

# The Interplay of Foreign Policy and Democratic Erosion

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## Abstract

*This paper investigates the intricate relationship between foreign policy and the vitality of democratic systems. It argues that a nation's foreign policy choices can fortify or erode its democratic foundations.*

*The paper analyzes how misguided foreign policy decisions contribute to the decay of democratic norms and institutions. Employing a case study approach, it examines four critical instances of foreign policy missteps: the U.S. intervention in Iraq, Russia's actions in Ukraine, Saudi Arabia's involvement in Yemen, and China's assertive stance in the Indo-Pacific.*

*The paper reveals how such foreign policy choices have fueled democratic decline within these nations and destabilized international norms. The repercussions of these missteps extend beyond domestic turmoil and economic instability, potentially damaging a nation's global reputation and eroding public trust.*

*The findings emphasize the crucial need to ground foreign policy in democratic values. Respecting human rights and engaging with the international community are not merely idealistic pursuits but vital strategies for preserving democracy, promoting prosperity, and fostering global peace. By aligning foreign policy with democratic principles, nations can strengthen their democratic institutions and contribute to a more stable and cooperative world order.*

**Keywords:** *Democracy, Democratic Backsliding, Economic Decline, Foreign Policy, International Cooperation, Populism, Public Trust*

**JEL Classification:** *D72, F50, H77, K40, P16, Z13*

## Introduction

The relationship between a country's foreign policy and the health of its democratic systems has already become significant due to the rise of authoritarianism and the reversal of the democratic process (Diamond, 2015, pp. 141-155). This paper will explore why and how these two elements are related by showing how foreign policy choices affect the country's democratic

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underpinnings.

Foreign policy decisions, especially ones regarding international relations, are very much connected with the internal political life of a nation, and thus the stakes are very high. A well-executed and wise foreign policy can be a force for good. It can pave the way for the success of democracy by creating conditions that are conducive to economic growth and sustainability, thus promoting social integration and international cooperation too (Putnam, 2000). On the other hand, a foreign policy that is incorrect or poorly carried out would result in economic troubles, unrest in the society, and lack of stability in the political circle; hence would be a part of the decline of democratic norms and institutions (Walt, 2018).

The current democratic crisis, accompanied by the rise of populism, democratic backsliding, and the infringement of civil rights, has managed to merge foreign policy with the most vital issues of the day. More and more scholars and policymakers seem to be exploring the possibility that foreign policy issues are indeed consequences of but rather the driving forces for the crisis (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

This paper deals with the interconnectedness between foreign policy and the crisis of democracy, which goes beyond the discrepant view that foreign policy problems are only a result of the decline in democratic governance. Along with presenting various case studies, the paper will point out how government experimentation and mistakes (case studies) lead to the disappearance of political institutions and norms of a democratic society.

The paper references some gaps discovered in foreign policy literature and democracy and looks into these by referencing literature. First of all, prior research has recognized the connection between the two. Nevertheless, it usually dealt with general correlations instead of getting deeper into the mechanisms by which foreign policy failures can threaten democracy (Doyle, 2005, pp. 613-620). This paper plans to make a more detailed analysis of what happens by examining a range of case studies and drawing common patterns and causal factors.

This paper aims to find the areas of the academic world and policy-making through the importance of examining the potential domestic implications of foreign policies. By showing that foreign policy mishaps have fostered the decline of democracy, the paper hopes to advise politicians and lead them to pursue a careful and moral-based approach to foreign policy.

The primary purpose of this paper is to create awareness of the profound relationship between foreign policy and democracy. The study argues that highlighting the harmful effects of failed foreign policy on democratic systems is key to making policymakers aware of the necessity for informed and responsible policies that protect democratic values and systems.

## **Literature Review**

The debates between foreign policy and democracy are complicated. A well-crafted foreign policy can strengthen democracy; a poorly executed one can undermine it. In recent years, there has been increasing recognition that foreign and democratic governance crises reinforce each other. In the essay below, the author examines a link between unsuccessful foreign policy and democracy, drawing on international examples.

Many scholars have investigated the uneasy relationship between foreign policy and democracy. S.D. Muni (1993) and Lipset (1959) queried the argument that the social requisites of democracy are economic development and political legitimacy. In a recent paper (2023), Larry Diamond highlighted the correlation between growing income inequality, education mobility, and the erosion of political norms.

