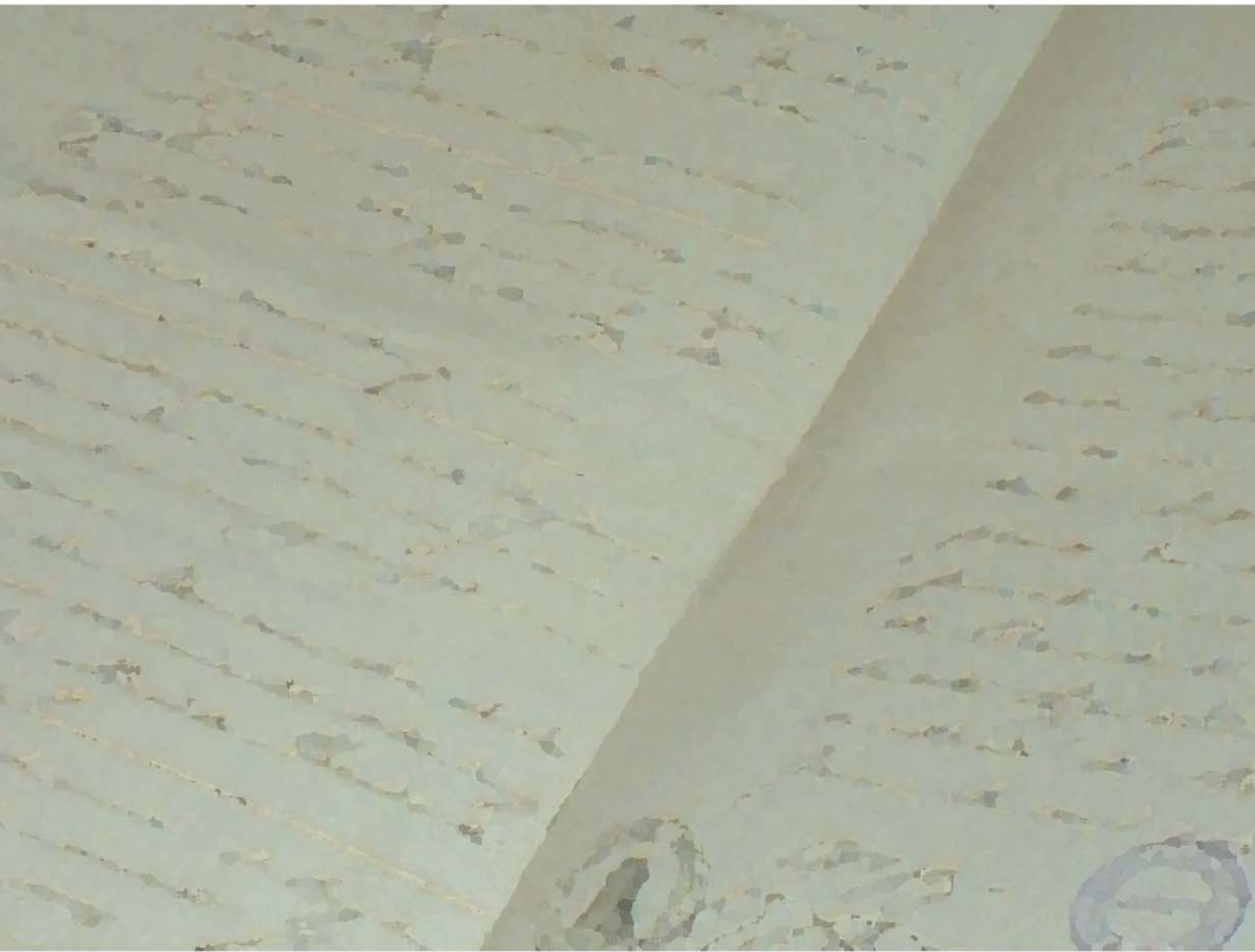




# Crusader America: Democratic Imperialism under Wilson and Bush

Omar G. Encarnación



Tribuna  
Norteamericana

Número 2  
Octubre, 2009



Universidad  
de Alcalá

*Las opiniones, referencias, y estudios difundidos en cualquier publicación de las distintas líneas editoriales del Instituto Universitario de Investigación en Estudios Norteamericanos “Benjamin Franklin” (Instituto Franklin) son responsabilidad exclusiva del autor colaborador que la firma. El Instituto Franklin no interfiere en el contenido ni las ideas expuestas por los referidos autores colaboradores de sus publicaciones.*

*El Instituto Franklin (fundado originalmente como “Centro de Estudios Norteamericanos” en 1987) es un organismo propio de la Universidad de Alcalá que obtuvo el estatus de “Instituto Universitario de Investigación” en el 2001 (Decreto 15/2001 de 1 de febrero; BOCM 8 de febrero del 2001, nº 33, p. 10). Su naturaleza, composición, y competencias se ajustan a lo dispuesto en los Estatutos de la Universidad de Alcalá de acuerdo al Capítulo IX: “De los Institutos Universitarios” (artículos del 89 al 103). El Instituto Franklin tiene como misión fundamental servir de plataforma comunicativa, cooperativa, y de unión entre España y Norteamérica, con el objetivo de promover el conocimiento mutuo. El Instituto Franklin desarrolla su misión favoreciendo y potenciando la creación de grupos de investigadores en colaboración con distintas universidades norteamericanas; impartiendo docencia oficial de postgrado (másteres y doctorado en estudios norteamericanos); difundiendo el conocimiento sobre Norteamérica mediante distintas líneas editoriales; y organizando encuentros académicos, de temática inherente a la propia naturaleza del Instituto, tanto de carácter nacional como internacional.*

Tribuna  
Norteamericana

Tribuna Norteamericana es una  
publicación del  
INSTITUTO FRANKLIN  
Universidad de Alcalá  
c/ Trinidad, 1  
28801 Alcalá de Henares  
Madrid, España  
Tel: 918855252 - Fax: 918855248  
<http://www.institutofranklin.net>

Director: José Antonio Gurpegui  
Coordinador de la colección:  
Andrew Richards  
Coordinadora editorial: Cristina Crespo  
Diseño e IT Manager: Víctor Riera  
© Instituto Franklin - UAH. 2009  
ISSN: 1889-6871  
Depósito Legal: NA-1832/2009  
Impreso en España - Printed in Spain  
Impresión: Ulzama Digital S.L.

Crusader America: Democratic  
Imperialism under Wilson and Bush

Omar G. Encarnación

## Omar G. Encarnación

Omar G. Encarnación is Professor and Chair of the Political Studies program at Bard College (USA). He is the author of *Spanish Politics: Democracy after Dictatorship* (2008) and *The Myth of Civil Society: Social Capital and Democratic Consolidation in Spain and Brazil* (2003). His essays on Spanish and Latin American politics, the comparative study of democratization, and US-Latin American relations appear in leading political science journals, such as *Comparative Political Studies*, *Comparative Politics*, *Political Science Quarterly*, *West European Politics*, *Human Rights Quarterly*, and *Ethics & International Affairs*, and in policy journals such as *Current History*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *World Policy Journal*. Professor Encarnación holds a Ph.D. in politics from Princeton University and is the recipient of academic honors and fellowships from the Fulbright Program, the Council for European Studies, the Ford Foundation, the National Research Council, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Program for Cooperation between U.S. Universities and the Spanish Ministry of Culture. He has been a visiting scholar at the departments of Political Science of Yale University and New York University, and a Research Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, D.C. and the Center for the Advanced Study in the Social Sciences of the Juan March Institute in Madrid.

## RESUMEN

En un intento por *racionalizar* la invasión americana en Irak y con el propósito de impulsar la democracia en Oriente Medio, la administración de Bush confió plenamente en las ideas sobre el “imperialismo democrático” desarrolladas ocho décadas antes por la administración de Wilson, cuyo objetivo era impulsar los modelos democráticos en América Latina. El elemento clave en esta aproximación democrática es la percepción referente a la difusión de la democracia como una fuente de paz y orden en las relaciones internacionales. Los principios democráticos se entienden, por tanto, como un valor universal capaz de superar las fronteras culturales, históricas y geográficas; además se parte del principio ideológico según el cual los Estados Unidos, cuna de estos principios democráticos, tienen obligación moral de expandir los principios de libertad y democracia al resto del mundo.

