
Introduction

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This book is about *regime change*. According to the Oxford Dictionaries, regime change is the replacement of one administration or government by another, especially by means of military force.¹ In common use, *regime change* seeks to comprehend the nature of a radical transition from a particular government system or political order to a different one.

The term *regime change* is relational. It compares a regime's current state with a previous one, or it refers to the need for change. In the latter usage, the term may have a strong normative connotation because its focus is on the end state of an envisaged change process rather than on the transition itself. However, a regime change may not – and does not always – lead to more political participation, let alone better everyday life, for the people. Still, most academic and political writings lend a negative connotation to the term *regime*. According to Google Search, almost three times as many entries combine the term 'regime' with the notion of autocracy instead of democracy. Thus, while the terminology of *regime change* seems to imply that something 'negative' is, most likely, replaced by something 'better', the reality of change outcomes is often rather different.

Most often, the terminology of an externally sponsored regime change also has a negative connotation as it implies interference. However, external interventions that aim to support internal efforts to topple an existing dictatorship may also be justified as an act of providing emergency relief, as a kind of humanitarian intervention to protect an oppressed people. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance used this argument in 1998 to justify its bombing campaign against the Milošević regime in Yugoslavia in spring 1999.²

Regime changes seem to imply, above all, a radical handover of power at the elite level, resulting from an external (intervention, war) or internal (economic collapse, implosion, revolution) impact of force, or both. A closer look at the driving and contributing factors of change reveals that the effective change marks only the tipping point of various systemic transformations, which may have started much earlier and may last much longer than the transition of power, let alone the actual replacement of one regime by another.

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Moreover, and reflecting the editors' longstanding interest in conflict transformation, the book assesses the extent to which regime change processes have actually instituted changes on the ground in terms of everyday life. Some instances of regime change and transition resemble a 'head transplant' in which the political elite is changed, but much in society remains the same or experiences retrenchment (e.g. Egypt). In other cases, profound economic and cultural change is introduced, often accompanied by economic shocks (e.g. post-communist transitions), while other transitions have resulted in political and social transformations following negotiated peace agreements or profound constitutional change (e.g. South Africa). For this reason, it is not enough to provide an account of regime change in itself; we also need to think about what happens next, thus considering transitions as *processes* rather than *events*.

That leads us to the intriguing question of whether a *diverse* typology of regime changes may evolve from the interplay of *similar* factors or drivers during transition processes. Moreover, does the replacement of an autocratic system of rule by a democratic government possibly follow trajectories that are similar to the transition from a colonial regime to a liberated but still autocratic national system of rule? Can we learn from the analysis of change processes about the sustainability of regimes and of regime changes? Are some catalysts of change more relevant than other factors? What qualifies a regime change as completed, if the transfer of power privileges only another set of elites, while the changes at the elite level do not affect most people's everyday lives, let alone alter the existing political and social hierarchies? Are there measurable indicators for upcoming or concluded elements of a regime change? Not least, how do regime changes in a particular country or region relate to – and are dependent or have influence on – the systemic political, social and economic transformations that result from globalisation?

Our way of making sense of this complexity (multiple cases and variables) was to start from what prevailed before the transition. It goes without saying that history and social events do not begin in a year zero (Edkins 2006). Alongside sudden shocks to the system (such as a coup), there is the *longue durée* of history in which long-term economic, cultural and political factors shape how power is held and legitimised. Yet a book such as this must start from somewhere, and so our starting point is what prevailed before the transition. We identified five potential starting points for analysing transitions: civil war (e.g. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burundi, Nepal), revolution/regime implosion (e.g. Iran, East Germany, Tunisia), secession (e.g. Northern Cyprus, South Sudan, Kosovo), post-military/authoritarian rule (e.g. Ghana, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Myanmar) and foreign intervention (Afghanistan). The categories

are not clear-cut; some cases, such as Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina and East Germany, offer overlaps between different categories. We concede that, by identifying starting points, we may miss the importance of underlying structural transformations. However, identifying underlying structures and processes has helped us – and our authors – to put events and key moments into perspective (Visoka 2016).