Various other writers have addressed these failures in foreign policy and their effects on democracy. Such works include Ganguly (2003), which analyzes the changing nature of American democracy after the Iraq War, and Haqqani (2005), where the author links Pakistan's foreign policy behavior to its democratic institutions. These studies add to our understanding of the intersection between democracy and foreign policy.

This literature review examines the issue of foreign policy and democracy. It is not comprehensive, as many theoretical and empirical perspectives go uncited, but the articles and books cited provide a sweeping overview of the topic. The review also articulates the range of scholarly writing on the subject by scholars based in South Asia, scholars in Asia, Indian scholars, and international scholars.

## Research Method

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to investigate the complex relationship between failed foreign policy and the crisis of democracy. This methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of the multifaceted dynamics within specific contexts. The research design involves a two-fold process:

### Case Studies:

This phase involves a detailed examination of four distinct cases:

**The U.S. invasion of Iraq:** This case analyzes how the decision to invade Iraq, based on flawed intelligence and questionable motives, contributed to domestic political polarization, eroded public trust in government, and damaged America's international standing.

**Russia's invasion of Ukraine:** This case examines how the invasion, a blatant violation of international law and Ukraine's sovereignty, has led to domestic repression, the suppression of dissent, and a further consolidation of authoritarian power in Russia.<sup>1</sup>

**Saudi Arabia's intervention in Yemen:** This case explores how the prolonged conflict in Yemen, fueled by Saudi Arabia's military intervention, has resulted in a humanitarian catastrophe, exacerbated regional instability, and further entrenched authoritarian tendencies within Saudi Arabia.

**China's aggressive grand strategy in the Indo-Pacific:** This case investigates how China's assertive pursuit of territorial claims and regional dominance has fueled nationalism, heightened internal security measures, and curtailed civil liberties within China.

Data for each case study will be drawn from a variety of sources, including:

**Scholarly articles:** Peer-reviewed research provides in-depth analysis and theoretical frameworks for understanding the relationship between foreign policy and democracy.

**Newspapers:** Reputable news sources offer contemporary accounts and diverse perspectives on the events under investigation.

### Comparative Analysis:

The second phase involves a comparative analysis of the selected case studies. This analysis aims to identify:

**Familiar patterns:** Recurring themes and trends across the cases that highlight the link between foreign policy failures and democratic decline.

Causal mechanisms are the specific processes and pathways through which foreign policy misadventures contribute to eroding democratic institutions and norms.

**Contextual factors:** Each case's unique historical, political, and social conditions influence the relationship between foreign policy and democracy.

This comparative analysis will enable the development of a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between foreign policy and democratic decline. Drawing on multiple data sources and employing a rigorous comparative framework, this study aims to produce reliable and valid findings, contributing to a deeper understanding of this critical issue in contemporary international relations.

By adhering to these methodological principles, this study aims to generate robust, insightful findings that contribute meaningfully to the academic discourse on foreign policy and democracy.

## Findings and Discussions

### Why the World Is Losing Democratic Freedom

Democracy, thought to be the inevitable endpoint of the evolution of political systems, is more wobbly worldwide than ever before. Freedom House, a leading nongovernmental agency that monitors the status of freedom worldwide, has charted a steadily declining number of countries labeled “free” over the past 20 years. This democratic recession (Diamond, 2023) can take many forms (from the very subtle erosion of democratic norms and institutions to the very overt bulldozing of the electoral process and the rule of law and suppression of

dissent). This crisis has deep and complex roots, sown by a tangled mix of factors:

**The Rise of Populism:** Populist movements spurred by economic anxieties, cultural grievances, and a distrust of the established elites are making deep inroads within many democracies. These movements frequently draw upon nationalist impulses, spread divisive rhetoric, and undermine democratic institutions, challenging the liberal democratic order.

**Erosion of Trust through Disinformation:** The fast propagation of disinformation and misinformation through social media and various digital platforms has sowed the seeds for polarization, distrust, and low public confidence in democratic mechanisms. When information is manipulated and falsehoods spread, informed decision-making can break down, eroding public trust in institutions and destabilizing the workings of democracy.

**The Erosion of Democratic Institutions:** One of the hallmarks of the current crisis is a turning of democratic institutions, the judiciary, the legislature, and the media, against us. These institutions are crucial checks and balances on executive power, defenders of individual rights, and accountability mechanisms for elected officials. The erosion of these principles weakens our democracy and facilitates the rise of authoritarianism.

