interventions to overthrow other regimes in the Arab world. This has made it more difficult for Obama to isolate Assad’s regime, Iran's Arab ally.

All in all, one could say that Obama is more committed to the liberal belief about the universality of democratic values, than to the idea that only a democratic world serves
American interests. He definitely does not support the notion of promoting democracy by force, as it has been clearly stated in the National Security Strategy of 2010:

The United States supports those who seek to exercise universal rights around the world. We promote our values above all by living them at home. We continue to engage nations, institutions, and peoples in pursuit of these values abroad... In doing so, our goals are realistic, as we recognize that different cultures and traditions give life to these values in distinct ways...America will not impose any system of government on another country...More than any other action that we have taken, the power of America’s example has helped spread freedom and democracy abroad. (National Security Strategy, 2010, p.36)

Changes considered, there is an obvious line of continuity identifiable between Bush and Obama administrations. Although both have made their share of errors, it is possible to identify a common source to many of their actions and world views. We suggest that this source has been the pervasive influence of the Liberal Tradition (HARTZ, 1955) in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. In a nutshell, the Liberal Tradition is the particular kind of liberalism developed in America. It can be traced back to the founding fathers and it rests on a clear set of moral and political principles. It places the individual at the center of political life and sees each person as possessing some inalienable rights. Liberals emphasize individual liberty and are mistrustful of unchecked power. They also believe that democracy is the best form of government and favor the rule of law, freedom of expression, and market economies. At last, they defend that most human beings would be better off if these practices were universal.

This influence has been identified in the American political thought by historians such as Louis Hartz (1955), Richard Hofstadter (1948) and Daniel Boorstin (1953). They were perceived in the foreign policy doctrines by Packenham (1973) during the Cold War and again recognized in similar manifestations by Castro Santos (2010) and Teixeira (2010) after the Cold War period. The Liberal Tradition crosses party lines and unites Democratic liberal internationalists and Republican neoconservatives. It was the foundation of Bill Clinton’s strategy of democratic enlargement, George W. Bush’s liberty doctrine, and Barak Obama’s humanitarian intervention in Libya.

Given that both Bush and Obama resorted to the Liberal Tradition to impose regime change, it is important to question which strategy is likely to work better. If we think of the overall costs involved in the interventions, it is important to evaluate their results. What quality of democracy is coming out of regime change interventions? Bush’s
unilateral choice of preemptive action, US heavy resources and commitment in war and nation-building in Iraq and Afghanistan? Or Obama’s welcomed, UN approved and humanitarian intervention in Libya but with US low resources and commitment and ‘leaving democracy building to the Libyans’ approach?

III. THE EXTERNAL VARIABLES IN THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS AND THE FOREIGN IMPOSED REGIME CHANGES (FIRC)

The last section finished with the question: which strategy is likely to work better for the building of democracy in target countries: Bush’s or Obama’s? The military imposition of regime change in the target country, with the active presence of the intervener after intervention; or the support to democratization behind the scene, leaving to the nationals the task of building democracy by themselves?

To answer these questions we have to address two previous ones: (1) how influential are external variables vis-à-vis internal ones as far as democratization is concerned? And (2) what do we know about the effectiveness of the exporting of democracy by the use of force? We shall resort to the democratization literature to answer the first question and to the so-called Foreign Imposed Regime Change literature (FIRC) to answer the second one.

The Importance of External Variables in the Democratization Process\(^4\)

The first generation of the democratization literature, which examined the cases of South Europe in the 1970’s and of South America in the following decade, considered that domestic factors played a much more important role than external variables in the democratization process.\(^5\) This consensus was broken with the democratic transitions of the communist countries in the 1990’s, when external stimuli were prominent.

\(^4\) A review of the democratization literature on the relative importance of external vs internal variables in the democratization process was offered in more detail in a previous work by Castro Santos (2010b). Here we provide a quick summary of the main points.

\(^5\) The basic reference is O’Donnell and Schmitter (1988).
Farer (1996), an author of the exporting of democracy literature, says that foreign actors can contribute a great deal to the defense and strengthening of democracy and that after the Cold War the tolerance for external interventions grew significantly. Huntington (1996), however, warns that even when external factors create favorable conditions for democracy building this will only occur if domestic conditions exist – adequate level of economic development and political leadership compromised with democratic values.

Whitehead (2005) contests the downplaying of the external variables influence in democracy building stated by the first generation literature arguing that this generation came to that conclusion because it based its analysis on transitions that occurred inside the limits of Westphalian-consolidated states. However, the post-Cold War democratic transitions occurred many times in weak and vulnerable states, with numerous fragmentation processes. In those cases, says the author, “international factors can be expected to play a stronger and more directive role in democratization” (p.6). A typical pattern is the military imposition of democracy after short wars, among which Whitehead includes the Western interventions in Afghanistan (2002) and Iraq (2003).

Summing up, if there is no consensus in the literature about the importance of external variables in democratization, one can say that starting the communist-countries transitions in the 1990’s, the significant influence of these variables on democracy building came to be recognized, although in different degrees.

This is an academic backup of great importance for the foreign and defense policies decision-makers who choose to export democracy by the use of force. They must believe and make their constituents believe that the American military interventions are effective when it comes to the crafting of democracy.