En primer lugar, este ensayo analiza la manera en que las distintas racionalizaciones del imperialismo democrático se han llevado a cabo durante el mandato de Wilson con el fin de predecir las consecuencias del esfuerzo encabezado por los americanos de democratizar Irak. Igual que Bush, Wilson también convirtió el desarrollo democrático en el eje de su política exterior y vio la expansión de la democracia en México, en América Central y el Caribe como el antídoto a la revolución y el terrorismo. Consecuencia de ello fueron las múltiples intervenciones militares para arrancar de raíz los regímenes autocráticos y sustituirlos con regímenes democráticamente elegidos. Por tanto, el ensayo analiza las

consecuencias de las cruzadas democráticas en Latino América. Irónicamente, estas intervenciones militares dejaron en su resurgimiento graves consecuencias para el progreso de la democracia en el extranjero. Virtualmente en todas partes la política exterior de Wilson incitó una ola de nacionalismos, agravando los conflictos políticos internos e igualmente sirvió para marcar el comienzo de una nueva ola de autoritarismo. Estas consecuencias inesperadas enseñaron a Wilson una importante lección sobre la naturaleza problemática de la promoción democrática en el extranjero haciendo uso de la fuerza. Tal y como él mismo llegó a reconocer, su visión sobre la implantación de modelos democráticos no sólo resultó ser idealista sino incluso equivocada, y, lo más grave, contraproducente para la difusión de la democracia.

El ensayo concluye ofreciendo una visión general de las consecuencias preliminares sobre la intervención de Bush en Irak, que resultan ser un fiel y contundente reflejo de las intervenciones de Wilson en países como México y la República Dominicana. Al mismo tiempo, se argumenta cómo las dificultades a las que se está enfrentando la nueva democracia de Irak hoy en día tiene su origen en los supuestos equívocos que conllevaron la intervención americana.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Who would have guessed it? Having won the American presidency pledging humility in foreign policy, George W. Bush spent virtually the entirety of his administration in pursuit of the ambitious and idealistic goal of remaking Iraq into a beacon of democracy in the Middle East.

<sup>1</sup>This mission resulted in the violent overthrow of the Saddam Hussein dictatorship, an open-ended deployment of some 150,000 American soldiers, and more than \$200 billion spent on “nation-building” tasks ranging from fixing roads and electric generators to creating new political institutions such as a democratic constitution. Behind Bush’s dramatic change of mind is the terrorist attacks on America of September 11, 2001, a fateful day that saw Islamic radicals destroy New York’s World Trade Center, an icon of American global economic dominance. The attacks fundamentally transformed Washington’s perceptions of its relations with the Arab world, by making the democratization of this region, by force if necessary, an objective of American foreign policy. As outlined in the “National Security Strategy” of September 2002, the linchpin of the so-called Bush doctrine, “it is the policy of the United States to employ preventive action against rogue states suspected or aiding or abating terrorism” and to promote “a balance of power that favors freedom.”<sup>2</sup>

Bush’s approach to Iraqi democratization fits squarely within what can be termed “democratic imperialism,” or the imposition of democratic governance by one country upon another one (Encarnación 2005). As articulated by Bush, this coercive mode of democratic

promotion is rationalized by the following beliefs. First and foremost is the view of the spread of democracy as central to the advancement of peace and order among nations, an argument that draws upon the perceived amity of democracies. “The world has a clear interest in the spread of democratic values, because stable and free nations do not breed the ideologies of murder. They encourage the peaceful pursuit of a better life,” Bush asserted in his speech to the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) of February 26, 2003, just weeks before the arrival of the Americans in Iraq.<sup>3</sup> Following the fall of Baghdad, Bush predicted a domino-like effect for his policy of Iraqi democratization by proclaiming in an address to the United Nations General Assembly on September 23, 2003 that: “Iraq as a dictatorship had great power to destabilize the Middle East; Iraq as a democracy will have great power to inspire the Middle East.”<sup>4</sup>

Second in line is the belief in the universality of the appeal of democracy. This makes virtually any nation capable of living under democracy regardless of its culture, geography or history. In making this argument Bush aimed to counter the impression shared by many that the Muslim and especially Arab world is inhospitable to democracy (see Lewis 1996; Inglehart and Norris 2003; Basham 2004). “Human cultures can be vastly different, yet the human heart desires the same good things, everywhere on Earth,” Bush remarked in his AEI address. A more pointed defense of the presumed universal appeal of democracy was offered by Bush at an address on “Freedom in Iraq and the Middle East,” delivered on November 6, 2003, on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).<sup>5</sup>

In many nations of the Middle East—countries of great strategic importance—democracy has not yet taken root. And the questions arise: Are the peoples of the Middle East somehow beyond the reach of liberty? Are millions of men and women and children condemned by history or culture to live in despotism? Are they alone never to know freedom, and never even to have a choice in the matter? I, for one, do not believe it. I believe every person has the ability and the right to be free.

Third and final is the notion of America as the bearer of the moral project of bringing freedom and democracy to the rest of the world. “We will encourage freedom’s advance, we will nurture its progress, and we will help the nations that choose it to navigate the pitfalls that follow. This is the challenge of a new century; it is the calling of our time and America will do its duty,” Bush exclaimed in a speech to the International Republican Institute (IRI) on May 18, 2005.<sup>6</sup> A heavily messianic language intended to convey a highly ethical (if not providential) purpose to American foreign policy usually accompanied the mandate to spread



freedom. Bush's stump speeches and press conferences during the 2004 presidential campaign carried the subtle but distinct message that the American mission in Iraq essentially entailed doing God's work. At an April 13, 2004 press conference Bush observed: "Freedom is the Almighty's gift to every man and woman in this world. And as the greatest power on the face of the earth we have an obligation to help the spread of freedom" (Sanger 2004).

Only time will tell the validity of Bush's argument. But for now we can delve into the annals of American history to see how these same arguments fared in another time and in a different place. If Bush's rationalizations for intervening in Iraq sound familiar, it is because they have been made before and with the same intention: to justify bringing democracy to a region of the world where political instability and revolutionary fervor posed a direct threat to American interests. The intellectual father of democratic imperialism is President Woodrow Wilson, whose administration eight decades ago became famous for its commitment to "making the world safe for democracy." Between 1914-1921, Wilson made the spread of democracy the linchpin of his foreign policy towards Latin America, where he launched multiple interventions intended to eradicate chaos, revolution and terror by promoting free elections and constitutional government. They included sending American troops to topple dictatorships and introduce democratic practices to Mexico in 1914; Cuba, 1917-1922, the Dominican Republic in 1914 and 1916; Haiti in 1915; Honduras in 1919; Guatemala in 1920; and Costa Rica and Panama in 1921 (Williams 1980).

The Bush's administration embrace of Wilsonianism explains characterizations of Bush as the "most Wilsonian president since Wilson himself" (Kaplan 2003: 21), and the invocation of Wilson as "the patron saint of the Iraq war" (Steel 2003: 2). Curiously, in rushing to adopt Wilson's ideas about democratic promotion Bush does not appear to have given any serious consideration to how poorly they fared in Wilson's own time. Although Wilson remained a life-long optimist about the prospects for worldwide democratization, his Latin American "crusade" taught him important lessons about the pitfalls of promoting democracy abroad when backed by military force. Ironically, Wilson's democratic promotion policies left in their wake anything but peace and democracy. In the short term, they incited a wave of nationalism and revolution; in the long term, they ushered in an unprecedented era of authoritarianism and repression.