### **Foreign Policy and Domestic Destruction**

All of these are how flawed foreign policies, ambitious goals, poorly thought-through implementation, and failure to play the long game also serve to deepen the crisis in democracy:

**Back to Economic Decline and Social Unrest:** Foreign policy is often acutely misguided and capable of upending nations, feeding a toppling domino chain of trade acts of war, tariffs, and chaos for the global supply chains that keep the world working. The economic pain, loss of livelihoods, acceleration of inflation, and declining living standards can create social unrest, distrust of the government in society, and establish space for populists. As Lipset (1959) argued, it is true that there is a close interaction between economic development and political legitimacy and that economic decline may dismantle the social foundations of a democratic regime.

**Damage to the Nation's Reputation and Credibility:** A nation's world-level standing and reputation are priceless assets. Pursuing reckless policies abroad can sully this reputation, making it more challenging to assemble coalitions and to cooperate meaningfully to shape events in the world. When influence weakens, a country's ability to advance its interests, promote its values, and help secure peace and security worldwide diminishes.

**Damage to public trust:** If members of the public come to believe that their government, in effect, is pursuing a dubious or failing side of foreign policy, they will likely be left questioning their government's competence and its judgment on various issues. For example, the erosion of trust in the system often leads to disengagement from participating in political mechanisms, lower voter turnout, and weakness in democratic institutions.

**Democracy's Blind Spot:** This story of a declining democracy is also replete with foreign policy blunders. The relationship between a nation's foreign policy and the health of its domestic democracy is a hand-in-glove one. However, would-be leaders would do well to realize that our behavior in the world has a way of quickly crossing over into the political culture at home, breaking confidence, making divisions deeper, and undercutting the norms of democratic governance.

The Iraq War is one of the excellent illustrations of the pernicious consequences of reckless foreign policy, based in particular on lousy intelligence and inflated justifications for the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq.

This was the beginning of the war in Iraq; a war waged on the pretext that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction that needed to be dismantled, adding to the unnecessary deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians, the instability of the whole region, sectarian violence and a void that the criminal and terrorist organizations like ISIS would use to full advantage. That barbaric and inadvertent act, born of a right-wing neocon doctrine and total disregard for international law, would have consequences that reached far beyond Iraq's borders.

Fight an unwinnable war, a kind of war that not only dashes anyone's hope for peace for that part of the world but whose repercussions have eroded America's standing in the world, giving more impetus to anti-Americanism all over the world, eroding the myth of America as the world's shining beacon of democracy and human rights. In the US, the war contributed to a deterioration of faith in the US government as the reasons that the Bush administration gave for the war quickly became discredited, and the human cost of the war grew. The Iraq War

is a cautionary tale about the danger of conducting foreign policy through the prism of hubris and a disregard for international mores. It also says the fallout from that clumsily drafted, malfunctioning pair weakens international credibility and rattles the ground under domestic democracy.

One more example, perhaps the most salient, is Russia when it attacked Ukraine in 2022. The unprovoked aggression that this regime has unleashed, a flagrant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, is also a humanitarian catastrophe, with thousands dead, millions as refugees, and widespread devastation. The war had shattered European security architecture, triggered a global energy crisis, and left Russia a pariah on the global stage.

The war in Ukraine has revealed the weakness of democracy and the predisposition of autocratic leaders to use massive force to accomplish their geopolitical goals. It has also shown how fragile the international system is and how one country's decision can reverberate worldwide, destabilizing regions, turning economies upside down, and undermining the rule of law.

These are high-profile cases, but many instances show the link between failed foreign policy and the decline of democracy. The Inter-communal Conflict in Yemen, triggered by both Regional rivalries and outside interventions, resulted in a catastrophic Humanitarian crisis, which also reinforced a more porous region. Support by the U.S. and other Western powers for the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen has exacerbated the conflict and led to mass civilian death, famine, and the collapse of essential services. This war has devastated Yemen, fueled regional instability, and undermined the credibility of the international community.

