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**Book Review**

**Christopher Coyne.** *After War: The Political Economy of Exporting  
Democracy.* Stanford Press, 2007.

West Germany, Japan, Somalia, Haiti, Afghanistan and Iraq. What do these six countries have in common? Each of these countries has been the site of a U.S. led post-war military occupation and reconstruction. At various points in the past century, the United States has endeavored to export liberal democracy to nations abroad. While some of these reconstructions have succeeded – West Germany and Japan are clear success stories – others, like Somalia, have failed miserably. The outcomes of other endeavors, specifically Iraq and Afghanistan, are still undetermined. When looking at the various outcomes in these countries, an important question arises: What factors contribute to successful installation of liberal democracy; and conversely, what factors doom reconstruction to failure?

*After War: The Political Economy of Exporting Democracy*, is the latest attempt at understanding the spread of liberal democracy. Christopher Coyne, author of the book and professor of economics at the University of West Virginia, explains the dynamics behind post-war reconstruction using tools from economics and game theory.

*After War*, Coyne examines the “economics of reconstruction” (31). The book uses game theory tools to better understand the strategic interaction between the participants in the reconstruction process. The book looks at post-war reconstruction as a game involving several players – citizens of the occupied country, the occupier and its agents (military officials, politicians), and international parties like the United Nations. Each actor has his own agenda; each player pursues a set of goals to the best of their abilities and within the constraints that he faces. The simultaneous pursuit of different objectives by different actors creates a shaky interplay that influences the outcome of the reconstruction.

*After War* has a neat structure. The book comprises four parts. The introduction defines the reconstruction and lays out the main lessons of the book. Then, in chapters two through four, the book defines relevant tools from economics and game theory and identifies how these tools can contribute to our understanding of the reconstruction process. Chapters five through seven engage in a comparative study of sixty-years worth of reconstructions. In this section, the author looks at six cases, divided into three categories – successes, failures, and undetermined – and discuss the factors that influenced the varying outcomes using the logic he develops in previous

chapters. The book concludes in chapter eight by recommending new approaches to exporting democracy.

According to the book, citizens of an occupied country face two choices during reconstruction: a) to cooperate, by working with occupying forces and by bargaining with rival factions; or, (b) to defect, or to create conflict through obstructive behavior such as corruption, infighting, and breaking agreements. Each citizen's choice depends upon the potential rewards and costs, which, in turn, are influenced by the choices made by other citizens in the country.

Furthermore, *After War* underscores that the goal for occupiers is to make the reconstruction process a game of cooperation rather than defection. The author notes that when conflict is the dominant choice among the citizens of the occupied country, those who cooperate face huge costs. If people in the occupied country perceive the occupier as an invader rather than a liberator, then individuals who cooperate with the occupier will attract hostility from others. In addition, those who invest in liberal democratic institutions will receive no returns in the absence of credible adoption by a majority of the citizens of the occupied country. *After War* emphasizes that cooperation is only beneficial for the individual under a scenario of collective cooperation.

On the same note, the book asserts that a major factor for successful reconstruction is the "art of association" (51), a tendency for citizens of a country to interact and to create meaningful social networks. The author borrows this concept from nineteenth century political theorist Alexis de Tocqueville, who lauded Americans for their "capacity for interaction" that created a "robust civil society" in America (51). These "associations" exist at the midway point between the public and private sectors and provide individuals a forum in which they can address the relevant issues without government interference. According to the book, countries that have mastered this art are more likely to turn reconstruction into a game of cooperation. It is the author's view that these associations "create a shared identity that facilitates social interaction and allows individuals to cooperate to get things done." (52)

The book offers some relevant examples that help clarify this concept. The author asserts that, in the cases of Japan and West Germany, strong associations among the

citizens facilitated the reconstruction of democratic institutions following the Second World War. In Japan, a strong sense of national identity existed prior to the war, and revealed itself in the country's economic and social institutions. Coyne offers the example of the *zaibatsu*, large industrial conglomerates that dominated the Japanese economy in the nineteenth century. These conglomerates, which began as exclusive family operations, evolved over time into more public enterprises supported by external managers. Over time, the liberalization of Japanese *zaibatsu* produced a widespread culture of cooperation in Japanese society. According to Coyne, the development of these associations prior to the war, contributed greatly to the achievement of credible collective cooperation in the post-war reconstruction game.

Similarly, the book points out that West Germany benefited from a preexisting art of association that contributed to the success of reconstruction after the war. In the case of Germany, associations had grown out of the nineteenth century liberalization of the economies of the members of the German Confederation. Increased trade between the German economies strengthened the connections between members of German society and spurred the development of liberal political institutions that would serve as the foundation for new institutions installed during reconstruction.

