

Introduction to the Special Issue on Interim Governments

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Introduction

This special issue of *Strategic Insights* presents a variety of works that showcase developments in interim regimes and transitional governments as they have evolved over the past fifteen years. Transitional regimes—also called interim governments—bridge old and new orders of rule. Interim governance signifies a hinge of history, a central point upon which depends future national, at times even international, stability. These interim structures, so historically significant, are nonetheless fleeting and indeterminate. And despite the obvious domestic character and significance of governance transitions, the assembly and maintenance of interim structures is now commonly an international project. The papers presented in this special issue represent part of a larger project on interim regimes, which will eventually result in a series of edited volumes that interrogate various aspects of transitional governance as practiced today.

Over the course of two days in July 2005, the Naval Postgraduate School convened a workshop on interim governments. The governance requirements in the wake of US and allied operations in Afghanistan and Iraq were the immediate precipitating events that spurred conference organizers and NPS professors Karen Guttieri and Jessica Piombo to plan the workshop. The project, however, was motivated by a longstanding and deep interest in the trends of increasing international interventionism in the domestic affairs of countries around the globe. The proceedings aimed to initiate a dialog between the academic and policy world by bringing together academics and policy experts who have been involved with researching and working in the field of transitional governance and interim regimes. The goal was to examine the innovations in interim governance that had occurred since the end of the Cold War.

Particularly, the project aimed to trace the evolution of transitional governance in the past decade and to analyze the increased international involvement in transitional regimes, with particular attention to the longer term consequences of heavy external involvement on domestic legitimacy, stability, and governance. Participants at the workshop were asked to prepare case studies and theoretical works that examined a number of critical cases in international governance, and which probed various themes. This special issue presents some of the works presented at the conference, updated since the end of the workshop and oriented towards providing a more case-study than theoretical perspective.

The project takes on added significance in the United States as policy and military doctrine have recently elevated the status of these types of operations. On November 28, 2005, the Department of Defense passed a directive entitled "Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations" (no. 3000.05), which placed operations other than war on the same footing as combat operations. Called the "Stability Operations Directive," this document signals a major point in the evolution of the mission of the DoD and the role that the United States government has set for itself in international affairs and the rebuilding of war-torn countries.

In this context, assessing the impact of transitional governments on post-conflict democratization, stability and legitimacy becomes an increasingly important venture. This special issue presents a mix of theoretical and case study material, which will be subsequently modified for incorporation into an edited volume that will have an explicitly theoretical orientation, assessing the analytical innovations and theoretical linkages between the new style of interim governance and traditional paradigms of transition and democratization. Future works in this project will orient themselves at the practitioner level, bringing together organizations and individuals who work in the field of democratization, transition, stabilization, reconstruction, and economic development, enabling them to share experiences and develop a framework of best practices through shared knowledge.

The articles in this edition of *Strategic Insights* all assess the impacts of the interim governments in the selected countries—Cambodia, East Timor, El Salvador, Guatemala, Kosovo, and Liberia—presenting a variety of interim governments that range from the traditional, mostly domestically organized transitional regimes, to the full internationally-organized and managed transitional government. Each of the cases under investigation experienced a different degree of domestic and international control in their interim governments, ranging from the primarily domestically-managed transitional governments in Guatemala and El Salvador, to the completely internationally-run interim government in Kosovo. Through this mix of experiences, the cases provide a sample of a broad range of transitional governance arrangements that are currently in practice, enabling a comparison of their longer-term effects.

The conference report and the *Issues and Debates* paper by Guttieri and Piombo provide the overview and theoretical grounding for this project. The report presents the proceedings of the two-day workshop at which the full complement of project participants presented their initial papers. The report was written to capture the debates and spirit of the proceedings, and as such is not a final product assessing the outcomes or findings of the project. Rather, it is intended to provide the reader with the diversity of opinions and perspectives that were incorporated into the workshop, without forcing the consensus necessary for a final, edited project.

In the *Issues and Debates* paper, Guttieri and Piombo present the conceptual motivation and theoretical background to the papers in this special issue and the larger project. Guttieri and Piombo review the innovations in peacekeeping and democratization that have led to the current situation where the international community finds itself increasingly involved in the day to day process of reconstituting governments in war-torn societies. In the paper, they particularly stress how the practice of interim governance has developed from a primarily domestically-managed process to one that is often dominated by the international community, and sometimes even called "neotrusteeship." The heavy footprint of the international community has strong effects on the legitimacy of the resultant governments, which in turn affects both stability and democratization.

Guttieri and Piombo review how the United Nations and many of its constituents have taken on significant roles in state-building, the creation and sustenance of government institutions, in troubled states. They argue that while interim regimes are particularly significant in this era of global engagement, too little is known about the factors that make for success and failures in transition, in particular with respect to the commonly stated goals of peace and democracy. Therefore, the authors set out parameters for a project that aims to identify the rationale, form and effects of interim regimes. In this process, the authors review a number of issues and

debates that set the scope of the project, including developments in international conflict and international peacekeeping, changing norms of sovereignty, the role of elections, and how to assess outcomes of transitional regimes.

As they set the research agenda for the case studies, Guttieri and Piombo are particularly interested in the choices interim administrative structures, for example, whether these are comprised of domestic or international components, or whether they represent elite pacts or popular will. What are the legitimacy issues associated with these choices? What are the consequences for the extension of state control, the management of resources, the development of civil society, and the staying power of the new order?