## 2. REVISITING WILSON'S LATIN AMERICAN CRUSADE

Wilson's democratic crusade in Latin America was the principal manifestation of a "New Diplomacy" intended to replace the prevailing Republican "Dollar Diplomacy" with a moral and high-minded foreign policy.<sup>7</sup> American foreign policy in Latin America, Wilson contended, should not be driven by material interest but rather should be subordinated to superior ethical standards and the exaltation of a moral and spiritual purpose. As he proclaimed in a landmark 1913 speech in Mobile, Alabama, on "Latin American Policy" intended as a direct slap to the foreign policy of his predecessors: "It is a very perilous thing to determine the foreign policy of a nation in the terms of material interest. It is not only unfair to those with whom you are dealing, but it is degrading as regards to your own actions" (Link 1978: 450).

A moral foreign policy toward Latin America, in Wilson's view, meant supporting self-governance as it emerged out of English and American political development, with political leaders freely elected by the people and individual rights inscribed in a constitution and protected by independent courts. The main threat to the emergence of self-governance in Latin America, Wilson reasoned, was revolution, which he regarded "a horrid enemy of democracy" and a waste of the resources of a nation (Bemis 1957: 116). Not surprisingly, nowhere was Wilson's moralistic fervor displayed more prominently than in his 1914 intervention in Mexico, a country that for his entire administration was in a revolutionary maelstrom. His attempt to uproot the dictatorship of General Victoriano Huerta and replace it with a democratically elected government was intended to serve as an antidote to revolution and an example to the world of America's commitment to spreading constitutional democracy abroad. "Rarely has the United States gone to such lengths to bring down a dictator in Latin America," notes Paul Drake (1995:15) in his analysis of Wilson's attempt to uproot autocratic rule in Mexico.

Upon entering office in 1913 Wilson refused to recognize the Huerta government, thereby abandoning the previous practice of American administrations of recognizing foreign governments regardless of how they acquired power or held on to it. Announcing that he would never recognize "a government of butchers," Wilson demanded democratic elections in Mexico in which Huerta was not a candidate. In Wilson's eyes, Huerta had disqualified himself as the legitimate leader of Mexico by having overthrown in 1913 Mexico's first democratically elected government in a violent military coup that took the life of the Mexican

president (the Berkeley-trained businessman Francisco Madero) and that of many civilians. Wilson was equally outraged by the role that American officials played in the demise of Mexico's first democratic government. The United States ambassador in Mexico, Henry Lane Wilson (no relation to President Wilson), convinced that the Madero government was incapable of protecting American interests in Mexico, offered no support to Madero and actually conspired with General Huerta in carrying out Madero's murder.

When Huerta refused to accept Washington's demands, Wilson lifted an arms embargo on Mexico so that weapons could reach Huerta's opponents, secured British cooperation by offering economic incentives, and occupied the port city of Veracruz in February 1914.<sup>8</sup> Such coercive actions helped Wilson succeed in driving Huerta into exile in Spain, but during his time in office he failed to force Mexico to abide by democratic, constitutional rule. Instead, he witnessed the country descend deeper into civil war and revolution that caused the destruction of hundreds of dollars' worth of American property and the death of hundreds of American citizens. In 1917, on the eve of the war with Germany, Wilson recognized the government of General Venustiano Carranza, a regime that "was not much moral than Huerta's" (Bemis 1957: 124).

It was across Central America and the Caribbean, however, that Wilson's attempt to spread democracy across Latin America would generate its most spectacular, unintended consequences. Ironically, it was in these countries that Wilson succeeded in implementing his full democratization agenda. As noted Peter Smith (1996: 53), Wilson's interventions in the Caribbean and Central America played out in a very predictable routine: "military forces would arrive amid considerable fanfare, depose rulers, often with minimal force, install a hand-picked provisional government; supervise national elections; and then depart, mission accomplished." Not a single democratic government created by Wilson, however, survived the departure of the Americans. More tragically yet, a new generation of brutal dictators consolidated their power in this region in the wake of the American military intervention: Fulgencio Batista in Cuba, Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, and Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua.

Wilson's Latin American policy was roundly criticized. At home, his administration was stung by charges of imperialism from church groups, the labor movement and socialist organizations (Bell 1972: 77). Even business leaders, who in the past had encouraged American intervention in Latin America opposed the invasion of Veracruz, arguing that this

was not “the best method of protecting American interests in Mexico,” which by 1913 totaled more than one billion dollars invested in railroads, mining, oil and land (Bell 1974: 53). “For these practical men, the task facing the U.S. government in a sphere that was already part of its international responsibility was to support the military dictatorship (Huerta’s) in its effort to restore law and order” (Meyer 1992: 101). The response from abroad was no less harsh. The historian John Eisenhower (1993: 130) writes of Wilson’s Mexican intervention that: “On the international scene the United States stood now alone, castigated on all sides for occupying the major seaport of a sovereign nation... The episode appeared from all sides to be Yankee imperialism in its baldest form and futile at that.”

Criticism was harshest from Wilson’s political opponents. Members of Congress, such as Frank Mondell of Wyoming, denounced the occupation of Veracruz as “the misuse of patriotism to hide an inept foreign policy” (Bell 1972: 77). Henry Cabot Lodge (the influential Chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee) is reported to have noted: “this administration is incompetent to a terrifying degree. To sacrifice American lives and money for the purpose of putting one Mexican rather than another one in Mexico City seems to me as wrong as anything can be” (Bell 1972: 77). Perhaps the most damning criticism came from the Republican president that succeeded Wilson. While traveling throughout South America in 1928 in the hope of mending relations with the region’s leaders, President Hoover promised to promote democracy abroad by example rather than by force. In remarks that must have come as a great relief to Latin American audiences, Hoover remarked: “True democracy is not and cannot be imperialistic” (Smith 1996: 64).

What went wrong for Wilson in Latin America? Complexity was certainly an issue. Demanding a uniform political standard across the region posed multiple difficulties since many Latin American nations operated with significant ambiguity, mixing authoritarian and democratic practices. This made it very difficult for Wilson’s Department of State to determine what was and was not a democratic government. Ambition was another problem. The policy of non-recognition was meant to apply to Latin America as a whole, but Wilson was unprepared to defend it across the region. It was imposed uniformly across Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, but it ran afoul in South America, where Wilson was less willing to either deny diplomatic recognition to authoritarian governments, much less to intervene military whenever one would emerge on the scene. For example, in Peru in 1913 and again in 1919, Wilson denied recognition to a provisional government because it had been established

by force. But it later reversed course and granted recognition anyway doubting he could dislodge a powerful dictator and fearful that the country would fall prey to revolutionary forces. However, it was the idealistic and unrealistic expectations that guided Wilson's interventions in Latin America that in the end proved most troublesome to his attempt to bring democracy to the region.

### 3. INCITING NATIONALISM AND SPREADING CHAOS

Spreading democracy abroad under Wilson was the linchpin of a grand strategy of liberal internationalism that saw the world evolving toward a community of civilized states whose relations were governed by strong multilateral structures. Wilson was, after all, a great believer in democracy as the source of trust, cooperation, and peace in international relations. Such a belief was rooted in classic arguments about the inherent peaceful nature of democracies, especially Immanuel Kant's compelling theorizing about the aversion that democracies appear to have toward war (Layne 1994). His 1795 essay "To Perpetual Peace," which Wilson probably read as an undergraduate at Princeton or as a graduate student at Johns Hopkins, argues that a world dominated by republics is more likely to be a peaceful one than one dominated by monarchies because war is a very difficult proposition for republican governments. Kant contended that the constraints on executive authority placed by the legislature and a vigilant public weary of the costs and sacrifices of war prevented adventurous rulers from committing their nations to war.

