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United States Military Intervention and the Promotion of Democracy

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All through history, when United States presidents have sought to explain or defend US military interventions in foreign lands, no goal, with the exception of the national security of the United States, has been advanced with such regularity and frequency as the promotion of democracy. Interestingly, however, this readiness to use force in the name of democracy does not appear to square with some of the emerging findings on the pacific relations among democratic nations. If states do not war on each other because they are democratic, does it make sense that they wage war or use force to compel others to become democratic? In this article the author attempts to answer two central questions related to the use of force by the United States in the ostensible quest to promote democracy. First, why would the United States intervene in the affairs of other nations to promote democracy? And second, is the use of force an effective tool in the promotion of democracy? The article finds that in the majority of cases, regardless of the manner in which democratic change is measured, US military interventions do not appear to lead to increased levels of democracy. Most nations retain their current level of democracy. However, when a comparison is made between nations which have experienced intervention, with those that have not, it is shown that the former group is more likely to experience democratic growth. Probit analyses of the effects of military intervention on democratization generally support the notion that the use of US ground forces does lead to increased democratization. A probit model is also developed to predict which military interventions are most likely to promote democracy. The predictive success of the models is quite high. The author finds that when the president declares democracy is a goal of the intervention, and if the US government is opposed to the targeted regime, democracy is more likely to be promoted.

1. Introduction

All through history, when United States presidents have sought to explain or defend US military interventions in foreign lands, few goals, with the exception of the national security of the United States, have been advanced with such regularity and frequency as the promotion of democracy. In earlier history, the Mexican–American war was justified partially on the basis of the right of Texans to self-determination and democracy; later, the rights of Cubans in the Spanish–American war were similarly defended; Woodrow Wilson fought World War I to make the world safe for democracy, and sent troops into Mexico, ‘to teach Mexicans the meaning of democracy’ (quoted in Schlesinger, 1993, p. 20). In 1983, Ronald Reagan defended the US intervention in Lebanon by arguing that ‘If America were to walk away from Lebanon, what chance would there be for a negotiated settlement producing a unified, democratic Lebanon’ (*Congressional Quarterly Weekly Reports*), 1983, p. 2274). Returning to that theme in the very same speech, Reagan also claimed that the US invasion of Grenada was a ‘military operation to

restore order and democracy’ (ibid, p. 2274). After the invasion of Panama, George Bush stated that ‘. . . the goals of the United States have been to defend democracy in Panama’ (*Congressional Quarterly Weekly Reports*, 1989, p. 3534). And the debate continues today as the Clinton Administration attempts to restore democracy in Haiti.

Interestingly, however, this readiness to use force in the name of democracy does not appear to square with some of the emerging findings on the pacific relations among democratic nations. If states do not war on each other because they are democratic, does it make sense that they wage war or use force to compel others to become democratic? Is democracy both a reason for peace and a justification for war? In this article I hope to answer two central questions related to the use of force by the United States in the ostensible quest to promote democracy. First, why would the United States intervene in the affairs of other nations to promote democracy? And second is the use of force an effective tool in the promotion of democracy?

To accomplish these goals, I examine literature on the relationship between regime type

and conflict, the viability of promoting democracy in US foreign policy, and military interventions. Second, using data on US military interventions and the democratic ratings of foreign states, I analyze the extent to which nations that were intervention targets experienced an expansion, a retraction, or a continuance of democratic practices. Third, I compare these nations to nations that did not experience military intervention to determine which group was more likely to enjoy democratic growth. Fourth, I develop a model to predict when military interventions are most likely to promote democracy. Lastly, I assess this study and offer suggestions for future research.

2. *Promoting Democracy*

To understand why the United States might wish to promote democracy through force of arms, it is necessary to examine the emerging findings on the relationship between democratic regimes and conflict. We know that democratic regimes rarely make war on each other (Chan, 1984; Maoz & Abdolali, 1989; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Russett, 1990; Weede, 1984; although see Layne, 1994 for an opposing view). Whether because of structural constraints that make going to war politically complicated, or because of the use of democratic norms in democracies' relations with other nations (Maoz & Russett, 1993), this is one of the most important and convincing findings in international relations (Levy, 1989). There is, however, still considerable controversy over whether democracies are less conflict-prone in general (Bueno de Mesquita & Lalman, 1992; Chan, 1984; Gleditsch & Hegre, 1995c; Lake, 1992; Rummel, 1983; Small & Singer, 1976; Vincent, 1987). Some argue that democratic regimes may appear equally as war-prone as autocratic states because they are more likely to be victims (Gleditsch & Hegre, 1995c; Lake, 1992). Others argue that democratic and autocratic regimes possess similar sorts of rationales for waging war on one another (Vincent, 1987).

