Alessia Rossinotti

# Post Conflict Democratization. The Role of External Actors in Rebuilding Legitimacy and the Example of Afghanistan

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| AIA | Afghan Interim Authority |
| ATA | Afghan Transitional Authority |
| CLJ | Constitutional Loya Jirga |
| ELJ | Emergency Loya Jirga |
| ISAF | International Security Assistance Force |
| UNAMA | United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan |
| WJ | Wolesi Jirga |
| UCDP | Uppsala Conflict Data Program |
| SSR | Security Sector Reform |
| DDR | Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration |
| MJ | Meshrano Jirga |
| JEMB | Joint Election Monitoring Body |
| SNTV | Single Non-Transferable Vote |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| OEF | Operation Enduring Freedom |
| OFS | Operation Freedom's Sentinel |
| RS | Resolute Support |
| US | United States |
| UN | United Nations |
| WWII | Second World War |
| ONUMOZ | United Nations Operation in Mozambique |
| UNTAES | United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium |
| EU | European Union |
| NGOs | Non-governmental organizations |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UNMIK | United Nations Mission in Kosovo |
| KFOR | Kosovo Force |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| UNITA | National Front for the Total Independence of Angola |

| | |
|---|---|
| MPLA | People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola |
| UNTAC | United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia |
| ANC | African National Congress |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe |
| UNTAG | United Nations Transitional Assistance Group |
| EMBs | Election Management Bodies |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |

# INTRODUCTION

Democratization processes have through time increasingly attracted the attention of scholars and practitioners, due to the growing number of democracies that have emerged worldwide starting especially after the end of the Cold War. In this regard, various theories have been advanced to understand and evaluate these processes, specifically their drivers and the challenges related to them. One case of particular relevance nowadays is the one of countries who make their transition to democracy after a conflict. These cases clearly differ from the ones in which states proceed towards transition from a situation of peace. Due to the peculiarities linked to these scenarios, this thesis will be dedicated to post conflict democratization processes, and the focus will be made on the role that external actors play therein. Indeed, international players have increasingly assumed leadership in driving and assisting democratization attempts in countries in the aftermath of a conflict. However, the outcomes of their intervention have actually been mixed, and in a significant number of cases they failed in achieving the desired goals. One specific issue seems problematic while intervening in a post conflict context, that is restoring legitimacy. For this reason, this research will focus on the role external actors can play in rebuilding legitimacy in a country shattered by war, on the challenges these players must face in this domain and on evaluating the impact these actors have in post conflict settings.

Consequently, this thesis is organized in four chapters. After having provided a theoretical framework on democratization processes and their occurrence in post conflict settings in the first two sections, I will analyze the main challenges external actors face when they intervene in these environments in order to rebuild legitimacy and support the transition towards a democratic political

system. Legitimacy will be treated as a key challenge to be faced, and it will be considered as the founding basis for the whole post conflict political setting. Finally, in the last chapter, based on the findings of the analysis carried out, a hypothesis will be introduced in order to illustrate why external-led democracy building in the aftermath of a conflict produces instability and often fails in achieving the desired outcomes in terms of democratization and legitimacy-building, and it will be considered in light of one specific case study, namely Afghanistan after the US-led intervention in 2001. Thus, chapter IV will be an attempt to analyze the impact of external actors in rebuilding post conflict legitimacy by considering the Afghan transition after the fall of the Taliban regime, and it will aim at trying to provide an empirical ground for the hypothesis advanced. Finally, based on the overall findings of this research, conclusions will be drawn.

## CHAPTER I

## Democratization: a theoretical framework

### 1. Understanding democratic transitions: theories and features

### 1.1 Introduction

During the last decades, the attention of scholars in the field of political science and comparative politics has focused on analyzing transitions from authoritarian rule towards more democratic regimes, in order to understand how democratization processes work, which paths they may follow and what conditions make them possible. This growing attention towards the domain of democratization is certainly due to the increasing number of democracies that have emerged worldwide especially starting from the 1970s, reaching as Morlino notices, in 2015 the total number of democracies was 89.[1] Indeed, in the period between 1974 and 1990, as Samuel Huntington outlined, 30 countries made their transition to a democratic system. This is due to what he defines as 'third wave of democratization', a period in which countries worldwide made, or at least attempted, their transition from authoritarian regimes to democracies. This wave was not the only one in history. Apart from this one, he identifies two more that took place previously: the first, which began in 1820s and lasted until 1926, through the widening of the electorate to a larger amount of male population in the United States; and the second, that started with the end of the Second World War and continued until 1962, as a result of the first glimpses of the decolonization process.[2] Both waves were followed by what he defines as reverse waves, during which the overall number of democracies decreased. Needed to say, Huntington treats democratization as a combination of different causes, and thus it's not possible to explain it as the result of one single factor. In fact, democratization is a process that doesn't follow one unique pattern, but

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[1] L. Morlino, *Transitions to Democracy: What Theory to Grasp Complexity?*, Working paper No. 6, LUISS Academy (2014), p. 13.
[2] S. Huntington, *Democracy's Third Wave*, in R. Dahl, I. Shapiro, and J. A. Cheibub (eds.), *The Democracy Sourcebook*, the MIT Press (2003), p. 93.

rather it may take different time and features depending on the country that embarks in such transition. Thus, there's a solid consensus on the fact that democratization is a multidimensional process that touches various different domains.

From a general point of view, we can distinguish between four main phases that a political system experiences whenever it proceeds towards transitioning to democracy. The first phase sees the opposition of citizens vis-à-vis the political elite, and this confrontation consists in more and stronger demands for liberties by the population. This phase is followed by a second one, which consists in the emergence of a new political arrangement, as the old one doesn't work anymore due to the requests made by citizens. The third step, when liberty is finally granted by the elite that is not able to oppose to the demands of the citizens anymore, sees the political attention shifting towards how to achieve further rights and liberties, thus on how to deepen the democratic character of the system that has been achieved. The final phase is the one of consolidation, through which everything that has been achieved until that moment gets further institutionalized and embedded in the system.[3] Apart from identifying these four steps that political systems go through while transitioning away from authoritarianism, scholars have during relatively recent times advanced several explanations to the phenomenon of democratization. Indeed, the field of research is nowadays highly varied. First, as just affirmed, democratization is a multidimensional process that takes into account several aspects of a political system. Second, while trying to understand which are the drivers of transition, we should keep in mind that it's extremely hard to provide a unique explanation to democratic transition, because such cases do vary depending on various factors, including for instance the region where the transition takes place.[4] Among the factors that must be considered while analyzing these political processes, we can find as crucial elements the following ones: the features of the previous authoritarian regime, the space and strength of the civil society, the

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[3] K. Newton and J. W. Van Deth, *Foundation of Comparative Politics, Democracies of the Modern World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Second Edition (2010), p. 57.
[4] Morlino, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.