Our book addresses issues of regime change through a theoretical reflection, a number of case-based in-depth studies and a comparative analysis. The central aim is to identify patterns, commonalities and disjunctures in contemporary transitions that occur after civil war, secessionist conflict, popular revolution or military rule. While we are aware of the national peculiarities that shape individual transitions, the book aims to draw out common themes or threads in the causes of – and influences on – regime change processes and their aftermath.

In doing so, it sheds light on the complexities of political, economic, cultural and social transitions that have followed the implosion of the past orders of colonialism and communism. It reflects on numerous but failed expectations about a linearity of transition from those ancient regimes to a new global order characterised by pluralistic democracy, market economy and liberal peace. Finally, it presents the diversity unfolding in many regimes worldwide in times of external and internal uncertainty, influenced, for instance, by volatile or partly dysfunctional international orders or by a severe lack of inclusivity in change processes.

WHY IS *REGIME CHANGE* OF ACADEMIC AND POLITICAL INTEREST?

The book takes, as its starting point, two factors of political and academic interest.

The first is the reality of regime changes. We have seen bursts of regime change, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia, the ‘colour revolutions’ (rose, blue, orange), and the Arab Uprisings, and apparently stand-alone changes in places like Myanmar and Iraq. Politically, better insight into the forensics of a regime change might help to increase the predictability of change trajectories and assist political actors to develop functional governance strategies during the transition. A better understanding of the drivers of change can also help to identify the root causes of conflict and instability and assist national and international actors to address them properly in order to prevent or curb violence. Another reference point is the coincidence of similar regime change processes in time-related or regional contexts. Samuel

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Huntington described this phenomenon as *waves* (and *reverse waves*) of *democratization* (Huntington 1991). According to his analysis, all major regime changes in the twentieth century affected more than one country at the same time, including late anti-communist revolutions. During the Cold War, the two bloc-leading superpowers either sponsored or influenced directly a number of competitive regime changes, to the benefit of their own values and strategic interests. The policy of creating puppet regimes started back in the 1970s and lasted until the end of the 1990s. Chile (1973) and Ethiopia (1974) are typical examples in this respect.

The most prominent case in the long list of enforced regime changes within this two-decade period is Afghanistan. In December 1979, Soviet troops entered Afghanistan in order to prevent a regime change by mujaheddin against communist rule under Mohammad Najibullah, who had seized power from the previous prime minister and self-proclaimed president Mohammad Daoud. The mujaheddin's campaign of resistance against the regime in Kabul, supported by the US in a coalition with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, succeeded in forcing the Soviet Army out of the country in 1988. After this event, while the Soviet empire crumbled, the US was increasingly on the offensive in effecting regime change in a number of countries within the (former) Soviet and communist hemisphere, from Kosovo in the Balkans (1999) to the various colour and flower revolutions in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005). Emerging post-communist regimes in Eastern Europe were also supported, as were subversive efforts to remove the remaining socialist regimes in Latin America, from Nicaragua to, more recently, Venezuela.

Not all of these efforts were – or are – successful. The US started the post-9/11 campaign in Afghanistan to effect a regime change against the very actors whom it had helped to seize power against the Soviets and their protégés in Kabul. Although the ruling Taliban were ousted from power, the intended regime change has turned out to be a disaster, with a government in place that is fully dependent on foreign protection, having very little control over the country other than in and around Kabul. Warlords and other autocratic leaders continue to exert the power that fell into their hands with the intervention's support and are willing to prop up the government only as long as they remain beneficiaries from its rule.

Another story of failure relates to the regime change efforts, sponsored by the US, in Iraq and Libya. The large-scale invasion of Iraq (2003) resulted in the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime; a similar situation, resulting in the fall of the dictator arose after a US and NATO-sponsored rebellion against Muammar al-Gaddafi in Libya in 2011. The regime change did not bring about democracy, let alone peace, but engulfed both countries in violence and anarchy.