Yet, if, as most scholars agree, the prospects for universal peace increase with the number of democratic regimes (although see Gleditsch & Hegre, 1995 for a modification of this thesis), there might very well be an incentive for democratic nations to spread their form of govern-

ment through the use of military force. Indeed, Secretary of State, George Marshall once argued:

Governments which systematically disregard the rights of their own people are not likely to respect the rights of other nations and people and are likely to seek their objectives by coercion and force in the international field. (Department of State Bulletin, 19, [October 3, 1948], 432)

This might then explain both why democracies wage war against autocratic states and why scholars have not conclusively demonstrated that democratic regimes are more peaceful overall. Bueno de Mesquita & Lalman argue that democracies may intervene pre-emptively in a non-democracy to avoid being exploited (1992, p. 159). And, as Lake argues, '... democracies may ... preemptively intervene in the domestic affairs of an autocracy to construct democratic political structures' (1992, p. 30). And, given the remarkable rate of success democracies enjoy when they are involved in war (Lake, 1992), a foreign policy of converting autocratic to democratic regimes may well be an efficient method by which to make the world more peaceful.

Setting or propping up a democratic regime may also help to bring greater stability in one's region and make it easier to influence the targeted nation. Thus, aside from the ideological values espoused by presidents, there may be more tangible benefits to be gained from military interventions that attempt to promote democracy. The fear that some have (Forsythe, 1992; Vincent, 1987), that democratic nations may embark on a crusade to impose their form of government on other nations, may not be unfounded. But while this literature may help answer the question of why the United States would be interested in promoting democracy, it does not address the question of whether the use of force is an effective tool.

The question of whether or not the United States should actively promote democracy is attracting increasing attention among foreign policy-makers and scholars. Charles Maynes writes that under Bill Clinton, '... the United States will try to spread democracy' (1993-94, p. 3). Larry Diamond writes that: 'Democracy should be the central focus - the defining feature - of US foreign policy' (1992, p. 31). Allison &

Beschel, however, conclude: 'The literature provides little advice for would-be promoters of democracy other than cautions about how little can be done' (1992, p. 85). They go on, however, to provide readers with a lengthy list of suggestions the US government and others might follow to encourage democratic growth, such as encouraging pluralization of societies, assisting in the development of market economies, and socializing military and security forces to respect democratic norms and values. Similarly, for Diamond (1992, p. 27), promoting democracy '... means offering moral, political, diplomatic and financial support to individuals and organizations that are struggling to open up authoritarian regimes'. Left out of this inventory is the use of force. Others have found that the United States often uses foreign aid as a means by which to reward and punish nations for their human rights abuses and democratic practices (see Poe, 1991b for a review of this literature). Fossedal (1989) also analyzes a wide variety of measures the United States has employed to promote democracy such as economic assistance and economic sanctions, the funding of freedom fighters and propaganda. Yet, he too barely mentions the use of force in this quest.

Those who do, such as Haas (1994) argue that: 'The United States should largely stay outside or minimize its role in situations requiring ... nation-building' (p. 36). Robert Art (1991) concludes that while promoting democracy where it is feasible is in the US interest, military force, 'is of little use' (p. 42) in this effort. He argues that:

The aim of spreading democracy around the globe ... can too easily become a license for indiscriminate and unending U.S. military interventions in the internal affairs of others. Democracies are best produced, rather, by stalemating aggressor states, by providing a stable international framework that facilitates economic development and the emergence of a middle class within states, and by using economic and other types of leverage to encourage internal liberalization. (p. 42).

Indeed, most research on the causes and correlates of democracy indicates that the path to democracy is long and complex (Dahl, 1989; Huntington, 1968, 1984; Lijphart, 1984; Lipset, 1960; Poe & Tate, 1994). In general, the prognosis for the use of force in the promotion of

democracy is either not discussed or is severely downplayed.

Relatedly, studies of military policy often discuss criteria for successful interventions. For example, George et al. (1971) enumerate eight preconditions for successful missions, such as strength of US motivation, clarity of objectives, and domestic political support. Blechman & Kaplan (1978) find that positive outcomes after a political use of military force by the United States are associated with prior US military actions, statements of interest by the president made before a use of force, and either low or high presidential popularity. From an even broader body of knowledge on war-fighting (Clausewitz, 1968; Summers, 1992), we learn that uses of force are more likely to be successful when force is used quickly and decisively. This tradition has greatly influenced the thinking of many in both the State and Defense departments, especially since the end of the war in Vietnam. For example, in the 1980s, Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger outlined a famous set of prerequisites for US military intervention, which took into consideration many of these assumptions. Smoke (1977), however, echoes the thoughts of many in this area when he states that the preconditions for success are numerous and substantial (p. 40).