The Bush administration was for sure a believer in the capacity of military intervention for opening the way to the building of democracy in the two rogue states invaded by the United States during his administration: Afghanistan and Iraq.

Obama certainly does not approve nor adopted Bush’s strategy for the exporting of democracy by the use of force. He called frequently on humanitarian assistance to justify American military intervention in the Libyan civil war, withdrew as soon as possible from the war stage and committed his government to back up the crafting of democracy, which, however, should be a task for the Libyans themselves.
To proceed from here we put another question: how stable are the foreign imposed democratic institutions? This is the basic question of the FIRC literature.

*The Stability of the Foreign Imposed Regime Change*

We should note, to begin with, that the leading authors of this literature show some divergence on the definition of its basic concept. Thus, for Downes (2010), foreign imposed regime change

(... is the removal of the effective political leader of a state at the behest of the government of another state. Interveners typically also empower a new leader and sometimes impose a set of new institutions, but all that is required for a case to qualify as FIRC is if an external actor displaces the political leader of the target state. (p.5)

A few pages ahead the author adds to this definition “the threat or use of force” as the usual mean to remove the leader or a sovereign state (cf. DOWNES, 2010, p.19).

Peic and Reiter (2010) provide a definition that includes the change of leaders and political institutions as well:

The term ‘regime’ has been used by scholars sometimes to refer to a leader and some times to refer to political institutions. Foreign imposed regime change, therefore, can mean an externally imposed change in either leaders or political institutions, though in practice it is often both. (p.454)

Enterline and Greig (2008) focus specifically on FIRCs by democratic countries, which is the focus of this paper. They add another element to the democratic FIRC definition:

(... imposed democratic regimes are 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. (p.323)

The authors further clarify that the FIRC definition involves “more than merely encouraging or facilitating leadership change, but necessitates restructuring entirely the domestic political system of the target state.” (p.323)

Taking the above assertions into consideration altogether we will come to the democratic FIRC definition that includes: (1) the removal by an external actor of autocratic leaders and/or autocratic political institutions by the use of force; (2) the imposition by an external actor of a
new leader or the restoration of a recently overthrown ruler to office; (3) the playing by the intervening external actor of an important role in the establishment, promotion and maintenance of a new democratic political system in the target state. In this work, we will consider a democratic FIRC the external actor intervention which includes at least the first characteristic listed above.

The democratic FIRC literature is typically concerned with both the effect of a foreign actor intervention on the onset of civil war in the target state and with the effectiveness of democratic imposition from abroad. The literature is characteristically quantitative and analyzes a great number of FIRC cases that occurred along the 20th century, sometimes beginning the analysis as early as in the 19th century. Its distinctive trait is the focus on internal features of the target countries, looking for independent variables that could explain the success or failure of FIRC.

Concerned whether FIRC influence on the onset of civil wars, Peic and Reiter (2010) analyzed 40 episodes of leader removal by another state that occurred between 1920 and 1940. They concluded that FIRC following interstate wars both significantly decreased the likelihood of interstate conflict and significantly increased the chances of intrastate conflict. This is because FIRC wreck state infrastructural power and impose change in the political institutions of the target state. Downes (2010) explores another intervening variable: the imposition by the intervener state of a new leader or the restoration of a recently overthrown ruler to office. He analyzed 100 events over almost two centuries and concluded that new leader FIRC significantly increased the odds of a civil war in the target country over the next five or ten years, while restoration FIRC decreased the risk of civil war. He also tested some conditional variables and discovered that new leader FIRC is especially damaging for domestic peace when combined with defeat in an interstate war and in poor or ethnically heterogeneous countries. These findings might be particularly important when it comes to the American FIRCs in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya as it will be seen below.

Downes and Monten (2010) addressed the question of whether intervention is an effective means of spreading democracy. Claiming that there is no consensus answer to this question, they see the debate divided between optimists, pessimists and those who make conditional arguments.
Among the optimists are foreign and defense policies decision-makers. In previous works (CASTRO SANTOS, 2010; CASTRO SANTOS and TEIXEIRA, 2013a and 2013b) we indicated that Bush and Obama as well as theirs Secretaries of Defense and Foreign Affairs think that democracy is transferable to any society or culture and that external variables have a positive effect in the democratization process. This would be true regardless of poverty, ethnic fractioning or absence of democratic experience in the target countries, especially if enough time and resources are given to nation-building operations. Downes and Monten (2010) point to some empirical support to the optimist view in the academic research literature. In fact, some authors of this vein claim that military interventions are often necessary to remove abusive political and military institutions (cf. for instance BERMEO, 2003). Others qualify this assertion suggesting that military interventions have a positive effect on democratization only if the objective of these interventions was explicitly to democratize the target countries (see for example MEERRNIK, 1996 and PECENEY, 1999).

More recent studies, however, stress that success in imposing democracy by the use of force is not only rare but it might be counterproductive as well. Frequently cited is the study of Bueno de Mesquita and Down (2006). They found that be the intervener the UN, the United States or other democracy, the target countries experience no significant increase in the level of democracy between ten to twenty years after intervention. The explanation they offer for this result is that democratic leaders care most about their own political survival and democratic nation-building does not serve this purpose. Frequently autocratic leaders, who do not have to take into careful consideration the needs and interests of their people, can undertake policies that benefit the target states.