Wilson appears to be channeling Kant when announced on March 13, 1913, in his formal comments on his Latin America policy that: "We hold, as I am sure all thoughtful leaders of republican government everywhere hold, that just government rests always upon the consent of the governed, and that there can be no freedom without order based upon law and upon the public conscience and approval...We shall lend our influence of every kind to make these principles in fact and practice" (Link 1979: 172). In making this pledge, and in anticipating that the spread of democracy would serve the cause of advancing peace among nations, Wilson presumed that a military attack against another state was legitimate as long as the purpose was to spread democracy since the end more than justified the means. This logic was applied to his intervention in Mexico. As explained by Sidney Bell, for Wilson, his

intervention in Mexico “was not really an intervention because the intentions of the United States were for the best and the consequences would be beneficial to Mexico” (Bell 1972: 71).

Wilson’s thinking linking of the spread of democracy and the advancement of peace was problematic on many fronts. Only societies in possession of fully developed constitutional structures and democratic norms and values can be expected to subscribe to the notion that democracies are averse to war. This explains why the central claim of the neo-Kantian “democratic peace theory” (that democracies do not attack each other) has proved to especially weak when applied to societies undergoing democratization (see Doyle 1996; Layne 1994). As concluded by an influential study on “democratization and war” by Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder (1995: 96), during the phase of democratization countries become “more aggressive and war-prone, not less, and they fight wars with democratic states.” More important, however, was Wilson’s failure to anticipate the negative consequences of militarizing the effort to spread democracy abroad. In particular, he failed to recognize that any occupation, however well intentioned, entails a palpable violation of national sovereignty likely to invite resistance and incite a wave of indigenous nationalism.

Wilson was completely caught off guard by the rise of nationalist sentiments occasioned by the American invasion of Veracruz. Believing that his mission was a noble one, he had expected “Mexican gratitude and short of that at least no more than a rude reception (MacLachlan and Beezley 1999: 240). Indeed, Wilson had predicted that the Mexicans would come to appreciate “the legitimate work” of the Marines as he announced to the graduation class at U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis on June 5, 1914 (Link 1979: 147). But this was hardly the case. As a “flash fire of nationalism” raced across Mexico, citizens of all walks of life rushed to defend their nation (Clements 1992: 99). Thousands of Mexicans volunteered to fight the invading Americans and American consulates and flags were burned. Clashes occurred along the U.S.-Mexican border and anti-American riots broke out in Mexico City and spread to Costa Rica, Guatemala, Chile, Ecuador and Uruguay and American imperialism was denounced in the Latin American press. By the time the chaos and the fighting were over, 19 Americans had been killed and 71 wounded. The losses for Mexico amounted to 200 deaths and over 300 injured. The human toll it took to take control of Veracruz was undoubtedly disturbing for Wilson, who believed that his policies were the very antithesis of violence and revolution. “I cannot get it off my head... I cannot forget that it was I who had to order these young men to their deaths,” he is reported to have said about the bloodshed at Veracruz

(Eisenhower 1993: 122). Faced by an unexpected hostile reception, Wilson ordered the American commander at Veracruz that under no circumstances he was to expand the area held by American forces thereby abandoning plans to expand military operations beyond Veracruz and assume full control of Mexico (Clements 1992: 99).

The lessons of militarizing democratic promotion did not go unheeded for Wilson. In 1916, in remarks that scholars have interpreted as an acknowledgement of the failure of his Mexican policy, he remarked: “America cannot reap the harvest of her influence unless the soils of the world are kindly and genial and yield to her influence, and they will yield not to hatred, not to enemy, but to sympathy and cooperation” (Bell 1972: 77). Multiple developments flowing from the ill-fated invasion of Veracruz underscored this lesson. The American intervention in Mexico would complicate and even retard political development in Mexico, not to speak of poisoning U.S.-Latin American relations for decades to come. In the short term, it inhibited the advent of democracy in Mexico. Contrary to Wilson’s expectations, domestic political forces in Mexico rallied around the Huerta government, including the “Constitutionalists,” the one domestic force that Wilson had hoped would welcome his pro-democracy stance, and denounced the Wilson administration for its interventionist policies. They were put off not only by the military intervention, and perhaps more so by Washington’s tenacious actions to promote democratic change in Mexico. Their leader, General Venustiano Carranza, bowed that: “he could never be party to proceedings which placed the election of a President of Mexico in the hands of the Washington government” (Eisenhower 1993: 133).

Following the departure of the Marines from Veracruz in November 1914, Mexico grew not only authoritarian and intensively nationalistic but also rabidly anti-American. Some of the forces fighting for control of Mexico during the revolutionary period turned hostile and violent towards the U.S. eventually requiring another American intervention. In March 1916, Wilson dispatched an American battalion that eventually grew to 10,000 soldiers to enter Mexico and capture the revolutionary rebel Francisco “Pancho” Villa, who had staged an attack on a New Mexico town that had resulted in the killing of eighteen Americans. Wilson also mobilized 150,000 national guardsmen in anticipation of a full invasion of Mexico, the largest concentration of American forces since the Civil War. This show of force failed to capture Villa turning him into a national hero for many Mexicans. After a particularly violent clash in June 1916 resulting in multiple American losses and hostages, Wilson began to recall American forces from Mexico admitting to Congress that he might have made “an error in

judgment” (Clements 1992: 101). This proved to be his last military incursion into Mexico.

With the Mexican revolution coming to a close, the political class led by Carranza and the “Constitutionalists” began to turn to matters of national re-construction, such as drawing up a new constitution in 1917. This document was notable for at least two things. The first was its progressive features on matters of labor rights and separation of church and state, an acknowledgement of the role that popular sectors groups played in the revolution. The other was its strong anti-Americanism, a direct legacy of the American military campaigns in Mexico. Article 27 granted the Mexican government national ownership of subsoil rights, which directly threatened American business interests in Mexico. This opened the way for the full nationalization of all hydrocarbons by the government of Lázaro Cárdenas in 1938, a development that effectively closed the door on American investment in the Mexican oil industry in the ensuing decades.

Another unintended consequence of Wilson’s policy of spreading democracy was undercutting the capacity of his administration to engender peace, order and cooperation throughout Latin America and indeed the world. At the Niagara Fall, Ontario “mediation” conference of May-June 1914 convened to resolve the crisis in Mexico, Wilson was rigid and uncompromising by insisting on the elimination of the entire Huerta regime, a stand that shocked the major South American ambassadors and that led to the conference’s failure. Soon thereafter, Wilson saw his plans for a Pan American Treaty to organize cooperation across the Americas opposed and eventually derailed precisely because democracies like Argentina and Chile feared U.S. meddling into their domestic affairs and military aggression. Chile believed the United States “aimed at domination in Latin America” and “feared that the Treaty’s requirement for a republican form of government would tend to erect United States tutelage over Latin America” (Clements 1992: 96). Argentina rejected the Treaty because of fears aroused from American intervention in Mexico’s affairs. In the end, the Treaty died “a victim of the belief that although Wilson had renounced overt imperialism, his interventionism, the growth of American economic influence, and his insistence on political conformity all added up to a sort of informal imperialism that was just as objectionable as the cruder colonialism of an earlier day” (Clements 1992: 96).

Wilson’s intervention in Mexico also dealt a serious setback to his plans for gaining Latin American support for American policy in Europe. Most of the major Latin American powers (Argentina, Chile and Mexico, among them) adopted a policy of “strict neutrality”



during World War I and some, Argentina and especially Mexico, “were actively anti-United States, if not pro-German” (David and Finan 1997: 178). The Carranza government in Mexico went as far as entertaining the infamous “Zimmerman Proposal,” a German offer to assist the Mexican government in regaining the territory lost to the U.S. during the U.S.-Mexican war in exchange for a Mexican attack on the United States. This behavior during World War I, according to historians of Latin American diplomatic history, “demonstrated little in the way of a community of hemispheric interests” (David and Finan 1997: 178). The Latin Americans also proved reluctant and unreliable partners of the League of Nations, Wilson’s ill-fated attempt to create a multilateral organization to manage international relations after World War I. Even though the League provided for Latin American participation in an influential multilateral forum, hostility towards the United States kept many Latin American nations from capitalizing on this opportunity. Mexico, for one, did not participate in the League during its first decade of work.