Unfortunately, there are no studies which analyze both military interventions and democratic growth in a systematic fashion. We do know, however, that democratic institutions cannot be created overnight and that this task does not generally fall within the purview of military strategy.¹ Therefore there is no reason to expect that military force can create democratic norms and practices. As Lake (1992) argues, however, there are substantial incentives for imposing democratic regimes on defeated enemies if this means enlarging the zone of democratic peace. And imposing a government on a subjugated or defeated nation is something that can be accomplished through force of arms, as the experience of World War II and Grenada and Panama evidence. Therefore, if the US military is in a position to dictate domestic policy in another nation, the US government should be able to establish whatever type of regime it desires. Democratic regimes may be the most peaceful and compliant types. Thus, there would appear to be strong incentives for a

policy of 'democracy at gun point'. But does it actually work?

To answer this question, two pieces of information are required. First, the independent variable of US military intervention must be defined and documented. Second, the dependent variable of democratic change must be operationalized and measured. I consider a US military intervention as a political use of military force involving ground troops of either the US Army or Marine Corps in an active attempt to influence the behavior of other nations, as defined by Blechman & Kaplan (1978). By active attempt I mean the use of firepower or the transportation of arms or foreign armies. Presidents may use ground forces for a variety of other purposes, such as engaging in highly visible exercises, evacuating US nationals abroad, or simply showing the flag. The crucial difference between these events and the ones I have chosen for study is the dynamic, as opposed to latent, role the troops play. It should also be emphasized that the events analyzed here may not fit all readers' definition of classic military interventions (e.g., the Dominican Republic, Kuwait). Some events are rather obscure and some did not involve the hostile introduction of troops. Because my goal is to use a more inclusive definition of 'military intervention' to gain a more thorough understanding of the subject, I have chosen to analyze all cases (except where specifically mentioned) that Blechman & Kaplan have determined involved the use of US ground forces. To determine when presidents utilized troops in this manner, data identifying interventions were gathered from Blechman & Kaplan (1978), Zelikow (1984), and the Center for Naval Analyses: 'The Use of Naval Forces in the Post-War Era: US Navy and US Marine Corps Crisis Response Activity, 1946–90'. This resulted in the identification of 27 cases of intervention involving ground forces of the US military who were operating in, or who were introduced into a foreign state to carry out these missions.²

To measure democracy, I rely upon Ted Robert Gurr's 'Polity II: Political Structures and Regime Change 1800–1986' and an updating of the data in Jagers & Gurr, 1995.³ I use a variety of different conceptualizations of democratic change, which are explained below. There are many different methods by which one might

measure or categorize democratic regimes. While the operationalization utilized here assumes a linear scale of levels of democracy, it is also possible that regime types may be measured by nominal categories. Regimes might be classified as either democracies, anocracies, or autocracies. I choose to utilize the measure of democracy employed by most scholars working in the democracy and conflict literature, the Gurr data set (Gleditsch & Hegre, 1995c; Lake, 1992; Maoz & Russett, 1993). For a thorough discussion of the problems related to measuring democracy, see Bollen (1993).

We know, however, that when presidents have spoken out so eloquently on behalf of democracy, they have often used its advancement as a pretext, a rationalization, or as rhetoric to explain (or excuse) interventions in other countries. We, as scholars, may never be able to know truly presidential motivations and goals, or whether the United States was directly responsible for governmental changes in other nations. Therefore, I do not assume that the promotion of democracy has been a goal of all US interventions. Rather, because of its prominence in US foreign policy and references to such objectives during a significant number of interventions, I simply wish to determine if the cause of democracy is helped or hindered when the US armed forces enter some nation, regardless of the intentions of presidents.

3. *Democracy at Gun Point*

I employ three different measures of democratic change. First, I compare the average democratic rating received by each target nation in the three years prior to the year of the intervention with the average rating received in the three years after the year of the intervention. I subtract the pre-intervention rating from the post-intervention rating to obtain a final score. The larger this number, the greater the change made in the direction of democracy. For example, in the case of the 1983 invasion of Grenada, I compute that nation's average democratic rating from 1980–82, and subtract it from the average democratic rating for the years 1984–86. This indicator is referred to as the three-year pre and post-intervention difference. Second, I compare the democratic rating a state receives for the year of the intervention, with its average rating

in the three subsequent years. For example, in the case of the 1989 invasion of Panama, I subtract its democratic rating for 1989 from its average score for the years 1990–92. This measure is referred to as the three-year post-intervention difference. Third, I compare the rating a nation receives the year of the intervention to the score it obtains in the year after the intervention. In the case of the 1965 invasion of the Dominican Republic, for example, I subtract the rating for 1965 from the rating for 1966. This measure is referred to as the one-year post-intervention difference.⁴ All three measures were recorded so that all negative changes are coded as ‘-1’, no change as ‘0’ and positive changes as ‘1’. There are statistically significant and positive correlations between all three measures, although the strength of the correlations suggests that each may be tapping into different processes.⁵