Another group of authors focus on factors that can facilitate the successful democratic FIRCs. The level of effort (resources and commitment) put forward by intervening states is considered to influence the level of success of democratization on the target countries. Dobbins (2003), making use of the nation-building literature, use this approach to compare cases of American interventions since World War II, taking as main indicators of effort the number of occupation troops per capita and the amount of economic aid. Another set of arguments attribute to certain conditions of the target countries the success or failure of the use of force in the exporting of democracy. The conditions most focused upon are: the level of wealth; the extent of ethnic, religious or social cleavages in the society; and previous democratic experience by the target state.
These variables are examined to determine how much they affect the survival of imposed democracies. Enterline and Greig (2008), for example, found that the survival of democracy is strongly conditioned by the process by which the regime is imposed and the social and economic conditions present in the state hosting the imposed polity.

Downes and Monten (2010) tested those main findings, adjusting the research designs for possible selection bias of the target states. To evaluate the level of democracy the authors used the Polity index. They found on average that states that experience democratic FIRCs remain firmly rooted in authoritarian regimes. Moreover, those target states gain no significant improvement in democracy as compared to similar states that did not experience intervention. The tests for the conditional arguments showed that in fact the effects of democratic imposition are influenced by the levels of economic development and ethnic heterogeneity present in the target states. Thus, FIRCs led by democracies do better in ethnically homogeneous and relatively wealthy states and loose ground in more heterogeneous and relatively poor targets. As for the intervener’s amount of resources and commitment spent to democratize the target countries, be it modest or huge, it is more likely to meet with success when the target is relatively wealthy and ethnically homogeneous.

Coherently with those findings, Enterline and Greig (2008), compare the cases of West Germany and Japan with Afghanistan and Iraq:

West Germany and Japan represent near ideal cases for the successful imposition of democracy, because of their high levels of prosperity and low levels of ethnic and religious differences. Yet, this is not the case in Iraq and Afghanistan, two states that are sharply divided across ethnic and religious lines. (p.345)

And also show “(... lower levels of economic development relative to West Germany and Japan, leaving fewer resources to divide amongst contending groups within both societies” (p.345). This is particularly true in Afghanistan, the authors add, “a state that is among the poorest in the world” (p.345).

In conclusion, we can say that according to the FIRC literature, due to the relatively low level of economic development and high level of ethnic and religious heterogeneity, the prognosis for successful democratization of Afghanistan and Iraq is poor at best. This is true despite the active presence and commitment of the United States to that goal after
invasion. Libya has better chances inasmuch that it displays a better level of economic development and an homogeneous population.

However, this quantitative literature works with aggregated data. In this paper we will refer to the FIRC hypotheses in analyzing the cases of Iraq and Libya.

IV. IRAQ AND LIBYA AFTER AMERICAN INTERVENTION: CIVIL WAR OR REGIME CHANGE?

In this section we will analyze the recent American military interventions in Iraq and Libya, according to the FIRC literature. We will then characterize the target countries by: their degree of prosperity, ethnic and religious heterogeneity and experience with democracy before the intervention; the kind of FIRC suffered by them, identifying if there occurred removal of the autocratic leader, imposition of a new leader, removal of autocratic political institutions, active intervener support to the building of new democratic institutions and the amount of the intervener efforts; the critical political cleavages in the aftermath; the prospects for civil war; the new levels of economic development and the quality of democracy after intervention.

IV.1. IRAQ

The Iraq invasion was a FIRC which included the three characteristics pointed above: the removal by the use of force of the autocratic leader, Saddam Hussein, and of the existing autocratic political institutions; the choice and imposition of a new leader; and the active role of the United States in institutional building. Differently from Afghanistan, the exporting of democracy was one of the motivations to invade the country since the beginning – although this motivation was significantly enhanced after it became clear that there were no WMDs in Iraq. In fact, as demonstrated in a previous work, after September 11, the Bush Doctrine defined democracy as the ultimate tool to defeat terrorism. This is because democracies do not provide safe haven to terrorists.

---

6 This mini-case study draws heavily on Thaís Soares Oliveira undergraduate dissertation, ‘A Exportação de Democracia e a Qualidade do Novo Regime: um estudo de caso do Iraque’, presented to the Institute of International Relations, University of Brasília, July 2014. Thaís is member of the research group indicated in footnote no. 1.
Moreover, a democratic Iraq would spread democracy in the Middle East, assuring regional as well as American security (cf. CASTRO SANTOS and TEIXEIRA, 2013).

Iraq became an independent monarchy in 1932, breaking the British control that prevailed since World War I. A military coup d’état in 1958 led the country into a decade of political chaos until the Ba’ath Party gained power. Saddam Hussein, member of this party, reached the government leadership in 1979 and ruled the country until the American intervention in 2003.

**Religious and ethnic heterogeneity**

Iraq kept its territorial integrity along its recent history, despite deep ethnic and religious cleavages. More than 95% of Iraqis are Muslims, but they are divided into a majority of Shias (60%) and Sunnis (35%). The remaining 5% of the population are constituted of other religious minorities, including Christians. As for ethnicity, there is a majority of Arabs (80%) who live in the central-south part of the country and a minority of Curds (around 15%), located in the Iraqi northeast. Among the Curds there are as well Sunnis (the great part) and Shias, but they do not identify themselves with their Arab counterparts, with distinctive language and cultural habits.