#### 4. THE LIMITS OF “ELECTORALISM” AND CONSTITUTIONALISM

Like Bush’s faith in the capacity of the Arab world to live under democracy, Wilson’s view of the potential of Latin America to embrace democracy cut against the prevailing conventional wisdom. In Wilson’s time, democratic governance was regarded as the exclusive province of Anglo-Saxon peoples and thus considered improbable for the nations of Latin America. The region’s Catholic faith, colonial experience, warm climate, mixed racial heritage and presumed hot temperament and lustful sexual mores were thought to make its peoples incapable of comporting themselves under the rules of democracy (see, especially Pike, 1999). Such sentiments were especially strong around the time of Wilson’s ill-fated attempt to imposed democracy on Mexico. That year a *New York Times* editorial noted that a great part of the Latin American public were “fundamentally unlike the people of this country or the people of England, France and or Germany.” They “were hopelessly ignorant” while those of high intelligence, often of pure Spanish blood and free from that racial admixture which has been so prolific, “remain aloof from politics” (Bell 1972: 56-57).

A man of its era, Wilson certainly did not view all peoples as capable of self-government. But his reasoning for believing this was not based on the notion that certain

people because of their race or creed were inherently incapable of self-government. Rather, he reasoned that they were incapable of self-government because they lacked the proper political instruction. As he argued about the role of the United States in its empire (the Philippines in particular), the American purpose was to teach the Filipinos obedience and self-discipline because only then would they be capable of self-governance. “Only a long apprenticeship of obedience can secure them the precious possession, a thing no more to be bought than given,” Wilson noted about the prospect for self-governance in the Philippines in his 1909 text *Constitutional Government* (Bell 1972: 24-25). He applied the same reasoning to his mission in Mexico. “They say the Mexicans are not fitted for self-government; and to this I reply that, when properly directed, there is no people not fitted for self government,” Wilson asserted in an interview with the *Saturday Evening Post* as he undertook to bring an orderly and righteous government to Mexico (Smith 1996: 70).

In Mexico and across Central America and the Caribbean, however, Wilson was shaken to discover that while democracy may well have universal appeal this did not mean that it would find a receptive political, social and political environment at the precise moment determined by the United States. A central problem was the absolute dearth of political institutions (state bureaucracies, courts, and parties) upon which to anchor a democratic government. Ever the political optimist, Wilson believed that the process of political development could be accelerated or abbreviated through proper political mentorship and assistance leading to the eventual staging of free elections and the enacting of a democratic constitution. These things were “tangible signs of democracy at work” and justified both the military intervention as well as the decision to lift the occupation (Smith 1996: 54). Accordingly, in his struggle with the Huerta dictatorship, Wilson believed “that the problem was essentially a political one and that if Huerta could be held to his promise to conduct free elections, all would be well” (Clements 1992: 97). But Wilson eventually came to realize that democratization entailed more than just elections and constitutions. Neither one possesses the capacity to transform the social and political conditions that can effectively stand in the way of democracy’s development such as such as poverty and economic inequality. This realization, as seen shortly, eventually led Wilson to set aside his insistence that Mexico live by law and order and instead embrace many of the economic and social goals of the Mexican revolution.

Latin America in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century posed a very challenging

environment for democracy, and Mexico was not an exception to this rule. Prior to Wilson's attempt to democratize the country had little if any experience with steady government, democratic and otherwise. The war of independence against Spain (concluded in 1820-21) left Mexico in greater disorder and chaos than most other large Latin American countries since the fighting in Mexico had been more widespread and protracted (Skidmore and Smith 2001: 217). The two main pillars of political power after independence were the military and the Catholic Church; hardly friends of democracy, as neither was willing to relinquish power or have its authority curtailed. The Catholic Church controlled perhaps as much as one half of the nation's land and skillfully used this asset to create a powerful alliance with the national economic elite. The military dominated Mexican politics like few other Latin American countries in the post-independence era. From 1821-1860, Mexico had at least fifty separate presidencies, each lasting for an average of less than one year; and thirty-five of them were led by army officers (Skidmore and Smith 2001: 220-21). The most notorious was Antonio López de Santa Anna, who held the presidency on nine separate occasions and installed figureheads at other times.

Even less inauspicious for democracy was the social and economic climate. The American attempt to impose democracy in Mexico played out against the backdrop provided by the unraveling of the 35-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, whose modernizing policies had enriched the upper classes and done relatively little for the poor, and the advent of a full-blown civil war. Its denouement was not democracy but rather the first great revolution of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It pitted hordes of hungry, illiterate and landless peasants led by rebels like Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata against the central government in Mexico City. Small wonder that in the end Wilson came to accept authoritarianism in Mexico led by revolutionists "because he had become convinced that agrarian and other socioeconomic reforms were more pressing than electoralism" (Drake 1992: 16). A year after pulling American forces from Veracruz he observed: "The first and most essential step in settling the affairs of Mexico is not to call general elections. It seems to me that a government essentially revolutionary in character should take action to institute reforms by decree before the full forms of the constitution are resumed" (Skidmore and Smith 2001: 55-56).

After his ill-fated invasion of Mexico in 1914, Wilson halted all attempts to stop revolution in Mexico and began to grapple with defining a "legitimate" or "good" revolution (Bell 78-79). Many of his remarks on Mexico in the wake of the Veracruz intervention suggest

that he had become a “champion” of that country’s revolution and that this stance made him “decidedly more radical abroad than he was at home” (Smith 1996: 61).<sup>9</sup> In 1914 Wilson declared that: “my passion is for the submerged 85 percent of the people of that Republic who are struggling toward liberty” (Smith 1996: 61). In more extended comments on Mexico delivered in April 1917 Wilson showed not only his obvious sympathies for the Mexican Revolution (which earlier in his administration he had described as “banditry”), but also an understanding that political order was essentially meaningless unless accompanied by significant social and economic reform:

It is a curious thing that every demand for the establishment of order in Mexico takes into consideration not order for the benefit of the people of Mexico, the great mass of the population, but order for the benefit of the old regime, for the aristocrats, for the vested interests, for the men who are responsible for this very condition of disorder. No one asks for order because order will help the masses of the people to get a portion of their rights and their land; but all demand it so that the great owners of property, the overlords, the hidalgos, the men who have exploited that rich country for their own selfish purposes, shall be able to continue their processes undisturbed by the protests of the people from whom their wealth and power have been obtained. They want order—the old order; but I say to you that the old order is dead! (Shaw 1924: 372).

Wilson did more than praise the Mexican Revolution, which he argued “represented a great liberating movement in human history, akin to the French Revolution” (Bemis 1957: 124). He grew to admire his nemesis Villa, whom he likened to Robin Hood, and other revolutionary leaders, such as Zapata, as seen by his endorsement of their plans for land reform, which consisted primarily of taking land from the rich and giving it to the poor. “The revolutionaries, Wilson said, “had become more than mere rebels”...they had a program which went to the “root causes which have made constitutional government impossible” (Bemis 1957: 75). More surprisingly still, Wilson sided with the Mexico’s revolutionary government in its struggle with American companies to retain control over the country’s oil reserves. He refused to intervene in Mexico when the Carranza government moved to nationalize the oil industry and business leaders and Republican members of Congress began to make the claim that the Carranza government was “tainted by bolshevism” (Clements 1992: 103). “If we could not get the oil in a peaceful manner,” Wilson instructed a State Department officer, “we would simply have to do without it” (Clements 1992: 102).