The most prevalent outcome after US mili-

tary intervention is no change whatsoever. In 48% of the cases where we compare the difference between the three-year averages previous and subsequent to the intervention, there was no change at all. In 74% of the cases comparing the level of democratization in the year of the intervention with the average level in the three years after, there is no change. And when we compare the difference in democratization between the year of and the year after the intervention, 63% of the countries experienced no change. Positive change occurred in 37% of the cases comparing the three-year pre and post-intervention democratic averages, in 22% of the cases comparing the democracy ratings the year of the intervention with the three years after, and 26% of the cases comparing the year of and the year after the intervention. Finally, there are also a handful of cases in each category where democracy lost ground. When one combines these cases with the number of cases where there was no

Table I. US Military Interventions and Their Effects on Democratic Change

Year	Event Description	3-Year Pre and Post-Intervention Difference	3-Year Post-Intervention Difference	1-Year Post-Intervention Difference	Target Nation
1950	Korean War	0	0	0	South Korea
1951	Security of Yugoslavia	-1	1	1	Yugoslavia
1954	Guatemala Gets USSR Arms	-1	-1	-1	Guatemala
1954	Tachen Islands Fighting	0	0	0	Taiwan
1957	Syria Coup and Crisis with USA	-1	0	-1	Syria
1958	Invasion of Lebanon	0	0	0	Lebanon
1958	Quemoy and Matsu Crisis	0	0	0	Taiwan
1959	Laos Civil War	1	0	0	Laos
1961	Congo Civil War	1	1	1	Congo
1964	Panama Riots	0	0	0	Panama
1964	Fighting on Cyprus	-1	0	0	Cyprus
1964	Laos Rightist Coup	0	0	0	Laos
1964	Congo Civil War	0	1	-1	Congo
1964	Vietnam War	0	0	0	South Vietnam
1965	Dominican Republic Civil War	1	0	1	Dominican Republic
1970	Civil Disorder in Trinidad	0	0	0	Trinidad
1970	Jordan Civil War with PLO	0	0	0	Jordan
1974	Cyprus Military Coup	1	0	1	Cyprus
1978	Angola Rebels Invade Zaire	0	0	0	Zaire
1981	Ecuador/Peru Fighting	1	0	0	Ecuador
1982	Problems with Sinai Transition	1	0	1	Egypt
1982	Security of Honduras	1	0	0	Honduras
1982	US Marines in Lebanon	0	0	0	Lebanon
1983	US Invasion of Grenada	1	1	1	Grenada
1988	Nicaraguan Civil War	1	1	0	Nicaragua
1989	US Invasion of Panama	1	1	1	Panama
1990	Invasion of Kuwait	0	0	0	Kuwait

n = 27.

-1 = Decrease in democracy, 0 = no change, 1 = increase in democracy.

change, it would appear that US military interventions generally do not leave behind more democratic regimes.

Because some of the cases analyzed in this study may be unfamiliar to readers, I briefly undertake to examine some of the more well-known cases of military intervention. These are: (1) the Korean War, (2) the 1958 invasion of Lebanon, (3) the Vietnam War, (4) the 1965 invasion of the Dominican Republic, (5) the 1982 intervention in Lebanon, (6) the 1983 invasion of Grenada, (7) the 1989 invasion of Panama, and (8) the 1991 Gulf War. Democracy or the maintenance of legitimate government was frequently alluded to by presidents as an important goal in these highly visible interventions. Thus, we might expect presidents to have been even more cognizant of the need to effect some sort of democratic change. These results are slightly more promising. When we examine the three-year pre and post-intervention difference, and the one-year post-intervention difference, 38% of the time there is movement toward democracy. In the three-year, post-intervention difference, there is movement toward democracy only 25% of the time. The positive changes are especially notable when one examines the more recent interventions, such as Grenada and Panama. I will attempt to explain later why some interventions are more likely to be successful than others.

The analysis thus far has examined democratic change in light of a US military intervention. Ideally, one would also need to know what kinds of democratic changes would have taken place without a US military intervention to introduce some variation into the measurement of this variable. Since such knowledge is impossible, we must look for a substitute. To make a comparative assessment of democratic change, I analyze democratic change in nations involved in other international crises from 1948 to 1990 that did not result in the use of US ground forces. These incidents may or may not have involved other types of force. The international crises were identified according to criteria outlined in the appendix and in the author's earlier work. There are a total of 159 cases. Some nations might appear more than once in this data set if they experienced more than one crisis. If a nation experienced more than one crisis in a particular year, it was only counted once for that year.

The results generally follow the same patterns described above. In examining the three-year pre and post-intervention difference, we see that 22.2% of the nations in the sample made progress toward democracy, 51.3% stayed the same, and 26.6% moved away from democracy. For the three-year post-intervention difference, 17.7% moved toward democracy, 71.5% stayed the same, and 10.8% took steps away from democratization. Finally, when we examine the difference between the year after and the year of the US military intervention, only 10.8% changed for the better, 83.5% made no movement in either direction, and 5.7% changed for the worse.