The book contrasts these successful cases with reconstruction failures such as Somalia. Somalia did not benefit from a culture of cooperation that pervaded civil society in Japan and Germany. Coyne points out that because Somali society comprises many different clans with varying historical allegiances, the art of association is much weaker. Prior to independence, there was little economic or political cooperation between clans. Clans existed within their own political and economic institutional structure. The book argues that because of the entrenched separatism in Somalian society, democratic institutions formed after independence emphasized clan identity rather than national identity. The failure of Somalia's reconstruction is linked to a preexisting system of exclusion and a widespread lack of the art of association.

Additionally, *After War* emphasizes that expectations and credibility can play a critical role in the reconstruction process. In the reconstruction game, the actions taken by the various agents are dependent on the outcomes each expects. Coyne

presents his central point regarding expectations as such: “if the expectations of the citizens of the country being reconstructed are aligned...with the aims of the reconstruction, there will tend to be a greater degree of coordination and cooperation” (73). Along the same lines, the book argues that if expectations of the indigenous population does not match the outcome of the reconstruction, conflict persists. Coyne asserts that expectations should be low, but not so low as to dissuade credible commitment by agents involved in the reconstruction.

The book offers a good example of how low expectations can prohibit the establishment of liberal democratic institutions. *After War* points to the case of Haiti where the “repressive history of national institutions” marked by “coercion and predation” have fundamentally altered citizen perceptions, creating widespread doubt in government institutions (151). The mid-1990s U.S. occupation of Haiti was met by widespread defection by indigenous actors. Coyne attributes this to pervasive skepticism among Haiti’s lower class toward the reconstruction process. Due to historical patterns of repression, the Haitian elite lack credibility, and were seen as selfish players in the reconstruction process. The book claims that as a result, even though the occupation succeeded in keeping U.S.-backed leader Aristide in power, it did not succeed in strengthening liberal democratic institutions in Haiti. Worse, Aristide continued on to siphon international aid money and suppress the domestic population.

The spread of liberal democracy has received some attention in recent literature. *Democracy without Borders*, by Mark F. Plattner, discusses the relationship between liberalism and majority rule. The book argues that the ideals of liberal democracy – the individualism of liberal society and the collectivism of majority rule – are not inherently compatible, and this incoherence makes it difficult to build new democracies. The 2006 release, *The Spirit of Democracy*, by Larry Diamond, holds a more optimistic view of the global desire for democracy. The book argues that liberal democracy can spread under the right conditions, namely, in an environment that promotes good governance and shared economic prosperity.

A major message from the book is that the dynamics of reconstructions are changing. The successes of previous reconstruction are not good predictors for future endeavors. Cultural and historical forces that affect reconstruction have changed in the

past sixty years. The world has changed since the Cold War when two world superpowers created a geopolitical stalemate. Today, the author argues, failed and corrupt states present the major challenge to America.

*After War* concludes by offering two alternative means to social and political reform: principled non-intervention and unilateral free trade. The author asserts that these two alternatives offer “liberal means to liberal ends” (173). The book emphasizes that because free trade is voluntary, political change that stems from free trade will lack the bitter aftertaste typical of military occupation. Free trade also provides mutual economic and cultural gains. Countries exchange not only goods and services, but moreover, countries exchange ideas and institutions and incorporate the best aspects of each culture to produce greater efficiency in both societies. The book notes that although non-intervention and free trade are not the most direct route to liberal democracy, these strategies sidestep many of the geopolitical problems that can impede reconstruction.

The book’s great weakness is that its discussion overlooks relevant actors in the reconstruction game. *After War* takes a two-pronged approach which looks at agents of the occupying country and indigenous actors in the occupied county. Unfortunately, this approach does not sufficiently address the role of third party actors in the process. Third parties comprise international agents like the United Nations. International institutions play a key role in reconstruction because they influence the foreign relations between countries. Third parties also include regional powers, such as Iran in the case of the Iraq reconstruction. These third parties are relevant players in the reconstruction game. They often have a vested interest in the outcome. In the case of a regional third party, failed reconstruction can produce dreadful spillover effects that threaten a region’s stability.

*After War* is a sophisticated piece of writing. Although the book packs in a lot of theory, it is never inundating. It draws upon many schools of thought and requires the reader to integrate various concepts in order to fully digest the book’s message. The book benefits from its evolving structure. After three chapters emphasizing theoretical arguments, the historical narratives of the third section are a welcomed surprise. The author does a great job of reintroducing the central themes in each chapter; and because of this, the book’s message resonates throughout. By identifying the moti-

vations behind the actions of participants in post-war reconstruction, one can design policy that will build a cooperative environment and ensure liberal democracy will prosper.

*After War* is an essential read for students of economics and public policy who wish to gain a better understanding of the forces that affect the spread of liberal democracy. Even the casual reader will find some thought-provoking asides that will add to any coffee table discussion of America's role in the world. The book is a refreshing look at the spread of liberal democracy.

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