Now, as China continues to be more and more aggressive with its foreign policy (in terms of territorial/national territorial disputes, economic coercion, human rights abuses, etc.), there are questions within the general Indo-Pacific region about whether democracy will return or not. China's growing economic and military power, coupled with its more authoritarian domestic policies, has given it the confidence to adopt a more aggressive foreign policy that undermines democratic norms and threatens the status quo regional order. Look at the cross to its actions in the South China Sea, the crackdown of dissent in Hong Kong, and the treatment of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang, all of which set alarm bells to what the Chinese Communist Party is planning in the world and how has impact on global democracy.

Democracy in crisis is not a single-cause problem or a single-solution cure. However, foreign policies can contribute to this crisis when they fail and undermine public trust, exacerbate societal frictions, and erode democratic institutions. American foreign policy should be premised on democracy, human rights, and peaceful resolution of international disputes.

In our hyperconnected world, foreign policy choices made by nations have significant ramifications for their domestic democratic health. Thus, a foreign policy that is run through a filter of democratic principles, respect for international law, and a willingness to lead on human rights is essential to the interests of stability, growth, and divisions both in the United States and around the world.

### **Foreign Policy and the Fate of Democracy**

Democratic malaise is complicated, a process with neither a single cause nor cure. Many factors, including economic inequity, social polarization, technological disruptions, and a loss of faith in traditional institutions, influence it. However, it turns out that foreign-policy failings can be a significant component, and woefully misguided foreign policy can also play a significant role in this crisis, evidence worse. Misadventures in foreign policy—including military interventions or omega unilateralism—can affect democracy and its institutions overseas and at home.

Democracy is challenged partly because indifference leads to economic decline, a byproduct of failed foreign policies. Miserable military campaigns such as the American-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan can drain national treasuries, divert resources from critical public services, and create economic turmoil. The cost of war, in blood and treasure, can weaken a nation's economy, often resulting in widespread outrage and reactionary populism to blame the politicians. According to Lipset (1959), the relationship between economic development and legitimation and governance can also lose its legitimacy when the process of economic development is weakened.

Misguided foreign policies can potentially close doors for a country in many parts of the world and destroy its reputation and credibility. When a country acts in a manner that breaks international law or erodes respect for human rights, it damages its relationship with allies, strengthens its competitors, and weakens its soft power. The fall has cost some heft on the world stage, leaving it difficult for a country to protect its interests and policies around the globe. India's Cold War foreign policy alignment with a Third World vestibule was critical in enhancing India's international standing and democratic credentials (Muni, 1993).

Poorly conceived foreign policies can also undermine public faith in government and help breed cynicism about democracy. When faced with a foreign policy that is, in every respect, out of control and in every respect decadent, citizens begin to suspect that democratic institutions can no longer act in line with their interests and values. Such a trust breakdown helps explain declining voter turnout, citizen disengagement from politics, and susceptibility to demagoguery that demonizes imaginative external enemies and rubs away democratic norms. A dominant trend of recent years, as Diamond (2023) has noted, is democratic backsliding, which has been driven at least in part by citizen discontent with democratic regimes' performance.

Today, in a world of global interdependence and complex problems, the need for wise, effective foreign policy is more significant than ever. Defending diplomacy, multilateralism, and common ground against unilateralism and military adventurism is necessary. Governments must also be more sensitive to the domestic consequences of their foreign policy decisions and, where possible, cultivate a domestic constituency to support their foreign escapades through transparency, accountability, and consultation.

While pursuing foreign policies, every country will contribute to a more stable, prosperous, and democratic world when those policies are compatible with democratic values, human rights norms, and a commitment to collaboration among the world's nations. That means we want to do it in a way that is not zero-sum, and we want to recognize that we have the same interests, we also ultimately have the same humanity. It also requires a commitment to international law and multilateral institutions to resolve disputes and address global challenges. The crisis of democracy is a deep and complex process, but failed foreign policies can help do the trick. Pursual of foreign policy longings gone wayward can be the very ground where populism thrives, staining any nation with its reputation, unraveling the faith the citizens repose in their governments, setting the path for authoritarianism swimming closer into view since the sails of democratic institutions are made to catch the winds of social uproar and economic ruination.

### **The Global Reckoning**

Democracy, once regarded as the final act of political development, is now also in an epochal and complicated global crisis. Freedom House is a nonpartisan organization that monitors freedom and democracy around the globe, and it has noted a concerning trend: For the last 17 years, the number of nations it designates as "free" has dropped annually. As Diamond (2023) rightly states, this is a chilling retreat from democracy, a substantial erosion of fundamental rights and political freedoms over large swathes of the world.