Since the times of the Ottoman Empire, the military and political powers have been concentrated in the Sunnis hands, no matter who was in control of the country. This historical predominance came to be translated into privileges like social prestige and wealth to the Sunnis as compared to the other Iraqi groups. The Shias, historically submitted to a minority, excluded from power and social circles, translated their resentment into violent upsurges during the Saddam Hussein government. The Kurds, by their turn, never accepted the Arab central control. The various Kurd insurrections against Bagdad have been repressed by the central government with increasing brutality, there included the use of chemical weapons by the Saddam Hussein government. In 1991, with the support of the United States and England, they finally managed to establish an autonomous region in Iraq – the Iraqi Kurdistan.
It follows from the above that the meaningful deep political cleavages in Iraq are defined along ethnic-religious lines, constituting three main contending groups: the Sunnis, the Shias and the Kurds.

This was the explosive situation at the time of the American FIRC in Iraq, which, according to the FIRC literature, works against the chances of successful imposition of democracy by a foreign country.

The economy

The Iran-Iraq war in the 80’s followed by the Gulf War in the beginning of the 90’s hurt heavily Iraq finances. Those wars, the Kurdistan economic autonomy and the penalties imposed on Iraq by the UN Security Council along the 90’s combined to install a severe economic crisis in the country, worsening significantly the public services and especially depriving the middle class. The GDP grew at negative rates and the GDP per capita deteriorated.

During Saddam Hussein administration, economic information was a matter of state security. Economic data for this period are, therefore, precarious. The Economist Intelligence Unit (2014) estimated the Iraq GDP in 1989 around 39 billion dollars. After the imposition of the UN Security Council penalties this index went down more than 70%. Iraq GDP recovered significantly in the period between 1996 and 2000, increasing from 10.6 to 33 billion dollars, respectively, only to decrease again until the year of invasion.

Prosperity, a favorable condition for a successful FIRC, could not describe the economic situation of Iraq at the time of the American invasion.

Experience with democracy

Iraq has never experienced a democratic regime. The Freedom House every year measures liberty in the world, based on free and regular elections, civil liberties and political rights. It provides an index that ranges from 1 to 7, where 1 is attributed to the
freest countries and 7 to the worst non-free countries. Iraq ranked 7 in 2002. The Polity index measures democracy in all independent states with more than one million inhabitants, evaluating competitiveness, transparency and level of participation in the political regimes. It ranges from 10 to -10, where 6-10 is attributed to democracies, -5 to 5 to anocracies and -10 to -6 to autocracies. Iraq was a stable autocracy between 1980 and 2003, reaching the index -9.

No previous experience with democracy and a stable autocracy during the Saddam Hussein years would not for sure contribute to a successful FIRC.

*Imposition of a new leader and the active role of the United States in the building of new institutions*

On the first day of May, 2003, President Bush announced the end of the military hostilities in Iraq. Saddam Hussein has been ousted from power and the prevailing authoritarian political institutions were broken. The Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) was created to temporarily provide for basic services and for the reconstruction of the country and it was led by American government officials. After fifteen days, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) substituted for ORHA, with executive, legislative and judiciary power while the state infrastructure was being reconstructed. The CPA was recognized by the UN as an occupation authority and most of their members were American military. In July the CPA appointed a transitional authority, the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), constituted of 25 members from 6 parties, most of them Shias who have been in exile during Saddam Hussein government. The role of IGC was to assist CPA on the transitional Iraq governance. In June 2004, IGC and CPA were dissolved and a provisional government, allied to the United States was constituted, with an Arabian Shia as Prime-Minister. The first elections were held in 2005 to choose the members of the Transitional National Assembly, when the majority of the seats were occupied by Arab Shias (the Sunnis boycotted the elections). The Assembly indicated a Kurd for President and a Shia for Prime Minister. Two months later the Iraqis were called to choose the members of the Council of Representatives. This time the Sunnis showed up to vote, but the Shias got the majority of the seats again.
All in all, one can say that the American occupation took to an end the historical Arabian Sunnis dominance in Iraq, pushing them to a resentful position. The latter feared, moreover, a Shia revenge, who ascended to power after decades of submission. The Arabian Shias, by their turn, feared the return of oppression. As for the Kurds, they managed to take a firm grip on the north region of the country. Those historical cleavages hindered the American efforts to national reconciliation.

All these ethnical-religious resentments and fears led to what has been called the Iraqi insurgency, which refers to the hostilities directed to the local government and to the occupation military forces. There are today dozens of groups that could qualify as insurgents, but most of them are constituted by Arabian Sunnis. These groups share the goal of ousting the foreign occupation forces from the country and fighting to control strategic areas as those rich in petroleum. For them, every person related to the transitional government or to the American forces are potential targets for. Terrorists’ attacks started as soon as May 2003. In 2006 and 2007 the attacks scaled up and the situation was considered approaching civil war in terms of cleavages deepening, number of deaths and number of refugees. According to the ACNUR, there was more than 1.5 million Iraqi refugees in 2006 and this number scaled up to 4.8 million people in 2008 (16% of the whole population).