## 5. THE PARADOXES OF LIBERALIZATION

Wilson's view that the United States is especially burdened with the task of democratizing the world flowed from his conviction that Americans were uniquely endowed to promote democracy. Such beliefs placed Wilson squarely within the tradition, dating back to the American revolution, that held America's "Manifest Destiny" to be the creation of "an exemplary state separate from the corrupt and fallen world and to push the world along by means of regenerative intervention (Patterson, Clifford and Hagan 2000: 9). In a famous address at Philadelphia's Independence Hall on July 4, 1914 in observation of Independence Day, just months after invading Veracruz, Wilson summed up his vision of America as the fittest nation for spreading freedom. "To what other nation in the world can all eyes look for instant sympathy that thrills the whole body politic when men anywhere are fighting for their rights? America has lifted the high light which will shine unto all generations and guide the feet of mankind to the goal of justice and liberty and peace" (Link 1979: 254-255). Expanding on his plans for bringing democracy to the world, Wilson proclaimed to the U.S. Congress: "We are friends of constitutional government in America; we are more than its friends, we are its champions. I am going to teach the South American republics to elect good men!" (Smith 1996: 53).

Under Wilson, fulfilling America's mission of democratizing the world would unleash a series of unintended and paradoxical consequences. The 1914 intervention in Mexico was hardly helped by Wilson's patronizing and instructional language. In keeping with his conviction that Mexico could be reformed with the proper political instruction, Wilson and his Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan, a devout Christian who neither smoked nor drank and refused to serve alcohol at public functions, took to referring to the Latin American republics as "political children." In their view, "the Mexicans looked to the United States for guidance and for a model. It was the duty of the United States, therefore, to look after them" (Bell 1972: 59). Mexican politicians found this rhetoric deeply offensive, especially those who actually agreed with Wilson that the Huerta dictatorship was illegitimate and had to go and were hoping that the United States could assist in restoring democratic government.

More damaging to the Wilson administration's effort to spread democracy were the actions undertaken with the purpose of consolidating democracy. They had the outcome of robbing democracy of its indigenous legitimacy, arguably the primary reason for why the

governments that the United States established in the Caribbean and Central America fell so quickly upon the departure of the Americans. Elections under the sponsorship of the United States were hardly an exercise in democracy. The United States wrote electoral laws and often went as far as encouraging or discouraging particular candidates or parties, seeking those most likely to govern effectively and to serve U.S. interests. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, forced and manipulated elections would often lead to internal disputes. Complicating matters was that many of the institutions that the Americans relied upon to guarantee the survival of democracy had no respect for democracy. The task of making sure that democracy would endure was given to the military, ushering in a long and tragic history of military intervention in politics. More revealing yet, the governments that arose from the American occupation were designed to meet the short-term interest of the American government of guaranteeing security rather than the more complex task of developing indigenous democratic institutions.

The case of the Dominican Republic, where Wilson made his most ambitious and sustained effort to develop a constitutional democracy in Latin America, is especially instructive. Under Wilson, the United States intervened in the Dominican Republic in 1914 and again in 1916 and remained in control of the country's affairs until 1924, well past the end of his second administration. The purpose of the first intervention, as articulated by Wilson, was to prevent the rise of "revolutionary movements" and to ensure that all subsequent changes in government were "affected by peaceful processes" (Clements 1992: 105). The "Wilson Plan," put into effect in 1914, resulted in the election of Juan Isidro Jiménez to the presidency of the country. This prompted the State Department to declare that: "the election having been held and a Government by the people having been established, no more revolutions would be permitted" (Clements 1992: 106). To this end, the State Department pressed the Dominicans into accepting American supervision over their internal finances as well as over the customs service; a petition that angered the Dominicans and led to the destabilization of the very government put in place by the Americans. Outraged by the American petition, and threatened by impeachment by the Dominican Congress if he accepted it, President Jiménez resigned in 1916 throwing the country into political disarray and triggering a second American occupation of the Dominican Republic shortly thereafter.

In contrast to the 1914 intervention, the 1916 intervention led to a full-fledged occupation designed to re-build the Dominican administrative, political and economic apparatus from top to bottom. The United States military oversaw the organization of the

judiciary, the treasury and the ministry of agriculture and the creation of a provisional government in 1922, together with the modernization of the economy by introducing new farming techniques, building roads and port facilities and improving sanitary conditions (Munro 1934: 132). However, the one institution the United States devoted most of its energies to was a newly created “National Constabulary” (*Guardia Nacional*). This national army was meant to “depoliticize the armed forces, serving to bolster stable, constitutional government” (Hartlyn 1992: 59). Prior to the arrival of the Americans, the Dominican Republic was controlled by regional *caudillos* (local chiefs or warlords), who commanded their own militias.

A more immediate and urgent purpose of the constabulary, however, was defeating the insurgency comprised of peasants and sugar workers that effectively prevented full American control of the country and that accelerated the Americans’ departure from the Dominican Republic. The fight against the insurgents created “frustrations which caused some marines to brutalize Dominicans, both guerilla opponents and ordinary citizens,” and that generated “immense resentment against the marines, popular support and recruits for the guerillas and unfavorable publicity for the military government throughout Latin America and the United States” (Calder 1984: xiv). The insurgency also affected the building of the constabulary since those who were willing to join it were perceived as collaborators with the occupier. Indeed, most Dominicans who joined this new security force did so mainly because it offered one of the few relatively high paid jobs around (Healy 1988: 225). Yet despite these problems and the poor training offered by the American forces, the new constabulary succeeded in providing the Dominican Republic with some resemblance of stability by weakening the power of the private armies controlled by the *caudillos*. After the departure of the Americans, however, this accomplishment would come to haunt America’s plans for a democratic future for the Dominican Republic.

The strategy of concentrating state-building efforts on developing a powerful military dramatically backfired as it proved to be the vehicle for the military’s rise to power. Before the last American marine left the country in 1924 the Americans conducted national elections resulting in the election of Horacio Vásquez as president. Support among Dominicans for Vásquez was shaky at best and his government (despite being democratically elected) was hardly any more legitimate in the eyes of the Dominican people than the interim government that it had replaced. This was due, to no small measure, to the reemergence of old political patterns soon after the departure of the Americans. “Personalistic leaders and issues obscured

by personalistic feuds again dominated politics and corruption reappeared;” moreover, there remained a willingness to abuse the constitutional system, as Vásquez showed in 1928 when he artificially extended his term in office by two years (Calder 1984: 239). Lacking a domestic base of political support, the Vásquez government also remained largely dependent upon the American government, which exacerbated the sense among the public that he was puppet of the United States.

In 1930, the Vásquez government was overthrown by a military coup staged by Rafael L. Trujillo, who had been trained by the American marines and had himself fought the insurgency born with the occupation. As head of the military, Trujillo had been entrusted to keep the American-created constitutional order, but upon gaining control of the country, he abolished the liberal reforms and institutions created by the Americans, harshly repressed the democratic opposition, and terrorized its neighbors, including the infamous 1937 genocidal massacre of some 12,000 Haitians along the Haitian-Dominican border. “Wilson’s dreams of a constitutional order had become a nightmare,” concludes Tony Smith (1994: 73) of Wilson’s Dominican policy.

## 6. SAME IDEAS, SAME RESULTS?

It does not follow that what happened in Latin America under the Wilson administration will reproduce itself in the Middle East today. But it is interesting to point out the similarities in outcomes between Wilson’s democratic excursions in Latin America and Bush’s own in Iraq. For starters, there is little to suggest that the American introduction of democracy into Iraq has contributed to peace and order. Americans were not greeted as “liberators,” as Vice President Dick Cheney famously predicted on American television on the eve of the invasion, but rather as unwelcomed intruders. An initial wave of nationalism and resistance eventually gave way to a robust insurgency that became, in the words of one analyst, “a jobs program for jihadists worldwide” (Sanger 2004). Within three years after the invasion, the insurgency had resulted in a carnage that had claimed the lives of almost 4,000 Americans and between 100,000 and 150,000 Iraqi civilians, and a refugee population thought to exceed one million Iraqis (Encarnación 2006: 91). This, in turn, has hardly helped to make Iraq into a positive model for the Arab world, as the Bush administration had clearly hoped.