Table II. Promotion of Democracy in Nations That Experienced US Intervention and in Those That Did Not (%)

	Intervention	No Intervention
One-Year Post-Intervention Difference		
Democratization	26	11
No Change	63	84
Change Away From Democracy		
Democracy	11	6
Sum	100	101
Three-Year Post-Intervention Difference		
Democratization	22	18
No Change	74	72
Change Away From Democracy		
Democracy	4	11
Sum	100	101
Three-Year Pre and Post-Intervention Difference		
Democratization	37	22
No Change	48	51
Change Away From Democracy		
Democracy	15	27
Sum	100	100

n = 186.

Percentages have been rounded.

We do see, however, that when comparing the progress of democracy in nations which did experience US intervention with those which did not, the former group boasts greater movement toward democracy. If one examines the difference in democracy ratings from the three years prior to an invasion with the average of the three years after, nations which experienced a military intervention are 15% more likely to make democratic gains. When one compares the difference between the democracy rating the year of an invasion with the average democracy

score for the three years subsequent, the difference between intervention and non-intervention nations is only slight (4%). The difference between these two groups of nations is much more noticeable when one examines the one-year post-intervention difference (15%). There would seem to be some basis for arguing that nations which experienced a military intervention made greater progress toward democracy than those which did not.

To test this relationship more rigorously, a probit analysis was run on all 159 cases where the United States did not use ground forces and the 27 cases where such an intervention did take place. The three different measures of democratic change were used as the dependent variables (negative change was recoded as no change), and the one independent variable was the use of ground forces by the United States. While the results are mixed, they are encouraging. Table III demonstrates that those nations which experienced a military intervention were statistically more likely to become more democratic than those nations which did not when comparing democratic ratings in the three years prior to an international crisis/military intervention with the three subsequent years. We also see that when comparing democratic change in the year of and the year after the international crisis/military intervention, nations which had undergone a military intervention were more likely to experience democratic change. The military intervention variable is also statistically significant in this model. The relationship between democratic change and military intervention when comparing the year of and the three years after an international crisis/military intervention is quite weak.

Thus far we see that there is qualified evidence that US military intervention exercises a significant and positive effect on democratization among nations. It is much more likely the

Table III. Predicting Democratic Change in All Nations that Experienced an International Crisis: The Three-Year Pre and Post-Difference

Variable	Coefficient	<i>t</i> -Statistic	<i>p</i> -Value
US Intervention	0.627	2.128	0.033
Constant	-1.243	-9.345	0.000

n = 186.

Twice the log-likelihood ratio = 4.35, *p* < 0.05.

Table IV. Predicting Democratic Change in All Nations that Experienced an International Crisis: The Three-Year Post-Difference

Variable	Coefficient	<i>t</i> -Statistic	<i>p</i> -Value
US Intervention	0.169	0.576	0.564
Constant	-0.906	7.830	0.000

n = 186.

Twice the log-likelihood ratio = 0.326, *p* > 0.10.

Table V. Predicting Democratic Change in All Nations that Experienced an International Crisis: The One-Year Post-Difference

Variable	Coefficient	<i>t</i> -Statistic	<i>p</i> -Value
US Intervention	0.457	1.676	0.093
Constant	-0.750	-6.808	0.000

n = 186.

Twice the log-likelihood ratio = 2.76, *p* < 0.10.

case that while US military intervention does not lead to greater democracy in every instance, it may be successful in more narrowly defined cases, and it may work better (at least at producing more immediate results) than other US foreign policy tools. While the latter hypothesis will be tested in future research, the former is the next step in this analysis. I briefly outline below a model to be used in explaining what factors are most likely to be associated with a successful intervention. To test the significance and impact of these factors, I utilize the data set of 27 nations where the United States actively employed ground forces in an attempt to change a state's domestic policy.

4. *A Model of Military Intervention and Democratic Change*

The model I propose is based on the implicit and explicit assumptions of the democracy and conflict literature regarding the goals of democratic regimes, their relationships with adversaries and the outcomes of their interventions. First, this research has demonstrated that democratic nations have strong incentives for waging war on behalf of democracy. Therefore, it is important to know whether the promotion of democracy was an explicit goal of the United States. Second, although not directly addressed in the literature, it is important to consider the relationship between the United States, the regime it has targeted, and the population of the tar-

geted nation. The support or opposition of these actors is likely to bear heavily on the success of the intervention. Lastly, the success or failure of the military intervention will play an important role in the promotion of democracy. If democratic regimes do tend to win the conflicts in which they are involved, we would expect a high rate of success for these interventions and for the promotion of democracy. I discuss below how these factors are to be measured.