Reacting to this situation, Bush devised a new strategy to deal with Iraq. In January 2007 the American government launched The Surge. More than 20 thousand troops were sent to Iraq to reinforce the security of Bagdad and the region around, protecting the population. The idea was to bring stability to the country, creating a congenial environment for the reconciliation of the sectarian groups. In fact, this strategy managed to decrease hostilities against civilians, generating a more stable situation and bringing the numbers of civilian casualties to the 2003 level. In 2008 The Surge was called off.

According to the Freedom House Report (2008), the Arabian Sunnis improved their political participation and the American government managed to get the cooperation of several tribes to face Al-Qaeda attacks to the Shia population. The Iraqi government, however, never managed to assure protection, security and other essential public services to the population.
When Barack Obama took office in January 2009, following his electoral promises he announced the withdrawal of the bulk of the American troops until August 2010, leaving behind residual troops to train the Iraqi security forces and realize searching missions against the Al Qaeda. The residual troops should leave the country in December 2011, the date set by Bush. Part of the Iraqi elite feared that for the stability of the country and the interruption of the democracy building after the complete withdrawal of American troops. Obama, according to his ideas in foreign policy, answered that the stabilization of the regime and democracy building were tasks for the Iraqis themselves.

According to the FIRC literature, the imposition of a new leader does not favor a successful democratic FIRC. In the case of Iraq, the new Iraqi leader chosen was, moreover, a member of the ethnic group historically submitted and repressed by the Saddam Hussein government. The United States managed to include the Kurds, another group repressed by Saddam. The Sunnis, however, who backed the autocrat leader never managed to be included in the Executive, holding a minority of seats in the Council of Representatives. The failure to do this is probably the main reason for the explosion of the Sunni insurgents nowadays.

The aftermath: the level of economic development, the quality of democracy, the cleavages and the prospects for civil war

During the period of the American occupation, although the Iraqi level of development improved significantly, the GDP per capita of the country still put it among the poorest countries in the world. In fact, in 2013 Iraq was classified in the 141st position. The economic performance, therefore, could not mitigate the ethnic-religious cleavages by distributing more evenly the development products.

The quality of democracy improved somewhat, as some liberalizations measures were implemented, but the country still does not qualify as a democracy. By the Polity index Iraq is now an anocracy (3), still a long way to democracy. The Freedom House indexes show since the American invasion an improvement from 7 to 5.5, still considered a non-free country.
Immediately after the American Troops withdrawal from the country, internal violence resumed. The tensions between Shias and Sunnis, Kurds and Arabs, Muslins and Christians broke out again in face of the lack of proper training of the Iraqi security forces and the fragility of the new institutions. The number of civilian casualties (7,818) reached the level of 2008, when the country was approaching civil war (UNAMI, 2014). These civilian deaths have been put on the account of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a jihadist movement, created in April 2013, constituted by Arabian Sunni insurgents who act in Iraq as well as in Syria. ISIS, the Iraqi main opposition group, is a spin off of Al Qaeda and its attacks are particularly violent, including, suicidal attacks, murders and bombing cars. The movement has been successfully taking over important cities in the borders of Turkey and Syria. Its aim is to establish a caliphate in a territory between Bagdad and Syria. Given the incapacity of Iraqi leaders to deal properly with this situation, Iran announced that will send troops to help the government to face the insurgents. Obama as well affirmed that the increasing of the EIIL activities constitute a threat to the Middle East stability and that the American government will send war ships to the Gulf region should the situation get worse.

According to the Watson Institute for International Studies (2013), the American government spent more than 3 trillion dollars in this war. The Defense Department informs as well that the government kept between 150 and 200 thousand troops in Iraqi territory along the years of occupation. In spite of their huge efforts to turn the democratic FIRC in Iraq successful, Americans were not able to overcome the deep, historical cleavages that divide the country and provide for national integration. When the American troops withdrew completely from Iraq, without being able to train properly the Iraqi security forces, those cleavages turned into even stronger and more violent disputes. The country is presently on the verge of civil war, without having been able to advance much either in terms of level of development or in terms of the crafting of democracy.

IV.2 LIBYA

The uprising in Libya that removed Muammar Kaddafi from office is a dramatic demonstration of the deep social, economic and political discontent in the Arab world
and, the United States would say, of the aspirations of the Arab people for democracy and equality. On February 2011, Libyans staged a protest demonstration against Kaddafí’s forty-two-year rule, calling on him to step down and demanding change and freedom. Kaddafí, like other hated dictators, did not see himself as part of the problem and accused the terrorist group al-Qaeda of doping Libyans with hallucinogenic drugs and inciting them to destabilize the country (BBC, 2011). The United States condemned Libya as a rogue state sponsoring terrorism and denounced Kaddafí for waging war on his own people. The U.S. also financed anti-Kaddafí opposition groups who fought and eventually toppled him from power.