Among Iraq's neighbors, the U.S.-led democratization of Iraq has been "more alarming than inspiring" (Weisman 2005). They view Iraq as a chaotic and violent land where thousands of innocent people have been killed due to the actions of the Americans. They also regard the United States not as purveyors of freedom and democracy, but as the latest in a string of foreign powers attempting to subjugate the region. This negative perception has been hardened by the human rights abuses at Abu Ghraib prison and the protection accorded to Iraqi oil fields during the invasion while the country's cultural assets were left vulnerable to looters. Such actions account for the sentiment prevalent among many Iraqis that the invasion had more to do with controlling Iraq's oil than with introducing democracy.

Bush's faith in the capacity of Iraq to govern itself under democracy will only be revealed once the Americans depart and relinquish all control over the country.<sup>10</sup> But recent developments are not encouraging. The attempt to bring democracy to Iraq already shows how naïve is the expectation that "electoralism" and "constitutionalism" can overcome, much less cure, terrorism, sectarian violence, and religious intolerance. Rather ironically, Iraq pointedly shows how elections and constitutions can be manipulated to subvert democratic values. The winners of the first democratic elections appear to be using the political process to advance a narrow, ethnic-based political agenda rather than to consolidate democratic governance. Notwithstanding their formal support for democracy, the ruling Shiite parties oppose many liberal reforms (such as granting rights to women) and regard America as a purveyor of values that stand in contrast to the cherished traditional, non-democratic order. More revealing yet, these parties have not given up wishing for the joining of religious and secular authority typical of other Middle Eastern societies, most notably Iran. Moqtada al-Sadr, the renegade cleric who led two bloody revolts against the Americans in 2004 and whose party controls the largest block of seats in Iraq's newly formed parliament has remarked that: "I think it will be hard to make a completely Islamic state in the near future, but hopefully in the distant future" (Maass 2006: 37).

Finally, in Iraq, as in Latin America, the discharge of American's duty to bring freedom and democracy to foreign lands has had a host of paradoxical consequences. As under Wilson in Mexico, the attempt to bring freedom to the Middle East was hampered even before the Americans arrived in Iraq, a consequence of the unfortunate rhetoric that preceded the military occupation. Early references by Bush to his Middle East policy as a "crusade" revived images of chivalrous knights in shining armor driving the infidels out of the Holy Land that sent the

unintended message that Bush was declaring war on Islam in the name of Christianity (Associated Press, 2001).

Another consequence of the American liberation has been to compromise the legitimacy of the local government. The Iraqi Governing Council, dismantled in June 2003, was criticized for its lack of autonomy, for consisting primarily of Iraqi exiles, and for failing to incorporate the whole spectrum of Iraqi political factions. Not surprisingly, the claim that the council was a “puppet of the CIA” was quite common among ordinary Iraqis (Chandrasekaran 2003). The same fate has befallen the “sovereign” government inaugurated on June 28, 2004, headed by its American-approved head, Iyad Alawi, the former president of the Governing Council. Many Iraqis also see the government that emerged from the elections of January 30, 2005 as a cover for the Americans, especially the millions of Sunnis that boycotted the elections on grounds that they were being held under American occupation. A Sunni Iraqi quoted by the *New York Times* summarizes the Sunni view toward the country’s post-war governments as follows: “Both of those governments have been rubbish.” How can you call them government when they are imposed from abroad? Those governments and their ministers are just puppets” (Burns and Wong 2005).

More ominous is the role the United States is currently playing in the reconstruction of Iraqi security forces. As in the case of the Dominican Republic, the focus of America’s state-building endeavors in Iraq centers on the development of a central security apparatus: the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps. By the time of the Americans’ departure, something resembling a national army will likely be the most important legacy of the American occupation of Iraq. The hope is that this new force will grow strong enough to root out the insurgency and protect democracy after the departure of the Americans. As put by an Iraqi politician, the new Iraqi army will serve as “the guarantor that nobody like Mr. Hussein could ever rise again” (Burns 2006). But, as seen already, the history of putting the military in charge of protecting civilian governments is not especially encouraging. In concentrating military power in Iraq the U.S. may well succeed in stabilizing the country but at the price of sacrificing democracy.

## 7. FAULTY IDEAS AND AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC PROMOTION

With democracy precariously hanging in the balance in Iraq, it is not surprising that during its twilight days the Bush administration concluded that it is unreasonable to expect “a Jeffersonian democracy” to emerge from the ruins of Saddam Hussein’s brutal dictatorship (Wright and Knickmeyer 2005). Nor is it surprising that there is already a vigorous debate in American political circles over what went wrong in Iraq. One explanation appears to trump all others: the American propensity for “half-hearted” and “low-risk interventions.” “Our core problem in Iraq remains Donald Rumsfeld’s disastrous decision—endorsed by President Bush—to invade Iraq on the cheap,” observes *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman (2005). Jessica Matthews (2003: 51), President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, notes that: “Iraq proves again that the United States chronically underestimates the difficulties of nonmilitary aspects of foreign interventions and wildly inflates nonmilitary goals without committing the resources required to achieve them.”

Largely missing from the debate about Iraq, however, is a discussion of the philosophical premises that underpinned this mission. As seen in this analysis, ideas have mattered a great deal to the American presence in Iraq. Indeed, the argument can be made that for all the mistakes for which the Americans are responsible for in Iraq—and there are many, from the shortage of manpower during the occupation of the country, to the power vacuum created by the dismantling of the Republican army, to the arrogance shown by the Americans in their dealings with ordinary Iraqis—this mission was compromised from its very start by the faulty nature of the intellectual premises that animated it. In particular, Bush’s wholesale borrowing of Wilsonian precepts of democratic imperialism to justify a muscular policy of democratic promotion have clearly proven to be as problematic in Iraq as they were when first applied to Latin America decades before.

In the aftermath of the American intervention in Iraq, it is imperative to acknowledge that democratic imperialism is seriously flawed, if not misguided altogether. It is clear that while the spread of democracy can have salutatory effects for the world at large this cannot be taken as a license by American presidents for forcing countries into adopting democracy. Democracy by force, as the Wilson and Bush discovered, can invite many unwelcome and paradoxical results. As for the universal appeal of democracy, this may well be the case. After all, many countries once seemingly condemned to authoritarian rule due to their culture or

geography (think Germany, Japan or Spain) are today shining democratic examples. But it is wrong to assume that any country can comfortably slip into democracy at the point determined by the United States with the introduction of democratic practices such as free elections. In the end, democracy depends for its sustainability, to say nothing of its success, on things the United States cannot control such as capable leadership, strong political institutions, and a vibrant civil society.

Finally, America's impulses to free the world of tyranny, so firmly ingrained in its national DNA, and so amply demonstrated by Wilson across Latin America and Bush in Iraq, are most effective when kept under check. Over the course of history, American democratic promotion has been most effective when it has targeted the conditions that aid in the rise of democracy rather than democracy itself (see Smith 1994). Among the most effective of these strategies are John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, which channeled economic aid to poor Latin American nations during the early 1960s, Jimmy Carter's bold confrontation with right-wing military dictatorships in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay over their human rights transgressions during the peak of the Cold War, and Ronald Reagan's support for dissidents in Central and Eastern Europe in their struggles against Communist rule. When it comes spreading democracy abroad, it appears that the United States is most effective when playing a supporting rather than a leading role.