In 2008, after a period of autocratic restoration under the rule of President Putin, Russia increased its efforts to pre-empt further regime changes in what the previous Russian Foreign Minister Andrej Kosyrev once called the *near abroad* (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Northern Caucasus, Transnistria). Moreover, the resurgent power has undertaken vigorous steps to reverse past changes for its own benefit and thus regain geopolitical influence (Crimea, Eastern Ukraine).

With Iran and North Korea, two other actors now seem to have entered the US list of candidates for regime change. Domestically, no reliable indicators exist that the populations of these two countries are ready to support any such attempt. However, without a legitimate alternative to an existing regime in place, any attempt to remove the governing power by force would most likely result in a situation similar to what is happening in countries like Syria and Libya. It may even lead to regional shocks and the destruction of the existing global order.

The second starting point of interest lies in the existing theories of revolution and social change, drawing on literature on state formation, democratisation, social movement theory, contentious politics and political violence. The book aims to bring these two factors together by asking the question: are existing explanations of regime change fit for purpose given the diversity of transition experiences? In order to answer the questions of how regimes change and what happens afterwards, the book will begin with an extended conceptual/theoretical chapter that sets out the parameters of change put forward by the main theories of regime change and transition. The case studies are authored by academics and practitioners, some of whom are based in the countries they are writing about, and all of whom have extensive in-country research experience. The book concludes with a comparative analysis, which aims to draw conclusions about factors that influence the onset and course of regime transition processes. It also attempts to evaluate the quality of change in everyday life after transitions.

In principle, our analysis has revealed what we had assumed. Each case of change does indeed have its own patterns. The precipitants of change in one case may not be applicable in another. However, we were able to draw conclusions about how a few distinct, often mutually reinforcing, factors may influence or trigger change processes; the most important are:

- De-legitimation of existing rule and spreading grievances;
- Ethno-political or religious mobilisation of minorities;
- Withdrawal of external protection or sponsorship for a ruling elite;

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- Spillover inspirational effects of developments in neighbouring countries (e.g. the Arab Revolts);
- Self-organisation of secessionist or liberation oppositions; and
- Breakdown of basic service delivery and security by state authorities.

Often, foreign powers that support the replacement of ruling elites in a target country seek to establish an order in that country that is beneficial primarily to themselves. Ironically, this patrimonial post-intervention approach often backfires. There are many examples where foreign sponsors or interveners have installed puppet regimes to establish conformist institutions, which – although being new regimes in comparison to the previous rule – were only transitional and not sustainable. The four decades of Soviet-style regimes in Eastern Europe after the defeat of Nazism were an example, as were the regimes installed in Afghanistan in 2002 and Iraq in 2003.

Not all interventions by foreign powers, however, have relied on the use of force. Leadership by example and responsibility can encourage transformative processes, which make initial regime change sustainable. The US's protective security umbrella over West Germany helped to anchor the latter firmly as a liberal and democratic state in both the transatlantic alliance and the European community.

The interplay of endogenous and exogenous factors is of particular academic interest. It may reveal the underlying constituents and drivers of change in states' regimes within a globalising context. None of these factors, however, stands alone. None seems to result automatically in a predetermined outcome. As the following case analyses and the comparative chapter reveal, the tipping points for change, often after long political and social transformations of long duration, are in many cases triggered by single events resulting either from windows of opportunity or from resolute action by an assertive actor.

Not much is known about the impact of regime change on everyday life and the influence of everyday life on regime change processes. On the one hand, most socioeconomic grievances and political (e.g. ethno-politically or religiously mobilised) cleavages continue to prevail even in the immediate aftermath of a regime change. If reforms stagnate or are not started at all, the support for the new system of rule may decline as the legitimacy of the new rulers vanishes. Unconsolidated regimes tend to remain unstable and vulnerable for longer periods. The 'pendulum outcomes' of post-communist elections and indications of a reincarnation of only quasi-democratic, autocratic forms of rule in countries like Hungary and Poland seem to imply that the process of consolidating

regime change may take years, if not decades. The post-communist trajectories of change reveal how structural factors – cultural, political, demographic and social – may impede or accelerate social transformation after regime change.

STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

This volume begins with a chapter on key theories and concepts in the study of post-conflict transition and regime change. This introduction defines the loose framework of key points that each author has taken into account in their chapter and allows findings from the individual chapters to be compared without neglecting the diversity and distinct nature of the cases under scrutiny. This was all the more important as some of the authors are not only academics but were also participating observers of change in their own countries. Since we did not want to dismiss the originality of this observation for our analysis, we left sufficient space for the authors to unpack their unique insights in order to reconcile academic reflection with the wealth of eyewitness experience.

The introductory chapter draws on the traditional literature on post-conflict transitions and regime change but is mindful that this literature is not comprehensive with regard to relevant issues and that it cannot be employed to explain all cases equally. The conceptual framework draws on classic literature on state formation, social movement theory, democratisation and post-conflict transitions, and also considers the peculiarities of regional trends in political transitions.

Each of the authors was tasked to provide a brief analysis of the regime change in the given country, paying particular attention to initial conditions, the drivers of change (structural and proximate factors), external influences and the role of violence before, during and after the transition process. The guiding instruction to all of them was to respond to the question about what explains the onset, development and outcome of regime change in their respective country. In addition, the editors asked a number of questions to help our contributing authors focus on those issues that we wanted to explore in our comparative analysis. These questions were as follows:

- Which (structural) factors and/or events explain the onset of the transition? How did the influence of these factors change as the transition progressed? How did different actors benefit? How were they constrained by structural factors?

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- How was the control over markets, votes, state resources and the media distributed at the national, subnational and (if relevant) local level before the transition? Who were the winners and losers and how did they react to their fate? Which role did subnational power brokers play during the transition?
- Which role did violence play in the transition?
- How did social movements influence the transition process?
- Which role did external actors play in promoting or preventing regime change?
- How did the process relate to regional/global transition trends?
- Which political, constitutional, economic, social and cultural changes resulted from the transition?
- To what extent did the transition result in lasting changes in everyday life? Who came to or stayed in power in the long/medium term and what were their positions before the transition?

The case studies are roughly arranged in four clusters of analysis:

- A description of the initial conditions, timeline of events, introduction of the main actors, identification of structural and proximate factors driving the transition process;
- An introduction to structural and proximate factors behind the transition, including the separation between the necessary preconditions and sufficient conditions, and explanation of the international/regional context detailing how these circumstances influenced the process;
- A summary of the main political, constitutional, economic, social and cultural changes that resulted from the regime change in the short, medium and long term; and
- Conclusions and lessons learned.

With each of the case study chapters informed by a similar conceptual approach, the empirical base for a comparative analysis came into being. With more than a dozen case studies based on the different starting points explained earlier, the volume covers a sufficient diversity of types of regime change processes in a variety of geographical regions, times and regional contexts.

That said, we do not claim to have found a coherent framework for a regime change theory. The last chapter in the book, however, does bring together all of the cases and highlights points of similarity and difference. The tables in that chapter – we suggest – show the value of the comparative method whereby viewing separate cases alongside each

other sparks the possibility of new avenues of analysis. Our findings will be of interest to students of conflict transformation, peacebuilding, security governance, conflict studies, political and social violence, and theories of state-building, democracy and international relations.

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NOTES

1. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/regime_change (accessed 23 October 2017).
2. After NATO's intervention in support of the Kosovo-Albanians, which paved the way to Kosovo's secession from Yugoslavia, an international commission developed guidelines on the responsibility to protect (ICISS [2001]. *The Responsibility to Protect*. Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. <http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/ICISS%20Report.pdf>. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre).

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