Democracy in Iraq

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> The nation of Iraq – with its proud heritage, abundant resources and skilled educated people – is fully capable of moving toward democracy and living in freedom… Success could also begin a new stage for Middle Eastern peace…
>
> President George W. Bush[i1]

With this declaration, President Bush cited a new democratic domino theory as one of the philosophical reasons the United States launched Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in March 2003. As there are no Arab liberal democracies of any kind in the Middle East today, the Bush Administration envisioned that a successful implementation of democracy in Iraq (what President Bush often refers to as "freedom") would spread liberal democracy throughout the Arab world. This foreign policy objective is clearly articulated in the 2002 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (NSS):

> We seek to create a balance of power that favors human freedom: conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty.
>
> We will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets, and free trade to every corner of the world.
>
> America must stand firmly for the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity; the rule of law; limits on the absolute power of the state; free speech; freedom of worship; equal justice; respect for women; religious and ethnic tolerance; and respect for private property.
>
> Embodying lessons from our past and using the opportunity we have today, the national security strategy of the United States must start from these core beliefs and look outward for possibilities to expand liberty.[ii2]

Much of this quotation outlines American liberal values that are encapsulated in our founding documents, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The NSS's underlying premise is that liberal democracy cannot flourish where there is no liberal culture on which to build. Regarding Iraq, it seems that the Bush administration intends to implement a liberal democracy without first ensuring liberalism exists within the Iraqi culture.

The issue becomes whether the Iraqi people have the potential to assimilate liberal democracy. In 2002, Moataz Fattah conducted a statistical analysis of the first large-scale survey of literate Muslims (22 Muslim countries). He concludes that: "most Muslim societies do not prefer autocracy over democracy," and, "there is nothing in the current data that shows Iraqis to be exceptionally anti-democratic."[iii3] Further, Los Angeles Times reporter Greg Miller observes that: "Iraq is seen by some as holding more democratic potential – because of its wealth and

educated population – than many of its neighbors."[iv4] Given that Iraq has enormous economic potential with the world's second largest oil reserve, and that the Iraqi people have been among the most educated in the Arab world in the past, this article will explore the ideology of liberalism as the key to success in establishing democracy in Iraq. What are the prospects of democracy succeeding in Iraq given three decades of liberalism during the British mandate? I believe the answer is that it is possible, but probably not in the form the Bush administration envisions. As such, I intend to show that the best President Bush can expect for the billions of dollars and thousands of service members' lives invested in OIF will be an "illiberal democracy."

Liberalism as a Precondition for Democracy

In this section, I will discuss the characterizations of liberalism and liberal democracy before reviewing the acknowledged preconditions in a society needed to successfully assimilate liberal democracy. Barry Loberfeld defines the principles of liberalism as "the primacy of the individual; the distinction between civil society and the political state; natural law and natural rights; political equality and limited government; and, private property and free enterprise."[v5] He notes that these principles have existed in societies in some form going back thousands of years. Nancy Rosenblum defines liberalism as a theory of limited government aimed at securing personal liberty. In order to minimize arbitrariness, limited government needs to be constitutional, have separation of powers, have rule of law, and have "enforceable civil rights to secure the liberties of individuals and minority groups." (The civil rights cited include freedom of religion, speech, association, private property, travel, due process of law, and voting.) She notes that in its origin, liberalism was a revolutionary doctrine to legitimize resistance to arbitrary rule. Kenneth Minogue cites the benefits accrued to a society that adopts liberalism as its ideology include economic prosperity, political stability, and potential for advancement.[vi6]

Fareed Zakaria defines *constitutional* liberalism in a historical context as follows:

> It is liberal because it draws on the philosophical strain, beginning with the Greeks, that emphasizes individual liberty. It is constitutional because it rests on the tradition beginning with the Romans, of the rule of law. Constitutional liberalism developed in Western Europe and the United States as a defense of the individual's right to life and property, and freedom of religion and speech.[vii7]

Zakaria's conclusion is that while constitutional liberalism has led to democracy, democracy does not seem to bring on constitutional liberalism. "In the Islamic world, from the Palestinian Authority to Iran to Pakistan, democratization has led to an increasing role for theocratic politics, eroding long-standing traditions of secularism and tolerance."[viii8] Hence, he insists that constitutional liberalism is an essential precondition for democracy. He says, "[W]ithout a background in constitutional liberalism, the introduction of democracy in divided societies [such as Iraq] has actually fomented nationalism, ethnic conflict, and even war."[ix9] Some examples of this can be found in Southeast Asia, in countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia.