It is not one thing nor a frozen tableau but a fabric of many threads, as the temporary rise of populist rhetoric and authoritarian movements, the depletion of confidence in institutions, and the corrosive force of economic inequality. Among the most important contributing factors is populism, a political doctrine that mobilizes "ordinary people" against an allegedly corrupt and unresponsive elite class.

The economic anxieties, social fractures, and cultural grievances that populist leaders harness, which provide them avenues to a broad mass of popular support, are then utilized to consolidate power through means of nationalist rhetoric and authoritarian means of politics (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017).

Another major factor is the proliferation of disinformation, fueled by the explosion of social media and other platforms in the digital public sphere. Disinformation (false or misleading information deliberately disseminated for personal or political gain) can skew public opinion, erode trust in institutions, and create polarization in society, leading to the conditions necessary for democratic backsliding (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019). A crisis aggravated by an erosion of democratic institutions (the judiciary, the media, civil society organizations). These institutions also provide vital checks and balances to the executive, safeguard fundamental rights, and provide

channels for people to participate. The founding tenets of democratic governance are at risk from authoritarian actors' weakening or co-optation of these mechanisms (Levitsky&Ziblatt, 2018).

The democratic crisis has no limit to the region or political system. That is what the term refers to: it emerges through shaking the democratic forest violently, as in the case of autocratic orders, and shaking the forest gently, that is, through the slow decay of norms and values, as in functioning democracies. Take, for example, the methodical struggle against judicial independence and restriction of media freedoms and dissent by the populist leaders in Hungary and Poland to torpedo the checks and balances that any democracy requires (Krastev, 2019). Even in countries that have long been democracies, such as the United States and India, warning lights illuminate. The health of these democracies is under abuse due to hyper-partisanship, misinformation, and the decline of public trust in institutions (Muni, 2019). The crisis of democracy is a challenge worldwide, with severe consequences for human rights, peace, and security. Engineering solutions to this crisis would require swelling within democratic institutions, media literacy, and confronting disinformation and cultures of human and legal respect on the part of governments, civil society organizations, and international institutions.

### **Foreign Policy Failure and Democratic Weakness**

This is a pressing issue in the 21st century: the trade-off between foreign policy and democracy. Excellent and wise foreign and international diplomacy can bolster a country's democratic institutions by promoting peace, prosperity, and social cooperation. However, destructive or counterproductive foreign and international diplomacy can do fantastic damage to the soul of democracy. This essay considers how these failed foreign policies have aggravated the ongoing democratic crisis with a broad sweep and selection of regions and associated scholarship.

### **Economic Decline**

Economic ruin is one of unsuccessful foreign policy's most immediate and devastating outcomes. A foreign policy gone astray can move the economy toward trade wars that jolt markets, triggering economic sanctions and outages that weaken a nation's economy. Such disruptions can lead to the loss of jobs, inflated prices for essential goods and services, and the erosion of citizens' overall quality of life.

Ultimately, failed foreign policy and abuse will breed hatred and disrespect in the masses, which will manifest as social unrest and political boisterousness (Pakistan has given us a breath of fresh knowledge). The role of economic grievance in sparking protests, riots, and revolutions is long attested by history. When ordinary citizens perceive that their government's foreign policy decisions have cost them economically, the military or economic costs of an imperialist attack increase exponentially, eroding government legitimacy and faith in the democratic system. That diminishing trust is the fertile ground for populism to attach. However, at the exact moment, it is the soil in which the seeds of authoritarian leaders and the withering of democratic institutions will grow.

There is a well-established relationship between economic decline and democratic backsliding—the gradual erosion of the democratic institutions and norms that characterize successful democracies (Diamond, 2023). These relationships are not merely correlative but causal: the economy is the driver of either propping up or decimating the foundation of democratic societies (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006).

So, economic development can be considered indispensable to the basic social and economic foundation for developing democratic discourse and the institutions of democracy, as democracy cannot become proper without any help from economic development. Lipset (1959) - Economic modernization leads to higher levels of education, urbanization, and an expanded middle class, all of which generate (and require) public demand for a representative and accountable political system. This is the beginning of a self-sustaining cycle of democracy that creates better informed, more engaged, and more united citizens, cementing civil society, social cohesion, and ultimately democratic governance.