On March, 2011, French fighter-bombers destroyed four Kaddafí loyalist tanks, as the armor prepared to overrun the rebel capital of Benghazi while British aircrafts and U.S. cruise missiles destroyed Kaddafí’s air defense network (BAY, 2011). Fighting Kaddafí’s army was not merely enforcing a “no fly zone” as predicted in the UNSC Resolution 1973 (2011); it constituted a direct attack on the government’s ground forces. The intervention in Libya differed for sure from the one in Iraq, but even so it was indeed a FIRC. Even if multilateral in its nature, a direct consequence of U.S. actions was the removal of an autocratic leader from power. Obama never affirmed he would try to impose a new leader, nor that he would play a significant role in the maintenance of the new democratic political system. Democracy was, of course, the result expected, but the transition from the old regime was a task for the Libyans themselves:

> How this incredible transformation will end remains uncertain. But we have a huge stake in the outcome. And while it’s ultimately up to the people of the region to decide their fate, we will advocate for those values that have served our own country so well. We will stand against violence and intimidation. We will stand for the rights and dignity of all human beings: men and women; Christians, Muslims, and Jews. We will support policies that lead to strong and stable democracies and open markets, because tyranny is no match for liberty. (State of the Union, 2012)

**Religious and ethnic heterogeneity**

Libya is divided into three major regions, each with its own history, culture and traditions. Tripolitania in the west includes Tripoli, the capital of Libya; Cyrenaica in the east with Benghazi as its capital shares cultural affinities with Egypt; and the region
of Fezzan in the south dominated by Bedouin tribes. The vast majority of Libyans are Sunni Muslims (96%). The country’s social configuration is made up of numerous tribal communities and the culture of tribalism remains strong. People of Arab and Berber heritage constitute the majority (97%) and other ethnic groups include Tuaregs, black Libyans (descendents of sub-Saharan Africans), the Tehbu and Duwud (CIA, n.d.).

Since 1969, after participating in a coup d'état to overthrow the monarchy of King Irdis al-Sanusi, Muammar Kaddafi assumed power over what he described as an ongoing revolutionary struggle against the corrosive influence of the West and the oil companies. The alleged aim was to pursue President Nasser’s dream of a pan-Arabic nationalism by uniting Libya against Western imperialism. It became increasingly clear, though, that Kaddafi had quite a radical behavior. Almost immediately after coming to power, he sought to acquire nuclear weapons as a way to gather prestige. Libya also became a major state sponsor of terrorism, backing several rebel and terrorist organizations worldwide, from the Irish Republican Army to the Japanese Red Army (Woodward, 1985).

Evidence also linked Libya to several high-profile terrorist attacks, including the murder of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics and the 1973 assassination of the U.S. ambassador to Sudan (Jentleson and Whytock, 2005). Kaddafi, like Saddam Hussein, also sought to position himself as the leader of the Arab world by trying to undermine the Arab-Israel peace process (BOWEN, 2006). After his attempts to lead Arab unity failed, Kaddafi decided to aim at neighboring regimes that had opposed him. His adventures resulted in a nine-year intervention in the Chadian civil war and a 1974 plot to assassinate Egypt's President Anwar Sadat (CIA, n.d.).

Domestically, Kaddafi ruled Libya by maintaining patron–client relations with tribal communities, rewarding some with money and positions in the bureaucracy, and repressing others. He relied on the support of the people of his hometown, Sirte, and on the tribes of Bani Walid and Sabha, whose members were recruited into the state apparatus, particularly the security forces and the army. Kaddafi had a strong reliance on his intelligence agency – one of his preferred tools of repression – to fight internal dissent (EMADI, 2012).
As Kaddafi tightened his political grip on Libya, opposition groups began to organize and conspire against the repression and corruption of the regime still in the 1970’s. Several of these groups, specially the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), would come to play a vital role in the fall of the Kaddafi regime and the eventual restructuring of Libya (AMFITIS, 2012).

As it has been shown, Kaddafi had a united vision of the Arab World, but could not handle the internal divisions of his own population without resorting to the use of force. Though a highly homogeneous country (both ethnically and religiously), these frictions would certainly go to be a concern during the transition after the imposition of a regime change.

The economy

Libya is rich in natural resources and has a population of only 6.5 million people, most residing in two major cities, Tripoli and Benghazi. Oil resources constitute 95% of export earnings. With a small population and large oil revenues, Libya has one of the highest per capita GDPs in Africa – reaching $13,000 in 2009 (WORLD BANK, n.d.) – and a literacy rate that reaches 87% of the population.

Important to the Libyan development were the 1970’s oil crisis. Libya's oil money helped Kaddafi fund with both his foreign adventures and his domestic political power. In 1967, Libya was the fifth largest producer of oil among OPEC states. From 1975 to 1979, the Libyan economy grew more than 10% a year, and by 1981, the price of Libyan oil had increased by 208% over what it was in 1975. Kaddafi used Libya's wealth to assure his power by guaranteeing the population food, housing, and clothing (O’SULLIVAN, 2003). The government distribution of wealth for sure helped secure the population's acquiescence, but Kaddafi's rule still depended on political repression and the threat of violence.

Due to the Libyan involvement in terrorist activities, arms and oil embargoes, besides other American and UN sanctions damaged the national economy by the end of 1980’s. In 1992, GDP growth was negative for the first time since 1987, while inflation was up to 9.4% over the previous year (IMF, 2011). The ban on air travel had also increased
prices on food and other consumer goods. As the Libyan economy declined throughout the decade, the regime began to lose an essential means for maintaining its political power. No longer able to buy the population's acquiescence, Kaddafi began to face more significant internal challenges as Islamist groups recruited among unemployed youth. The moment also coincided with the Soviet pullout from Afghanistan, which prompted the return to Libya of well trained mujahedeen.