Patrick Basham concurs with Zakaria's concept, and develops it further noting that: "The so-called building blocks of modern democratic political culture are not institutional in nature….

Rather, the building blocks of democracy are supportive cultural values." He cites the four cultural factors that support a stable democratic political system as: 1) political trust; 2) social tolerance; 3) recognition of the importance of basic political liberties, such as freedom of speech and popular participation in decision-making; and, 4) popular support for gender equality.[x][10]

Seymour Martin Lipset has many keen insights regarding the conditions in a society to assimilate and sustain democracy. One of the most important observations he makes is that: "Virtually everywhere that democracy has been institutionalized, the process has been incremental."[xi][11] In America alone, liberal democracy as we define it today took almost 200 years to develop.

Seymour Martin Lipset backs up Greg Miller's observation that wealth and education lend themselves to democratic societies. He cites statistical research that demonstrates that: "improvements in standard of living are associated with the expansion of democracy."[xii][12] He uses Europe as an example noting that: "National income has been a statistically significant link to democracy within Europe. Wealth as a correlate of democracy showed up clearly on the continent prior to 1960 among Western nations, and between the West and East since."[xiii][13] He is most well known for his finding that the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain a democracy. Basham confirms this hypothesis stating that: "A higher standard of living breeds cultural values that demand greater democracy. As a person's cultural values change, those changes affect that person's political behavior, producing higher, more stable levels of democracy."[xiv][14] The higher standard of living tends to legitimize the democratic institutions, and legitimacy is the foundation factor for democracy, according to Lipset.[xv][15] Adam Przeworski and his colleagues conducted a study of democratization between 1950 and 1990, and discovered that no democratic country with a per capita income above $8,773 (in 2000 dollars) suffered a loss of democracy.[xvi][16]

Seymour Martin Lipset also notes that: "Levels of education, though correlated with income, are independently associated with democracy…. With each additional year of education, freedom scores, as measured by Freedom House, rise by a startling 6.6 percent."[xvii][17] Hence, as nations become more economically successful, their education systems tend to improve. As both a nation's wealth and education improve, the better the chances are that citizens, primarily of the middle class, will embrace the tenets of liberalism and subsequently the concept of a democratic government. (Of course, in the Middle East, this education would need to be secular, as *maddrassas*, religious schools used by some Islamic governments for political purposes, have been found to teach intolerance and violence.)

Looking historically, Lipset argues that: "democracy has correlated more highly with former British colonial status than with other structural variables…. Hence, democratization could occur more gradually and more successfully in ex-British areas than elsewhere…."[xviii][18] (It should be noted here that Iraq was a British mandate from 1922-1959 in which a parliamentary government was established according to a constitution; secret voting was conducted among multiple political parties; and, an aggressive, uncensored media existed.)

Finally, looking at the impact of ethnicity on democracy in a country, Lipset, along with Larry Diamond and Juan Linz, find that it represents the most difficult type of cleavage for a democracy to manage: "Because ethnicity taps cultural and symbolic issues…the conflicts it

generates are intrinsically less amenable to compromise than those revolving around issues of material and functional conflict…. At the extreme, different nationality groups may not identify with the state at all."[xix][19] Religion, as a significant part of ethnicity, has been a key factor in the nature of a nation's government. Lipset concludes that: "Historically, democracy has not done well in countries dominated by Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, Islam, and Confucianism; conversely, Protestantism and democracy have been associated positively." Protestantism emphasizes the individual more than other religions, while the others have closer links between religion and the state.[xx][20]

Liberalism in Islam

Now that we have covered a little of what liberalism is, does it have applicability to Islam? Scholars have varying opinions depending on their assumptions and perspectives. I will first discuss those scholars who believe that liberalism is compatible with Islam, and then discuss those scholars who do not believe that it is compatible.