Economic development produces a better-informed, engaged citizen with the knowledge and means to participate meaningfully in the political system (Lipset, 1959). Citizens who engage in such practices are much more civic-oriented, affecting how they govern and oversee their elected representatives. Moreover, economic development results in a healthy civil society: organizations and groups that are a bulwark against state power and promote

transparency and accountability (Putnam, 1993, p. 1). They are organizations that create room for various voices and interests so that power does not stay concentrated among some elites. In addition, economic modernization opens upward mobile opportunities. It reduces social cleavages and inequalities, alleviating the reasons for conflict and social polarization that could destabilize democracies (Przeworski et al., 2000). This approach helps build an integrated society where people from various backgrounds have a stake in the system and are less inclined to violent or counterproductive forms of activism to promote their interests.

Therefore, impoverishment, economic stagnation, or regression might have a corresponding effect on consolidating democratic regimes and their functionality. Reform occurs as a reaction or a consequence of the tremendous economic hardships in a society where people protest against austerity measures due to economic hardships. This will lead to social unrest and discontent within greater society as some people become more prone to support reform-based agendas. That resentfulness and frustration towards the establishment then becomes naturally acute. Populism comes next when an authoritarian leader capable of playing with popular discontent succeeds in genuinely creating an uncomplicated, sometimes populist solution that individuals would like to apply (Lipset, 1959).

Moreover, economic decline can erode state capacity, making it difficult for the government to deliver goods, keep the peace, and respond to social and economic challenges. The decline in state capacity is a double-cross for public confidence and trust in democratic institutions, as citizens view the government as incapable and unable to meet their needs (Haggard & Kaufman, 1995). This could disillusion the political process and weaken civic activism, paving the way for authoritarian agents to find a fertile ground to consolidate their power further.

The intricate relationship between economic conditions and the destiny of democracies. Diamond (2023) points to connections between economic equality decreasing worker mobility and the shorter 'shelf-life' of democratic norms. Add in that anger over perceived unfairness and lack of opportunity is a potent driver of a profound loss of faith in the democratic institutions that ostensibly guarantee political stability, producing support for populism — leaders who offer the opportunity for economic or political restoration or disrupt the political order with promise of solutions that are seductive but possibly illusory (Diamond, 2023). We can cure ourselves in violent ways.

Diamond's analysis highlights the importance of equitable distribution of wealth and opportunity and economic growth (Diamond, 2023). These sentiments can incite anti-democratic actions within a large part of society that feels that they are being ignored or disenfranchised by the fruits of economic advancement (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). They can succumb to the rhetoric of demagogues who would scapegoat minorities or external enemies, rolling back progress toward social unity and impoverishing the precepts of democratic pluralism.

Moreover, an economic downturn is almost inevitable to exacerbate social and political divides, making it much harder to reach consensus on important issues or enact sensible policies. That creates political gridlock and paralysis and the sense that democracy cannot meet the challenges the nation faces. In such a context, the allure of authoritarian responses pledging action and strong leadership has never been more tempting, thus making the future of democracy even more challenging to realize.

The economic decline is only part of the answer to the democracy deficit. However, there is a very articulate argument that the financial forces that shape the outcomes of democratically sanctioned societies are at the root. More immediately, economic development can help buttress the foundation of democracy, with a better educated and engaged citizenry, a robust civil society, and a broader social contract of shared prosperity. Instead, economic decline, especially in the form of chronic inequalities and the jettisoning of large swathes of society, erodes democratic institutions, ultimately undercutting confidence in them and creating conditions for authoritarianism to flourish.

### **Harm to Reputation and Credibility**

Even decimate a nation's standing and credibility with failed foreign policies. However, a nation acts untrustworthy, reckless, or unpredictable regarding foreign affairs — making building and maintaining strong alliances and partnerships difficult. The pleasing print effect of a trashed reputation knows no bounds. It can leave a country unable to join international organizations, negotiate trade agreements, or attract foreign direct investment. It



can also complicate working with other countries on pressing issues like climate change, global health, and counterterrorism.

For one, diminished international standing has domestic consequences. It can produce citizens who are ashamed or less proud of their country and contribute to unraveling society's dependence on its government and capability to pursue foreign policy sensibly. That can undermine faith and promote a diffuse discontent with democracy.