4.1 *Democracy as a Goal*

When embarking on a policy of intervention in another nation's affairs, the promotion of democracy may only be one of a number of competing foreign policy goals. Furthermore, it may not even be a consideration in many of these operations, especially those conducted during the Cold War when other nations' foreign policies were more important than their form of government. Therefore, I hypothesize that when presidents pronounce the promotion of democracy as a goal of an intervention, the target nation should be more likely to make democratic progress. This variable is coded as '1' if the president made a public statement to the effect that the United States sought to preserve or create democratic governance in a target nation, and '0' otherwise. This information was obtained from *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States* (various years 1950–91).

4.2 *Support of the Target Population*

Art (1991) argues that in some cases military intervention in the promotion of democracy can be successful if the local population supports US aims. Determining the extent to which the inhabitants of a nation invaded by the US military welcome the imposition of democracy has not, to my knowledge, been attempted on any systematic basis. We can, however, look for evidence of opposition to US intervention. While it may take many forms, there does exist information in the use of force data sets described previously on violence directed against US citizens and US property by non-governmental groups or individuals preceding the US intervention. I create a dichotomous variable for anti-US violence and take it as a rough approximation of the degree of local support for the US intervention.⁶ When such violence occurs, I

argue that the likelihood of military intervention furthering the cause of democracy should diminish.

4.3 *US Relationship with Target Regime*

It is also important to determine the relationship between the US government and the regime it seeks to influence. If the United States is on friendly terms with the government in place at the time of the intervention, a president wishing to promote democracy would probably try to encourage reform (i.e., Vietnam). If the United States does not support the current regime, promoting democracy probably would require compelling change (i.e., Grenada and Panama). The former would probably require time, patience, and institution-building expertise, to which military force would be ill-suited, while the latter would require quick, decisive action, for which the military is equipped. Therefore, I hypothesize when the United States is opposed to the regime in place at the time of the intervention, democratic change should occur more frequently.⁷

4.4 *Successful Interventions*

The success or failure of a military intervention is likely to be tremendously important to the promotion of democracy. Military operations that end in defeat are hardly likely to result in the achievement of democratic progress, while successful operations may help create the political conditions from which democracy might grow. I hypothesize that successful interventions ought to be more likely to leave behind more democratic governments than unsuccessful interventions. Measuring the success of a military intervention is quite problematic, however, since there are both multiple foreign policy goals involved in interventions and multiple factors which may affect the outcome of an intervention. Therefore, determining foreign policy success or failure is often a subjective and risky enterprise. I rely primarily on a neutral source for judging the effectiveness of US interventions, Brecher & Wilkenfeld's 'International Crisis Behavior Project' data set (1988). Their actor-based data include a variable which codes outcomes for all participants in a dispute (victory = 1, compromise = 2, stalemate = 3, defeat = 4, and other = 5).⁸ I employ their data on the outcome for the United States. For the handful

of disputes in this study that were not part of the Brecher & Wilkenfeld data set, I coded the outcomes according to their criteria. I hypothesize that there ought to be a negative relationship (note their coding) between crisis outcome and the promotion of democracy.

5. Analysis

Because of the scarcity of cases, I use a dichotomous probit rather than an ordered probit model to predict whether democratic growth takes place (coded as '1') or does not occur (coded as '0').⁹ All three measures of democratic change are employed.

Table VI. Predicting Democratic Change: The Three-Year Pre and Post-Intervention Difference

Variable	Coefficient	t-Statistic	p-Value
Democracy Was a Goal	0.729	0.81	0.413
Anti-US Violence	-4.659	-0.08	0.933
USA Opposed to Regime	-1.337	-1.98	0.047
Outcome	-0.053	-0.15	0.878
Constant	0.616	0.69	0.487

n = 27.
 Twice the log-likelihood ratio = 12.9, p < 0.01.
 Percent Corrected Predicted = 81%.
 Proportionate Reduction in Error = 49%.

Table VII. Predicting Democratic Change: The Three-Year Post-Intervention Difference

Variable	Coefficient	t-Statistic	p-Value
Democracy Was a Goal	1.532	2.156	0.031
Anti-US Violence	0.750	0.835	0.403
USA Opposed to Regime	-0.850	-1.171	0.241
Outcome	-0.629	-1.064	0.287
Constant	-0.075	-0.079	0.936

n = 27.
 Twice the log-likelihood ratio = 10.3, p < 0.03.
 Percent Corrected Predicted = 85%.
 Proportionate Reduction in Error = 35%.