The vast majority of scholars who insist that Islam is compatible with liberalism are Arabs or Muslims. In an interview with *Deutsche Welle*, Prince Aga Khan IV, the hereditary imam of Shiite Ismaili Muslims, told the reporter: "I don't see a conflict between Islam and democracy…because the idea of pluralism is tightly anchored in Islam."[xxi][21] Egyptian Senator Osama Harb concludes that: "For reform from within to succeed, it must be in harmony with its cultural and civilisational context. For the Arab and Islamic world, this means that the erroneous idea that there is a contradiction between Islam and democracy must be refuted."[xxii][22]

Ahmed Mansour of the National Endowment for Democracy notes that the Quran espouses many values of liberalism: "The Quran invokes five rights to which everyone is entitled: the right to justice; the right to freedom of belief and speech; the right to wealth; the right to security; and the right to power. It is this right to power which relates to modern conceptions of democracy."[xxiii][23] He concludes by explaining that the Prophet Mohammed encouraged his people to govern themselves, which is why he did not appoint a successor. After his death, the Shiites altered this part of his legacy, thereby subduing the potential of liberalism and democracy within Islam.

Mohammad Farooq believes that democracy is not only compatible with Islam, but that the underlying concepts of liberalism are essential to it. He cites three core features of Islam as constitutional government, participatory political system, and accountability to Allah. Islamic government is essentially a constitutional government where the source of the constitution is the Quran. An Islamic political system is participatory with regard to the Islamic process of shura (mutual consultation). Finally, all Muslims are accountable to Allah (but not in this world). However, while Allah is the ultimate sovereign, "he has bestowed a level of freedom and responsibility upon human beings…. He has blessed humanity with revelations and his essential guidance." In Islam, this system of democratic governance is known as khilafat, a concept of sovereignty vested in Allah where his followers are his representatives. What distinguishes Islamic democracy from Western democracy is that the latter is based on the concept of popular sovereignty, while the former rests on the principle of khilafat.[xxiv][24]

Ali Abootalebi writes that Islam is no more innately anti-democratic than Judaism or Christianity. He believes the problem is due to Western misconceptions of Islam stemming from a long history of mutual distrust, criticism, and condemnation.[xxv25] Indeed, most of the countries with the largest number of Muslims, such as Indonesia (240 million), India (121 million), and Turkey (70 million), are liberal-minded and showing signs of growing liberalism and democracy [note, however, that none of these states is in the Arab world].

Maulana Khan, the President of the Islamic Center in Kashmir, explains that: "The concept of democracy in Islam is practiced at two levels – the *Infaradi*-individual level and the *Islamayee*-collective level. At the individual level, a person is free to adopt the manner of worship he likes…But at the collective level, it is the voice of the people, which is to be given preference."[xxvi26] It is *Islamayee* Islam that embraces democracy as a social concept.

However, there are a few non-Muslim, non-Arab scholars who also believe that liberalism is compatible with Islam. In 2004, Brent Talbot led a study at the U.S. Air Force Academy regarding the implementation of democracy in Iraq. Examining the Quran and its support for liberalist-democratic concepts, he states:

> [T]he Quran contains the concepts of shura (consultation), and maslah (public interest). Historically, a traditional Arab tribal leader was not given license to rule arbitrarily; he would customarily consult with the majlis (tribal council). In theory, this meant the ruler was held accountable by the tribal council, and in fact, selection of a new tribal leader was subject to this council's approval. His position was not necessarily hereditary. This suggests that a democratic-like system of restraint was in place among the early Arab Bedouin tribesmen and was viewed as falling in line with Quranic precepts. So even without a specific formula, the Quran backs, even suggests, a democratically organized method of governance.[xxvii27]

Graham Fuller, a career foreign service officer at the Department of State, observes that: "if Christian Democrats can do it, there is no reason in principle why Islamists cannot…. Democratic values are latent in Islamic thought...."[xxviii28]

On the other hand, there are many non-Arab, non-Muslim scholars who do not believe Islam has anything in common with liberalism or democracy. London political analyst Selwa Calderbank has analyzed the Bush Administration's position that there is nothing within Islam that makes it incompatible with democracy. She claims that many scholars make the false assumption that moderate Islamists in the Middle East espouse the same notion of democracy that prevails in the West. She notes that: "many Islamists reject several aspects of modernization as a form of Western imperialism and a threat to traditional values…. If democracy means upholding Western-defined 'human rights' and subscribing to free market economics, most Islamists are not, by any means, democrats…."[xxix29]