REFERENCES

- Associated Press. "Bush's Use of Word 'Crusade' a Red Flag". 18 September, 2001.
- Basham, P. "Can Iraq be Democratic?". The Cato Institute. 5 January, 2004.  
<<http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa505.pdf>> . July 2009.
- Bell, S. *Righteous Conquest: Woodrow Wilson and Evolution of the New Diplomacy*. Port Washington, NY: National University Publications, 1972.
- Bemis, S. F. "Woodrow Wilson and Latin America," E. Buehring. Ed. *Wilson's Foreign Policy in Perspective*. Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1957.
- Burns, J. F. "In Hussein's Shadow, New Iraqi Army Strives to be Both New and Iraqi". *The New York Times* (7 January 2004).
- Burns, J. F. and E. Wong. "Some Iraqis Optimistic about Sovereignty". *The New York Times* (29 June 2005).
- Calder, B. J. *The Impact of Intervention: The Dominican Republic during the U.S. Occupation of 1916-1924*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1984.
- Chandrasekaran, R. "U.N. Chief Backs New Iraqi Council". *The Washington Post* (21 July 2003).
- Clements, K. *The Presidency of Woodrow Wilson*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1992.
- David, H. E., J. J. Finan and F. Taylor. *Latin American Diplomatic History*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 1997.
- Doyle, M. "Kant, Liberal Legacies and Foreign Affairs". S. Lynn-Jones, M. Brown, and S. Miller. Eds. *Debating the Democratic Peace*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1996.
- Drake, P. "From Good Men to Good Neighbors". A. Lowenthal. Ed. *Exporting Democracy: The United States and Latin America*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Eisenhower, J. *Intervention! The United States and the Mexican Revolution*. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993.

- Encarnación, O. G. "The Follies of Democratic Imperialism". *World Policy Journal* (Spring 2005): 47-60.
- Encarnación, O. G. "Coming to Terms with Iraq". *Ethics & International Affairs* 19: 3. (2005): 91-97.
- Friedman, T. L. "Let's Talk about Iraq". *The New York Times* (15 June 2005).
- Grier, P. "Expectations for Iraq Downshifting". *Christian Science Monitor* (17 August 2005).
- Hartlyn, J. "The Dominican Republic: The Legacy of Intermittent Engagement".  
A. Lowenthal. Ed. *Exporting Democracy: The United States and Latin America*.  
Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Healy, D. *Drive to Hegemony: The United States in the Caribbean, 1898-1917*. Madison, WI:  
University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.
- Inglehart, R. and P. Norris. "The True Clash of Civilization". *Foreign Policy* (March-April 2003): 63-70.
- Kaplan, L. "Regime Change". *The New Republic* (3 March 2003): 21-23.
- Layne, C. "Kant or Cant: The Myth of the Democratic Peace". *International Security* 19: 2.  
(Fall 1994): 5-49.
- Lewis, B. "Islam and Liberal Democracy: A Historical Overview". *Journal of Democracy* 7  
(April 1996): 65-75.
- Link, A. *Woodrow Wilson: The New Freedom*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,  
1956.
- Maass, P. "Back-Room Theocrat". *The New York Times Magazine* (May 11, 2003): 48-58.
- Mansfield E. and Snyder J. "Democratization and War". *Foreign Affairs* 74 (May/June 1995):  
79-97.
- MacLachlan C. and Beezley W. *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico*.  
Upper River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999.
- Matthews, J. T. "Now for the Hard Part". *Foreign Policy* (July/August 2003): 51.

- Meyer, L. "Mexico: The Exception and the Rule". A. Lowenthal. Ed., *Exporting Democracy: The United States and Latin America*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Munro, D. G. *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1901-1920*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964.
- Notter, H. *The Origins of the Foreign Policy of Woodrow Wilson*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1937.
- Patterson, T, G. J. Clifford and K. J. Hagan. *American Foreign Relations: A History to 1920*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2000.
- Pike, F. "Wild People in Wild Lands: Early American Views of Latin America". M. LaRosa and F. O. Mora. Ed., *Neighborly Adversaries: U.S.-Latin American Relations*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.
- Pipes, D. *In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power*. New York: Basic Books, 1983.
- Sanger, D. E. "Failure as an Option: Looking at the Costs if Iraq Goes up in Smoke". *The New York Times* (27 June 2004).
- Sanger, D. E. "Making a Case for a Mission". *The New York Times* (14 April 2004).
- Shaw, A. (Ed.). *The Messages and Papers of Woodrow Wilson*. George H. Doran, 1924.
- Skidmore T. and P. Smith. *Modern Latin America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Smith, T. *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Steel, R. "The Missionary." *The New York Review of Books* 50: 18 (November 20, 2003).
- Smith, P. H. *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S.-Latin American Relations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Tierney, J. "The Hawks Loudly Express Their Second Thoughts". *The New York Times* (16 May 2004).
- Weisman, S. R. "The Great Middle East Shake-Up". *The New York Times* (30 January 2005).

- Williams, W. A. *Empire as a Way of Life*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1980.
- Wilson, W. "The Road Away from Revolution". *The Atlantic Monthly* (August 1923).
- Wilson, W. "Commencement Speech at the U.S. Naval Academy". *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Vol. 30. A. Link. Ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979.
- Wilson, W. "Speech at Independence Hall, July 4, 1914". Arthur Link. Ed. *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Vol. 30. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979.
- Wright, R. and E. Knickmeyer. "U.S. Lowers Sights On What Can Be Achieved in Iraq". *The Washington Post* (14 August 2005).

NOTES:

<sup>1</sup>During the 2000 presidential campaign, candidate Bush criticized the Clinton administration for its military intervention in Haiti in 1994 to restore democracy as well as for its humanitarian missions in Kosovo and Somalia. "I would be very guarded in my approach. I do not think we can be all things to all people in the world. I think we got to be very careful when we commit our troops," was Bush's answer to a question about American military intervention abroad during the October 2000 presidential debate.

<sup>2</sup>*The National Security Strategy* (September 2002), available at <<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/index.html>>, accessed 9 July 2009.

<sup>3</sup>"George Bush's speech to the American Enterprise Institute" (27 February 2003), available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/feb/27/usa.iraq2>, accessed on 9 June, 2009.

<sup>4</sup>"President Addresses United Nations General Assembly" (September 23, 2003); available at <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/09/20030923-4.html>, accessed on 9 July 2009.

<sup>5</sup>"President Discusses Freedom and Democracy in the Middle East" (6 November 2003); available at speech is available at <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html>, accessed on 9 June, 2009.

<sup>6</sup>"President Attends International Republican Institute Dinner" (May 18, 2005); available at <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2005/05/20050518-2.html>, accessed on 9 July 2009.

<sup>7</sup>A term coined by President William Howard Taft and his Secretary of State Philander C. Cox, dollar diplomacy stood for safeguarding American economic interests abroad. It provided the rationale for multiple American interventions in the Caribbean in the decades before Wilson's inauguration, usually to force foreign governments to pay debts owed to American corporations. For a detailed view of these interventions see Munro (1964).

<sup>8</sup>Although forcing Huerta out of office was the primary reason for the invasion of Veracruz, the official reason for the invasion was the brief arrest of American sailors at the port of Tampico and Washington's contention that the Mexicans had failed to offer an appropriate apology and had refused to salute the American flag.

<sup>9</sup>Wilson's affection for revolution appears to have been short-lived.. In 1923, Wilson (1923: 397) wrote about the Russian revolution: "The world has been made safe for democracy...But democracy has not yet made the world safe against irrational revolution. That supreme task, which is nothing less than the salvation of civilization, now faces democracy, insistent, imperative. There is no escaping it, unless everything we have built



up is presently to fall in ruin about us; and the United States, as the greatest of democracies, must undertake it.”  
<sup>10</sup>As of this writing, Iraq continues to be ruled by the edicts enacted by the United States during the occupation period, including shielding every American soldier, coalition employee and private contractor from Iraqi law.



Tribuna Norteamericana  
Instituto Franklin

---

1. Andrew Richards.  
The 2008 Presidential Election in Historical Perspective.  
(Julio 2009)
2. Omar G. Encarnación.  
Crusader America: Democratic Imperialism under Wilson and Bush.  
(Octubre 2009)





INSTITUTO UNIVERSITARIO DE INVESTIGACIÓN EN  
ESTUDIOS NORTEAMERICANOS "BENJAMIN FRANKLIN"

Universidad de Alcalá

<http://www.institutofranklin.net>