### **Loss of Public Trust**

One of the most pernicious ways that failed foreign policies are abetting our slide into democratic breakdown is by eroding public trust in government. A viable democracy hinges on a citizenry that believes that if an ill-advised foreign policy pushes us into costly and bloody wars against a humanitarian catastrophe or disastrous global diplomacy, the average person has the power and the will to correct course.

The salt of trust loss has come in many forms: declining voter turnout, shrinking faith in democratic institutions, and less interest or belief in politics. "It also opens up this space for populist leaders and authoritarian movements to come in and rally around promises of national pride and strength while vilifying an agenda of dissent."

The importance of public trust in government to the health of democracy has been established and long-held ground among political scientists. In the notion of a democratic setting for the making of foreign policy, Muni (1993) states that "a government has to reckon with the wishes of its people; it has to be able to keep public opinion in some balance of support for its actions." Muni (1993) also reasons that foreign policy unmoored to transparency, accountability, and public engagement is bound to erode democratic legitimacy and sometimes engender perilous tension between the government and the governed.

### **A Call to Hold Foreign Policy Accountable**

The link between calamitous foreign policies and the crisis of democracy is wide-ranging. Such a foreign policy misadventure could lead to economic decline, damage a government's reputation and credibility, and result in the erosion of public trust. Such effects can ramify into a vicious circle of eroding democratic institutions, stagnating social discontent, and making societies more prone to autocracy," the report said.

The world is growing ever more interconnected and complicated in ways that will demand responsible and effective foreign policy like never before. The only foreign policies that Democratic governments should have are ones founded on principles that will advance the interests of their peoples, not the interests of a few vassals and selected states, and divide and conquer others. That will, in turn, help them to strengthen democracy at home and help shape a more peaceful, prosperous world.

### **The Destructive Consequences of Defective Foreign Policies**

Effective foreign policies tend to bolster economic growth, help manage relationships with other states constructively and optimistically, and encourage the rise of successful domestic political institutions, which, in turn, consolidate the foundations of democracy. In contrast, misguided or beggar-thy-neighbor foreign policy can wreak havoc on a state. It can eat away at democracy's foundational pillars: Public trust can whittle, institutions can destabilize, and the ground can become fertile for authoritarianism. However, over the last few years, it has seen a staggering global rise in democratic backsliding, and mounting evidence suggests that failed foreign policies rank as one of the chief drivers behind this crisis.

The most egregious example of a democratic foreign policy failure was the United States invasion of Iraq in 2003. This is the war that was justified because, you see, Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, not munitions of mass destruction, as it turned out — that created a catastrophe. It led to hundreds of thousands of civilians dead, destabilized an entire region, and opened the gates for massive extremist organizations like ISIS. The human cost of the Iraq War was terrible, and its impact can still be felt in an America that is permanently viewed with suspicion in many parts of the world. It tarnished its standing as an advocate of democracy and elicited global condemnation as a breach of international law. At home, the war prompted a long, steep decline

in public trust in government as citizens felt duped and scammed by the Bush administration's justifications for invading. The breakdown of trust only fueled a growing cynicism toward politics and developments that threatened the underpinnings of American democracy.

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022 was another case in point of the connection between a failed foreign policy and a weakening of democracy. It is this barbarism and this aggression that is unjustified that justifies this humanitarian catastrophe, which has already killed thousands of civilians and has inflicted millions of displaced people. The war has also changed the course of democracy in Russia.

Following the invasion, the Kremlin launched a sweeping campaign of repression, shuttering independent news media, imprisoning opposition leaders, and crushing fundamental freedoms. The war has provided the Putin regime with a pretext to clamp down even harder on its authoritarian rule, suffocating what small remnants of independent Democratic institutions and dissent that remained.

However, the war in Ukraine has perilous consequences for democracy around the world. An aggressive foreign policy is more distant from the autocratic leaders emboldened by Russia's actions because they would now know that they can act without fear of retribution. That, in turn, could help undermine democratic norms further and create more instability worldwide.

It should also be added here that foreign policy regarding ruin cannot be limited to combat duels in countries worldwide. The aftereffects are global, eroding democratic institutions and norms everywhere. Other fights that had drawn in myriad foreign powers, like the Syrian Civil War, also created a wave of refugees that strained resources and turned other Europeans more xenophobic. This, in turn, has given rise to populist and nationalist movements that assault the bedrock principles of liberal democracy.