Samuel P. Huntington, well known for his research on civilizations and cultures, declares that the American Creed consists of liberty, equality, democracy, civil rights, nondiscrimination, and the rule of law (all aspects of liberalism). He tries to demonstrate that the American Creed was

founded in the Anglo-Protestant culture.[xxx][30] He declares the 21st century as the beginning of an age of religion. And, he claims that significant in this age are the two great missionary religions, Islam and Christianity. He asserts that these two religions are destined to be in conflict with one another. "Islamic militants, both religious and secular, do see America, its people, its religion, and its civilization as Islam's enemy…."[xxxi][31] As a result, Huntington does *not* believe that liberalism is compatible with Islam.

Joshua Parens focuses on toleration as a key aspect of liberalism that is not evident in what he describes as the "revealed religions" of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. "[T]he revealed religions in their traditional forms are intolerant. Liberalism requires all its citizens to avoid intolerance."[xxxii][32] Of the three monotheistic religions, only Islam maintains its traditional form, and the vast majority of Muslims are fundamentalists. Where Islam dictates tolerance for those who follow the Book (i.e., Jews and Christians), it does not allow for tolerance for those who do not follow Allah's guidance.

Daniel Pipes, historian and director of the Middle East Forum, points out that of all the major religions, Islam is the only one which, when interpreting its holy writings (in this case, the Quran), the vast majority interpret it literally.[xxxiii][33] As such, the moderate Muslims with Western inclinations are really a minority. Many in the West are asking where the majority moderate Muslims are in the Middle East. Pipes's answer is that they are not the majority, and that they may be afraid to speak out for fear of reprisal from extremists.

Martin Kramer addressed this issue more directly claiming that the foundation of Islam is not compatible with liberal democracy. He states that:

> [D]emocracy is irrelevant to Islam and that Islam is superior to democracy. In this view, the fatal flaw of democracy is that it rests upon the sovereignty of the people. In Islam, God is sovereign, and his will is expressed in the sharia, the divinely revealed law of Islam. Democracy, which places the prerogative of legislation in the hands of the people, is the very essence of arbitrary government.[xxxiv][34]

In general, any attempt at defining Islamic liberalism requires the attribution of concepts formulated within a Christian cultural framework. If that were not challenging enough, education in the Middle East is generally not secular. Muslim children in the Arab world are taught the Quran and its teachings on how to live. As such, this makes it harder for liberal concepts to take root.

In conclusion, it is clearly debatable whether liberalism has any compatibility with Islam. However, there are a few Muslim nations that display characteristics of liberalism and democracy, such as Turkey and Indonesia. The difference is in the evolution of liberalism within a society. The assimilation of liberal values can be attributed in some degree to the religious orientation of the people. As Huntington points out, it seems that liberalism flourished under Protestantism, while it has languished under Islamism. However, Islam is actually the source of values and law, not of political power. An Islamic government can be perceived as a

representative democracy in that the *sharia* represents the will of the people, while the ruling politicians are elected and held accountable for implementing it.

Liberalism in Iraq

The goal of the Bush administration is to forcibly implement liberal democracy in Iraq in order to spread democracy (and the freedom it brings to people) throughout the region. The Arab Middle East is the only region in the world that does not have at least one or two democratic governments. Zev Chafets of the New York Daily News concludes that: "There are 22 member states in the Arab League, and not one of them is remotely democratic."[xxxv35] Given that democracies rarely go to war with one another,[xxxvi36] President Bush has stated that it is in the national security interests of the United States and its allies that democracy be spread throughout the world as much as possible. The President's comments imply that there are no regions, cultures, or even civilizations in which liberalism cannot be assimilated and democracy spread. President Bush likes to cite the examples of Japan and Germany following World War II as evidence that this goal is achievable. He said, "There was a time when many said the cultures of Japan and Germany were incapable of sustaining democratic values. Well, they were wrong. Some say the same of Iraq today. They are mistaken."[xxxvii37] With Operation Iraqi Freedom, the United States removed Saddam Hussein from political power and is now attempting to implement democracy in Iraq.