During the 1990s, Islamic opposition groups targeted regime officials carrying out assassinations and attacks on military posts. Dissatisfaction also grew within the military, eroded by unpaid salaries and cuts in weapons purchases. In 1993, an attempted military coup caused the arrest of 1,500 people, several hundreds of whom were subsequently killed (DEEB, 2000). Nevertheless, while these incidences were a sign of growing dissatisfaction, the regime successfully reasserted its control. By the end of the 1990s, the regime had crushed all coup attempts and nearly eliminated all significant Islamic threat.

Although the regime was able to suppress its internal threats, the dire state of the Libyan economy would only start to improve when African and Arab countries reached closer the Libyan regime. Prosperity, a favorable condition for a successful FIRC, was not exactly the word of the day. It is true that the country did make substantial gains once U.S. sanctions were lifted in 2006. However, the decline in oil prices in 2009 and an estimated unemployment rate of 20%, brought back the deteriorating economic conditions, threatening again Kaddafi’s popularity in the 1980’s and 1990’s.

*Experience with democracy*

Libya has never experienced a democratic regime. The Freedom House index for political rights and civil liberties for Libya before the events of the Arab Spring was 7, the most autocratic position. The Polity IV index also ranks Lybia as an autocracy since the 1950’s, without any changes in the index, which remained -7 until 2010. No previous experience with democracy and a stable autocracy during the Kaddafi's years are not favorable conditions to a successful FIRC.
Preceding the intervention per se were a series of nationwide protests beginning in January 2011, which were met with immediate violent repression by the Kaddafi regime (GRAUBART, 2013). By late February, several hundred people have been killed, with estimates reaching 2,000 (PAPE, 2012). On the 26th of February the UN Security Council passed the Resolution 1970, which condemned Kaddafi's actions; referred Libya to the International Criminal Court; approved sanctions and arms embargoes, but did not authorize military action. Western governments called his ousting from power (BBC, 2011).

When Kaddafi's forces approached Benghazi, the rebel-held city, his words suggested atrocities were imminent. In fact, he declared that he would 'show no mercy' to the protesters, who were described as 'rats' and 'cockroaches'; a rhetoric that reminded the language of the Rwandan genocide (PAPE, 2012). The fears of an impending massacre led regional organizations such as the OAS and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to call for UN intervention, which should “take all necessary measures to protect civilians” (BELLAMY and WILLIAMS, 2011). The Obama administration declared that as many as 100,000 civilians could die without the intervention, if not directly, through the subsequent humanitarian crisis (PAPE, 2012).

The Security Council subsequently passed the Resolution 1973, authorizing a no-fly zone and 'all necessary measures' to protect civilians in Libya. This was the first case of classic humanitarian intervention since a decade ago (PATTISON, 2011) and the events which followed led to a wide debate over the alleged objective of regime change by the interveners. The immediate goal of protecting Benghazi was achieved, and states like Russia and China warned that acting beyond the mandate of the resolution would be “unacceptable” (BELLAMY and WILLIAMS, 2011).

The press questioned what the ultimate goal of the intervention was and whether the resolution authorized regime change (MASSIE, 2011). The rhetorical calls for Kaddafi to step down were confronted by the media to the limited UN mandate. Obama made clear that the resolution did not include regime change, and intervention would not go
beyond “a well-defined goal, specifically the protection of civilians in Libya” (TAPPER and RADDATZ, 2011).

The conflict continued as the crisis turned into a civil war (THE ECONOMIST, 2011). On April 14, Barak Obama, David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy together published an open-ended letter in several newspapers, stating their intention to continue military operations “so long as Kaddafi is in power” (OBAMA et al., 2011). The message reinforced that intervention was to protect civilians, but that it was “unthinkable that someone who has tried to massacre his own people could play a part in their future government”.

As of this point, the intervention had clearly merged into a policy of regime change. As a consequence, the nature of the operation began to shift, with escalating air strikes, and the use of attack helicopters and US Predator drones (WILLIAMS and POPKEN, 2011). Allies began bilaterally supplying rebels with arms, despite the embargo, and NATO air-strikes began targeting Kaddafi himself (JOSHI, 2011). Tripoli fell in August, and two months latter Kaddafi was killed. The intervention ended on October 27 (GLADSTONE, 2011).

The aftermath: the level of economic development, the quality of democracy, the cleavages and the prospects for civil war

It is important to note that the intervention in Libya came at a time when Kaddafi had recently approved a $24 billion investment fund for local housing development in response to earlier protests (RABAT, 2011). He has also lowered taxes on food, proposed the doubling of government employees’ salaries and released 110 members of opposition groups from prison to show his willingness to compromise with the opposition leaders. Kaddafi also travelled around Libya to meet with tribal leaders, discussing grievances and campaigning for their support. Moreover, under Kaddafi, Libya enjoyed the lowest infant mortality rate, the highest life expectancy, and the highest Human Development Index (HDI) on the continent. The literacy rate jumped from 10% to over 90% during his rule and, before the intervention, Libya maintained the highest gross domestic product (GDP) in Africa. Libyans also had access to subsidized education and fuel during Kaddafi’s government (UNITED NATIONS,
All these favorable conditions and purposive actions by Kaddafi were not sufficient, however, to forestall the protests and insurrections that broke out in the Arab spring which ended up taking the leader from power.