Both the models using the three-year, post-intervention difference and the one-year post-intervention difference predict 85% of the cases correctly, while the model employing the three-year, pre and post-intervention difference is successful 81% of the time. A better measure of the predictive accuracy of the models is the proportionate reduction in error which compares the predictive success of the models with the percentage of cases one would have predicted

Table VIII. Predicting Democratic Change: The One-Year Post-Intervention Difference

Variable	Coefficient	t-Statistic	p-Value
Democracy Was a Goal	1.429	1.702	0.088
Anti-US Violence	-4.296	-0.078	0.938
USA Opposed to Regime	-0.774	-1.079	0.280
Outcome	-0.038	-0.088	0.929
Constant	-0.392	-0.396	0.691

n = 27.
 Twice the log-likelihood ratio = 11.3, p < 0.02.
 Percent Corrected Predicted = 85%.
 Proportionate Reduction in Error = 42%.

correctly using the model category.¹⁰ The three-year pre and post-intervention difference model performs best with a PRE of 49%, the one-year post-intervention difference model has a PRE of 42% and the three-year post-intervention difference model has a PRE of 35%.¹¹

While each of the models performs reasonably well overall, only one of the independent variables is statistically significant in a majority of the models – whether or not the US president declared democracy was a goal of the intervention.¹² When the United States is purportedly acting on behalf of democratic values, interventions are much more likely to aid the cause of democracy in the three-year and one-year post-intervention models. In the three-year pre and post-intervention difference we also see that the variable measuring US opposition to a regime is statistically significant.

It would appear that military missions that were deemed successful by Brecher and Wilkenfeld's criteria were no more likely than other military operations to promote democracy. Part of this may be caused by the high level of success all these operations enjoyed. In 19 out of the 27 cases, the United States was judged as being a victor, which is similar to Lake's finding that democracies win approximately 80% of the wars in which they are involved. Thus, unfortunately there is little variation in this variable to explain democratic progress. Anti-US sentiment as measured by nongovernmental violence directed at US citizens prior to the intervention also does not appear to be a crucial factor. Since this was a rather crude measure, the hypothesis behind the variable may prove supportable if a better indicator can be found. Thus, overall we must conclude that given the limited number of cases of direct military intervention and the

limited amount of information available regarding US military operations, successful prediction of democratic change is challenging at best. I assess the cumulative impact of these and earlier findings and offer suggestions for further research below.

6. Conclusion

I find that in the majority of cases, regardless of the manner in which democratic change is measured, the majority of US military interventions do not appear to lead to increased levels of democracy. Most nations retain their current level of democracy. There are, however, important, qualified exceptions to this statement. First, when we compare nations which have experienced intervention with those that have not, we see that the former group is more likely to experience democratic growth. Probit analyses of the effects of military intervention on democratization generally supported the notion that by some measurements the use of US ground forces does lead to increased democratization. Second, we also see that when the United States appears to be truly committed to promoting democracy, as evidenced by presidential statements, it is generally quite successful. Whether presidents resort to arms to impose democracy, because they believe international peace will be served or because it is in parochial US interests to create a more pliable regime, remains to be seen. Ultimately, military intervention appears to promote democracy in a sufficient number of cases to not only warrant its future employment but also continued academic inquiry.

Based on these findings, several suggestions are offered. First, since promoting democracy is increasingly being cited by presidents as a foreign policy goal, we should expand the analysis to other US foreign policy tools to determine which is most effective at promoting democratic change. Second, we should focus attention on intensive analysis of those cases where the evidence indicates presidents stand a greater chance of promoting democracy. What other factors unique to these nations or to the nature of the US intervention make democracy more exportable? Third, we need to expand the data set forward in time to include such recent events as the intervention in Haiti. While it is doubtful we will find conclusive evidence that

democracy can always be imposed through the use of force, we should at least understand if and when interventions can be successful.

That this research did not consistently reveal a strong connection between US military intervention and the promotion of democracy is hardly surprising given the skepticism most scholars have in the use of external pressure to influence the growth of democratic institutions. Yet, US presidents and other international leaders have consistently and increasingly spoken of the need to encourage democracy. Therefore, it still is extremely important that we investigate this phenomenon, because while we may not discover striking evidence of a relationship, the findings of this study are important for practical reasons. That is, these findings ought to serve as a caution (and perhaps as a guide) to policy-makers who are charged with encouraging democratic reforms abroad.

NOTES

1. In nations with a history of democracy, however, democratic institutions may be quickly resurrected after a brief or even lengthy absence (e.g., Eastern Europe after 1989 and Chile after Pinochet). In nations where it is believed the local populace is capable of implementing democratic reforms, there is likely to be little incentive to use US troops. Thus, in these types of nations there would be little need for military intervention to promote democracy.
2. In cases where more than one nation was involved in the military intervention, such as the 1981 conflict between Peru and Ecuador, I examine the nation into which the US military was sent. When the US military was sent into a nation more than once during a 36-month period, I count only the first intervention to avoid over-counting similar events. A more important problem is the link between military intervention and the promotion of democracy. Obviously, democratic expansion or retraction may be affected by a number of different factors, with or without the added impetus of a US military presence. Ultimately, we cannot be sure, except perhaps in a few cases where the US presence was so overwhelming it could dictate domestic policy (e.g., Grenada, Panama), what causes a nation to change its form of government. Thus, it is my contention that we should not look for causality between intervention and democratic growth, but rather study whether or not the United States leaves behind a more democratic government, *ceteris paribus*.
3. I leave out any nation which already possessed the maximum score for democracy in the periods before and after military intervention, such as West Germany (e.g., the various crises over the status of West Berlin). There was an insufficient number of these cases as well to warrant more intensive analysis of the effects of intervention on high-democracy cases.