However, as Zakaria discovered, a nation needs some liberalism for democracy to take hold and succeed. Reviewing Iraq's 6,000-plus year history for evidence of liberalism on which democracy could be established, one finds scant evidence for it. In fact, Iraq was never really a sovereign nation-state until the 20th century. Adeed Dawisha points out that many ancient civilizations inhabited Mesopotamia (the ancient name for Iraq), including the Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and the Chaldeans. The current civilization is Islam, which conquered Iraq in 636 CE. In 1921, with the approval of the United Kingdom and the League of Nations, Emir Faisal ibn Hussein, a Muslim of the Hashemite clan, was proclaimed king of Iraq. As such, Iraq maintained a monarchy for 37 years, until a Baathist military coup overthrew the government and assassinated King Faisal in 1958.[xxxviii38]

There are many who still believe Iraq may be a state, but not really a legitimate nation capable of national characteristics such as liberalism and democracy. Martin Peretz states that: "the uncomfortable truth is that Iraq was not ever, and is not now, a nation or a nation-state."[xxxix39] John Esposito also notes the influence of colonial powers in the region, stating that:

> [M]ost modern Muslim states, like many developing states, have artificially drawn boundaries determined by colonial powers that had their own strategic interests in drawing these borders when they left…. The majority of Muslim or Arab countries continue to have serious problems with authoritarianism and with legitimacy, and therefore rely heavily on their security forces. In that kind of context, it is not a question of religion or culture that prevents democratization, it is rather the history of authoritarianism….[xl40]

Although the current borders cutting tribal, ethnic, and civilizational boundaries do not seem to make sense to many people looking back, it made the most sense to the colonial powers who wanted to ensure that none of their former colonies developed sufficiently to threaten them in the future. Throughout the long reign of the Ottoman Empire (over 400 years), the region of Iraq today was actually three separate provinces: Mosul (where the Kurds lived), Baghdad (where the Sunni Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived), and Basra (where the Shiite Muslims lived).

For democracy to have any chance of success means installing some mechanism to achieve a balance of power among the three major ethnic groups in Iraq. Shiite Arabs make up approximately 60 percent of the population, while Sunni Arabs make up around 20 percent, with Sunni Kurds accounting for 15 percent of the population in Iraq. Basham warns that: "Iraq's new political institutions must be designed to prevent the long-suppressed fundamentalist Shia from, first, settling scores by exacting revenge upon the minority Arab Sunnis, and, second, ignoring the legitimate needs of the Kurds, Turkomen, Assyrian Christians, urban secularists, and others."[xli][41]

It was during the 37 years of British rule and military presence that liberalism may have been successfully seeded in Iraq's Muslim society. Though the country was difficult to govern during that period due to its tribal nature and various ethnic and religious factions, it did have a political system which consisted of a constitution, an elected Chamber of Deputies, five political parties, and an independent press (in 1957, there were 14 newspapers published in Baghdad, five in Mosul, and four in Basra). Dawisha notes that: "Debates in parliament were often vigorous, and legislators were usually allowed to argue and vote against the government without fear of retribution…. Parliament often managed to influence policy."[xlii][42] Even under Baathist Party rule, there were a number of newspapers and magazines calling for democracy and freedom of expression in the 1960s.[xliii][43] However, as to how much these imposed democratic institutions actually were assimilated by the Iraqis, Phebe Marr states that: "The constitution failed to take root, however, partly because Iraqis were never given real responsibility in the government and partly because they came to regard it as an instrument of foreign manipulation and control. As a result, Iraqi elites focused their energies…on removing unwanted British influence."[xliv][44]

Where an educated population and national wealth are key factors in the assimilation of the concepts of liberalism, two other factors are essential for the successful implementation of democracy. First is a stable middle class. According to Dawisha, "As almost all political theorists agree, a fully developed middle class is essential to an effective and sustainable democracy. Fortunately, even after 12 years of debilitating economic sanctions, a substantial and highly-educated middle class has persisted in Iraq." Second is the nature of government. Dawisha advocates implementing a federal government so that the various ethnic and sectarian factions could serve as a check and balance of power against one another. "The fact is that all this antagonism could serve a constructive purpose: having factions zealously check each others' power could actually promote democracy at the expense of rigid communal particularism."[xlv][45]