Turning to the case studies, Bill Stanley's piece on Guatemala and El Salvador provides an example of classic interim government models in which military regimes came to power via coup d'etat, and then found themselves with a legitimacy crisis. In both of these cases, splits within the ruling junta caused repression and then the eventual decision to cede power to a civilian regime. In Guatemala, the military ceded some power with the understanding that this was the best way to maintain influence, while in El Salvador the military junta began to remove itself from power in order to prevent the perversion of the military's mission. The transitions in both Guatemala and El Salvador were therefore spurred by domestic processes and a crisis of legitimacy for military regimes that induced them to create temporary civilian governments to manage a transition back to democratic rule.

Even in these cases of primarily domestically initiated and managed transitional regimes, however, the involvement of the international community was important. In both cases, the international community provided guidance and management at crucial junctures in the transitional process. In El Salvador, for example, during a critical period of voter registration, the interim regime balked at registering voters who were critical of the military. The United Nations mission, ONUSAL, moved out of its observer functions and forced the electoral commission in El Salvador to register these citizens who had been prevented from registering to vote under previous administrations, thus preserving the integrity of the electoral process. The transitional government, biased by the continuity in the interim government populated by domestic power elites, would not have otherwise done this. In this manner, we can see that the international community can play a critical, though limited, role even in interim regimes that are domestic affairs.

In his paper on Liberia, Phil Morgan provides an analysis of an interim regime located midway between traditional models and the neotrusteeship models described in the concept paper. His article stresses the hard choices that creators of interim governments face: should they include combatants and therefore potentially create a government with questionable legitimacy on the ground, or should they exclude combatants and therefore leave potential spoilers out of the peace process. Morgan's case brings out the insight that internationally governed transitional governments (the Liberian Government of National Unity created in 2003) have difficulties gaining legitimacy on the ground, even if the UN and other international actors consider the government viable.

Aurel Croissant compares two Southeast Asian case studies of transitional rule, one that ended a civil war and another that nursed a newly independent people. Croissant makes the fundamental point that sustainable peace-building and transition from authoritarianism to fully institutionalized liberal democracy requires more than ending civil strife. Croissant's article extends the theoretical analysis provided in the Guttieri and Piombo paper, by providing an excellent synthesis of models of interim governance, focusing on models created by Yossi Shain and Juan Linz and Michael Doyle. Following this, Croissant discusses the inherent contradictions in externally imposed democratization and the problems of democratization particularly in post-conflict situations: these regimes violate sovereignty and legitimacy in order to return sovereignty and restore legitimacy.

Croissant also raises the tension, particularly in regards to the UN transitional authority in East Timor, between organizing an international regime to completely run a country, while at the same time attempting to prepare that country to resume sovereign governance. He argues that there is a delicate balance between creating an effective and impartial international regime, incorporating locals to increase ownership, and preparing citizens to resume control.

Finally, Croissant raises the issue of timing. Cambodia is a cautionary tale about pushing democratization on a war torn country too quickly, without any change in underlying power structures. Reconstruction takes at least a decade, and democracy can be created prematurely. In East Timor, the lack of a common understanding of capacity-building and the negligence of these issues in the early stages of the transitional authority retarded UNTAET's efforts at institution-building. Perhaps the most basic lesson to be learned from UN-led interim governments in Cambodia and East Timor is that having the support of the local population is critical, but this alone is not sufficient. Successful UN-led interim governments also require elite settlement and the support of the regional powers and international patrons of local clients. Based on Cambodia, Croissant argues: "Obviously it does not make sense to leave the fate of a young democracy in the hands of anti-democratic national elites; however, this was exactly what took place in Cambodia. Rather, the international community must have the will to take responsibility for social and economic reconstruction and to intervene even after the transition process, if there are any negative aberrations occurring afterwards."

The final piece in this special issue, Lenard Cohen's assessment of the regime in Kosovo, provides a case of the full neotrusteeship type of administration in the absence of agreement on status. Kosovo is a situation in which the international administration (UNMIK) assumed virtually all governance functions—security, economy, services—for over ten years, in response to a situation where there simply was no domestic organization capable of forming a government. UNMIK also demonstrates some of the drawbacks of the international administration model, being hampered by organizational rivalries and difficulties coordinating the large number of organizations operating under the UNMIK umbrella. Through an analysis of the origins of UNMIK, and its evolution over the past 10 years, Cohen raises many of the dilemmas facing the international community as it attempts to re-create viable governance in a land torn apart by war.

However, the ambiguity of the future status—whether Kosovo would achieve status as an independent state, remain part of Serbia, or something in between—added to the burden of transition. In this situation, no domestic power could possibly have run a transitional regime that would be accepted by all parties to the conflict, and yet the sheer volume of tasks that had to be undertaken by the international authorities involved in the subsequent government was nearly overwhelming. Kosovo's interim government has not yet concluded, and therefore Cohen's conclusions are by nature provisional, yet his paper provides critical insights into many of the issues and dilemmas facing the fully-internationalized variant of transitional governance.

Overall, the combination of papers in this special issue provide an overview of the various forms of interim governance, with particular emphasis on their effects on longer-term legitimacy, stability, and governance. The cases which experienced primarily domestic-led interim regimes help to clarify when the influences of the international community become critical, while the more internationally managed interim regimes display the unique mix of challenges and opportunities that these regimes face. Creating domestic legitimacy through external trusteeship proves to be a critical difficulty in these cases, and is a theme that surfaces in many of the cases that do not appear in this special issue. Iraq and Afghanistan immediately come to mind.

The collected works in this special issue submit that the new interventionism of the international community, especially its commitment to "nation building," raises fundamental issues of legitimation, restructuring, conflict resolution and how all this relates to building the micro-foundations of government. Through these works and the other aspects of the larger research project, we hope lay the groundwork for future, more thorough, assessments of what makes for

transitional governments that create stable and legitimate systems of governance in post-conflict and other transitional societies.

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