Its reckless foreign policies may upset the world order. When great powers withdraw from international law and norms, the world pays attention, and endless uncertainty and mistrust reign. That can make it harder to meet transnational challenges, like climate change, pandemics, and economic inequality, that call for coordination and cooperation.

So, the first point I want to make is that there is an unmistakable connection between failed foreign policies and democratic crises. From the Iraq War to the war in Ukraine, a deep history of precedent admonishes us about how a foreign policy gone wrong can gut democratic institutions, devastate public faith, and contribute to the rise of authoritarianism. Policymakers must be aware of this connection and pursue foreign policies based on democracy, human rights, and peaceful resolutions of inter-state disputes.

## **Results**

Foreign policy and the fall of democracy are the themes of the research article, which deals with the complex nature of this relationship. It points out the wrong choices taken in foreign policy, which can undo a nation's democratic foundations. The study shows that foreign policy errors can result in an economic downturn, discredit the country's name, and bring about public disbelief, all of which can be the sources of democratic collapse.

These results align with previous research that has found a link between economic development and political legitimacy. In the case of foreign policy fiascoes, the economic downturn can weaken the democratic system's social base beyond repair. The reason is that economic hardships can cause social disturbances, and there might also be a loss of trust in the government and the swelling of populism, which sets the stage for the liberal democratic order under challenge.

The study also indicated that foreign policy mistakes can jeopardize the country's image, which is vital in building coalitions and meaningfully connecting with others on the world stage. This weakening of influence will, in turn, decrease the country's power to realize its interests, develop its values, and contribute to the peace and security of the world.

Research indicates that failures in foreign policy can lead to a loss of public trust in the government. When citizens believe their government is following a suspected or ill-fated course of foreign policy, they will likely question its overall efficiency and judgment on several issues. This trust erosion may translate into abstaining from political processes, decreasing voter turnout, and weakening democratic institutions.

The study and conclusions have a significant impact on the officials who would decide on, with a focus on a need to base the foreign policy on the values of democratic leadership, without lacking human rights and working with the international community, which would be the only idealistic side, but not the only one, the ones vital for the development of democracy, expansion of world peace, and still development cooperation, with the benefits of creating a more sustainable, and more positively interdependent, world dictate the need for practicing such kind of foreign policy.

## **Conclusion**

The delicate choreography, where international diplomacy on either side of the Atlantic meets the state of democracy in Europe and North America, is a complex ballet: A misstep in global politics can jangle the national political arena. Overreaching ambitions, botched implementations, and misunderstandings of the cause-and-effect mechanism of foreign policy consequences can wreak havoc on democratic societies, shredding confidence in institutions, the economy, and prestige.

The crisis of democracy cannot be contained in a bottle labeled nation-states; it is a transnational issue with causes that are not precisely unitary, nor do they equate simply to pluralistic. However, the record speaks for itself: Bad foreign policies are a significant cause of this crisis. Apprehending this multifaceted relationship between foreign policy and democratic backsliding can help governments and policymakers map a more responsible, realistic path that aligns international interests with their citizenry and the features of democracy at home and abroad. It might just be democracy's future that depends on that.

## **Future Implications**

The implications of this research are far-reaching and consequential, particularly in a world grappling with the crisis of democracy. The erosion of democratic norms and institutions is a global concern, and this study highlights the critical link between foreign policy choices and democratic backsliding.

One key takeaway is the urgent need for policymakers to consider the potential domestic consequences of their foreign policy decisions. Too often, foreign policy is formulated without adequate attention to its potential reverberations within a nation's borders.

The case studies examined in this research – the U.S. in Iraq, Russia in Ukraine, Saudi Arabia in Yemen, and China's assertive stance in the Indo-Pacific – underscore the detrimental effects of foreign policy missteps on democratic governance. These missteps can lead to economic decline, damage to a nation's reputation, and erosion of public trust, all contributing to democratic erosion.

The findings of this study suggest that a foreign policy grounded in democratic values – respect for human rights, adherence to international law, and a commitment to multilateralism – is not only ethically sound but strategically vital for preserving democracy at home.

The need for wise and effective foreign policy has never been greater in a world characterized by global interdependence and complex challenges. By aligning foreign policy with democratic principles, nations can strengthen their democratic institutions and contribute to a more stable and cooperative world order.

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