Potential for Democracy in Iraq Today

Whether or not the people of Iraq have assimilated enough liberalism to allow for the external implementation of democracy is certainly not clear cut. The best anyone can say is that it is possible. Kevin Whitelaw reports that many Iraqi tribal chiefs are talking of American "liberation" rather than "occupation," and they are enthusiastic about their democratic future, as long as it emanates from Iraqi traditions and not American ones. What these tribal leaders are being taught by Americans is that democracy requires *compromise*.[xlvi46]

However, there will probably not be many members of the tribes, clans, or ethnic groups voting for anyone other than one of their own for the foreseeable future. Basham explains that: "most Iraqis view political nepotism as a moral duty rather than a civic problem. Extremely strong family bonds also may prove to be a significant obstacle to liberal democracy."[xlvii47] According to Jeffrey Record and Andrew Terrill, "Democracy means different things to different communities in Iraq…. It is not clear that the Shiite leadership understands or accepts the concept of minority rights, rule of law, and other democratic principles unrelated to majority rule."[xlviii48]

Trust between national factions is another key factor in establishing a functional democracy. According to Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon in their national best-selling book, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, "Each of the parties has to persuade the other that the rules of the democratic game will be obeyed. Regime members need to convince the opposition that they can keep the hardliners in the army and security services under control, and the opposition must show it can restrain the radicals in its ranks…. Such trust building is a time-consuming, uncertain process."[xlix49] In the Middle East, and Iraq in particular, this process never really got started. Military regimes such as Saddam Hussein's in Iraq, won independence from Britain, and generally claimed their continued monopoly of power was necessary to preserve internal and external security. As well, trust between rulers and the people was not established because these authoritarian regimes in oil-rich countries did not depend on their citizenry for resources. "In democracies, there is no taxation without representation; in these states, there was no taxation and therefore no representation." Finally, trust among the various factions of Islam is difficult because of the belief that each has the authority of Allah, which is uncompromising.[l50]

There are many other factors which are currently in play against the successful implementation of democracy in Iraq or the region, even if there is some degree of liberalism among the moderate Muslim population. Greg Miller wrote an article for the *Los Angeles Times* about a classified State Department report on this subject. The State Department report is highly skeptical regarding the outlook for the Bush administration's efforts. It cites high levels of corruption and crime, serious infrastructure degradation, overpopulation, and other forces that have caused widespread disenfranchisement of the people in the region. The report does not address the growing hostility of the majority of Iraqis towards the foreign military forces (to include American and British armed forces) they perceive as occupying their country. The report, entitled, "Iraq, the Middle East, and Change: No Dominoes," concludes that the democracy domino theory is not credible in the Middle East.[li51]

Before democracy can be implemented in any fashion, there must first be stability and security in Iraq. Record and Terrill note that: "In Iraq, political success will require creation of: 1) a government regarded as legitimate by the great majority of the country's inhabitants, and 2)

security forces capable of protecting the new political order."[lii][52] Not only does Iraq need its own military force to protect its borders, it needs a competent police force and the infrastructure to make it effective, to include uncorrupted judges, courts, and prisons. Daniel Byman summarizes this problem stating: "The challenges to be faced by the new Iraqi government are staggering. It must reconstruct a devastated economy, establish the rule of law after decades of tyranny, and satisfy Iraq's myriad of communal problems—all while fighting an insurgency and securing Iraq's borders in a dangerous neighborhood."[liii][53]

Ahmed Hashim spent several months in Iraq, returning in April 2004. He found that: "Iraq is overridden with partisan warfare by former regime loyalists, organized rebellions by disgruntled Iraqis, terrorism by foreign and domestic Islamist extremists, and a wave of crime by organized gangs." While there, the number of insurgent attacks continually increased, and is still increasing today. He notes that the movement is not united by a single leader or ideological vision. Instead, all factions are united in fighting against the American occupation of Iraq. Once the common enemy is removed, then the in-fighting among the factions will begin, and the civil war will likely ensue. Finally, Hashim declares that: "The insurgency can evolve…into patterns of complex warfare and violence. Should this evolution continue, the prospects for American success in bringing about Iraqi security, political stability, and reconstruction will be nonexistent."[liv][54]