4. To make certain that the measure of democracy in the year of the intervention was not a consequence of the intervention itself, I examined the values of the democratic rating for each nation in the sample in the year prior to the intervention. For example, in the case of the Dominican Republic intervention in 1965, to determine if the value for 1965 was not contaminated by the intervention, I compared the democracy ratings for 1965 and 1964 and found them to be identical. This procedure was employed on all cases, and in all but two instances the democracy rating for the year of the intervention was identical with that of the previous year. I have reviewed these two cases, Laos in 1959 and Honduras in 1982, but could find no concrete evidence that the US intervention did or did not result in a regime change.
5. The Pearson correlation between the three-year pre and post-intervention difference measure and the three-year post-intervention difference is 0.32, and 0.55 between the former and the one-year post-intervention difference. The correlation between the three-year post-intervention difference and the one-year post-intervention difference is 0.43. All are statistically significant at the 0.05 level.
6. This information was obtained from the Blechman & Kaplan (1978) data set and *Facts on File* (various years).
7. This information was obtained from the following: *Facts on File*, *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, *The New York Times Index*, *Royal United Services Institute and Bracey's Defence Yearbook*, and *The American Defense Annual*.
8. There were no 'other' outcomes for the events in this analysis.
9. There was not sufficient variation in the dependent variable to run a trichotomous model.
10. The formula for the Reduction of Error measurement is found in Hagle & Mitchell (1992, p. 781), and is as follows:
ROE =
$$100 \times \frac{\% \text{ correctly classified} - \% \text{ modal category}}{100\% - \% \text{ modal category}}$$
11. The analysis was also run using the absolute values of all three dependent variables. The results were similar, with few of the variables ever attaining statistical significance. The overall performance of the model, however, was quite weak.
12. To check the reliability of this model, variables used in similar models, such as per capita GDP, region, changes in US public support for military interventions, and the number of other nations involved in the intervention were also tested. They all failed to achieve statistical significance across most of the equations.

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APPENDIX

The criteria used for identifying international crises are borrowed from Job & Ostrom (1986) where:

- 1) the situation involved a perceived current threat to the territorial security of the USA, its current allies, major clients, or proxy states;
- 2) the situation posed a perceived danger to US government, military, or diplomatic personnel; to significant numbers of USA citizens, or to US assets;
- 3) events were perceived as having led, or likely to lead to advances by ideologically committed opponents of the USA (i.e., communists or 'extreme leftists' broadly defined) by they states, regimes, or regime contenders;
- 4) events were perceived as likely to lead to losses of US influence in regions perceived as within the US sphere of influence, especially viewed as Central and South America;
- 5) events involved inter-state military conflict of potential consequence; in human and strategic terms; or events, because of civil disorder, threatened destruction of a substantial number of persons. (1986), p. 10)

The crises under consideration all share the common property of events that seemed likely to attract the president's attention. Job & Ostrom justify this operationalization of opportunities because the search criteria constitute a 'syndrome of characteristics commonly found in use of force situations' (p. 9). Thus, although data on presidential perceptions per se were not collected, based upon an analysis of situations where presidents used force in the past, it was inferred that if such events arose in the future there was reason to believe presidents would perceive the events as similarly threatening and consider the use of force. It is not known with certainty if presidents viewed all such events as threats, only that, based on past behavior, there is a high probability threats were perceived. An examination of international crises in the following sources, *Facts on File*, *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, *The New York Times Index*, *Royal United Services Institute and Bracey's Defence Yearbook*, and *The American Defense Annual*, was undertaken to identify these events and construct a data set of crises that resembled situations that had previously been met with a use of force. In all, 159 opportunities to use force from 1949 through 1990 were identified and analyzed in this research effort. The original Ostrom & Job data set was used to identify opportunities from 1949 through 1976 that were not met with a use of force. The author collected similar data for the years 1977 through 1990 using their methodology for identifying opportunities. Data on the use of force were gathered from Blechman & Kaplan's 'Political Use of the United States Armed Forces 1946–1976' data set, an updating of this information by Zelikow (1984), a study done by the Center for Naval analyses entitled: 'The Use of Naval Forces in the Post-War Era: US Navy and US Marine Corps Crisis Response Activity, 1946–1990' and from the archival sources mentioned above. These same data sources also establish what international events led to or preceded uses of force.