The United States celebrated the fall of Kaddafi as a victory for the Libyans and a triumph of democracy over repression and tyranny. From the beginning of the conflict, the United States had played a crucial role in the war against the autocratic leader, but they preferred to characterize the U.S. policy as one of “leading from behind” (EMADI, 2012).

The United States unfroze Libyan assets to prevent the country from descending into chaos. Washington and its European partners also worked to rebuild Libya’s oil industry, which lost two thirds of its capacity during the conflicts.

Another important matter is human rights in the aftermath of international intervention. In fact, immediately after the intervention, human rights groups and international observers spoke of violence and human rights violations as the victorious rebels imposed their revenge on those who supported Kaddafi. According to the Human Rights Watch, the Libyan National Transitional Council rejected the jurisdiction of international human rights monitors and enacted “shockingly bad laws, mimicking Kaddafi laws, criminalizing political dissent and granting blanket immunity to any crimes committed in ‘support’ of the revolution” (AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, 2011).

Insecurity remained a major concern during 2012, with regional militias, armed Islamist groups, international actors, criminal gangs, and smugglers, all contributing to enhance the problem. In the most widely publicized incident, an armed assault on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi in September resulted in the death of the U.S. ambassador and three other Americans. Other large-scale violence included deadly bombings during the elections, a series of attacks targeting government security forces in the second half of the year, and a deadly assault by government and militia forces on the Kaddafi loyalist town of Bani Walid on October. The southern border areas, a common place for arms smuggling, drug trading, and human trafficking, had become so insecure by December that the national government instated martial law in the border provinces and gave
military authorities jurisdiction over provincial governments (FREEDOM HOUSE, 2013).

According to the 2013 Freedom House evaluation, however, Libya’s political rights rating improved from 7 to 4, its civil liberties rating improved from 6 to 5, and its overall status improved from Not Free to Partly Free due to successful elections for the General National Congress. The process included candidates from a wide range of political and regional backgrounds; it increased transparency in the drafting of the new constitution; and it encouraged the proliferation and sustained activism of media outlets and civil society organizations. The general balance is that the 2011 uprising created more space for free political association and participation in Libya. Freedom of assembly has also increased, with frequent demonstrations by various groups during 2012 in the context of the elections and the constitutional drafting.

V. BRIEF TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

According to the Watson Institute for International Studies (2013), the American government spent more than 3 trillion dollars in the Iraq war. The Defense Department informs as well that the government kept between 150 and 200 thousand troops in Iraqi territory along the years of occupation. In spite of their huge efforts to turn the democratic FIRC in Iraq successful, Americans were not able to overcome the deep, historical cleavages that divide the country and provide for national integration. When the American troops withdrew completely from Iraq, without being able to train properly the Iraqi security forces, those cleavages turned into even stronger and more violent disputes. The country is presently on the verge of civil war, without having been able to advance much neither in terms of level of development nor in terms of the crafting of democracy.

The case of Libya is not as clear as the Iraq’s. First of all, it has not passed enough time to properly evaluate the consequences of the military intervention in the country. The FIRC literature usually measures the effects of the intervention 5 and 10 years after it happened. Second, the Libya FIRC displays only one of the characteristics that define imposed regime change: the ousting of an autocratic leader. In fact, the United States withdrew from the country rather early, without overviewing neither the building of
new institutions nor the choosing of a new leader. The US government efforts toward a successful FIRC are for sure a great deal smaller than in the case of Iraq. These differences make difficult the comparison between the two cases. Going on tentatively, like Iraq, Libya never had a democratic experience either but enjoyed a good economic condition at the time of intervention, differently from Iraq. Unlike Iraq, Libya shows a remarkable ethnic and religious homogeneity. However, this important characteristic has not been sufficient to prevent conflict and violence among various different groups as indicated above. This suggests that the FIRC hypothesis has to be refined. Further research should look for intervening variables that would explain how a FIRC in an ethnic and religious homogeneous country does not manage to reach national reconciliation and integration.

Coming back to our research question – which strategy is likely to work best in terms of providing a successful democratic FIRC: Bush’s or Obama’s – we cannot answer it at this point of the research. More cases should be added for comparisons, hopefully with similarities and differences distributed in such way as to permit isolate the effect of the principal independent variables of the FIRC literature: the level of economic development and the ethnic and religious homogeneity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Amditis, Joseph, Responsibility to Overthrow: Libyan Regime Change and the Politics of Intervention, Political Terrorism, Rutgers University, 2012.

Amnesty International, Libya: NTC must take control to prevent spiral of abuses, \textit{Amnesty International}, September 13, 2011.


Desch, Michael C., “The more things change, the more they stay the same: the Liberal Tradition and Obama’s counterterrorism policy”, Political Science & Politics, Volume 43, Issue 03, July 2010.


Oliveira, Thaís Soares, a Exportação de Democracia e a Qualidade do Novo Regime: um estudo de caso do Iraque. Undergraduate dissertation presented to the International Relations of the University of Brasilia.