The primary issue for the United States becomes one of patience and perseverance. Record and Terrill conclude that: "Many experts believe that genuine democracy lies beyond the power and patience of the United States to create in Iraq."[lv][55] Amy Chua notes that: "at no point in history did any Western nation ever implement capitalism and overnight universal suffrage at the same time – the precise formula of free market democracy currently being pressed on developing countries around the world."[lvi][56] She finds that forcing a laissez-faire market and rapid democratization, such as the U.S. is doing in Iraq, will more than likely aggravate ethnic instability and result in violence. "The global spread of free market democracy has thus been a principal aggravating cause of ethnic instability and violence throughout the non-Western world."[lvii][57]

Many Middle East scholars also do not believe liberalism and democracy can be successfully implemented from external sources, such as by the United States. Graham Fuller concludes that: "In the end, modern liberal governance is more likely to take root through organically evolving liberal Islamist trends at the grassroots level than from imported Western modules of 'instant democracy.'"[lviii][58] Record and Terrill observe that:

> Under even the best of circumstances, fashioning genuine democracy in post-Saddam Hussein Iraq is problematic. Since its creation, Iraq has known nothing but authoritarian rule and, under Saddam Hussein, a vicious neo-Stalinist tyranny. Though Iraqi regimes, like other dictatorships, embraced such democratic trappings as elections, parliaments, independent courts, they did so fraudulently for purely propaganda purposes.[lix][59]

George Soros, the multibillionaire financier who promotes the spread of democracy around the world, declares in an interview that: "Introducing democracy by military means is not

doable. The effort to promote democracy [in Iraq] has been undermined because we lost credibility."[lx60] (The common belief is that after the U.S. assumed control of Iraq during OIF, we lost credibility with the population by not providing internal security, except around the gas and oil facilities.) Finally, Iraqi scholar Isam al-Khafaji concludes that: "Twenty years of uninterrupted brutal dictatorship have left the political culture of the people of Iraq more impoverished than ever. As a result they are unlikely, in the foreseeable future, to be able to develop radically different state structures required to replace the existing system."[lxi61]

A Recommendation

It is being reported that the security situation in Iraq is getting worse every day. Dana Priest and Thomas Ricks of the *Washington Post* reported recently that officials who fight the insurgency and study it believe: "the rebellion is deeper and more widespread than is being acknowledged."[lxii62] The U.S. National Intelligence Council was reported to have concluded that in the *best case*, Iraq could achieve a "tenuous stability" over the next 18 months.[lxiii63] However, most analysts believe that more than likely it will probably dissolve into a civil war, especially if the United States withdraws its military forces following the national elections in January 2005. In their conclusion, Record and Terrill recommend that: "under no circumstances should the United States abandon Iraq as it did South Vietnam in 1975. Indeed, abandonment would seem a near-guarantee of civil war…."[lxiv64]

There are many people in America who are ready to settle for anything short of civil war in Iraq. Richard Cohen, for example, states what many are feeling: "The truth is that we'd now settle for a pro-American strongman such as Pakistan's Pervez Musharraf or Egypt's Hosni Mubarak. Both countries are essentially military dictatorships."[lxv65] Record and Terrill also recommend we settle for: "some form of benign quasi-authoritarian rule along the lines of Kemal Ataturk's Turkey, Anwar Sadat's Egypt, and King Hussein's Jordan, perhaps as a prolonged transition to more representative governance."[lxvi66]

What Cohen, Record, Terrill and others are alluding to is what Fareed Zakaria wrote about in *Foreign Affairs* in 1997 – an "illiberal democracy." Zakaria observes that democratically elected regimes around the world are routinely ignoring limits on their power and depriving their citizens of basic freedoms. Where liberalism (the rule of law and basic human rights) and democracy (free and fair elections) have gone hand-in-hand in the West during the 20th century, they seem to be drifting apart in the rest of the world. He claims that:

Democracy without constitutional liberalism is producing centralized regimes, the erosion of liberty, ethnic competition, conflict, and war…. From Peru to the Palestinian Authority, from Sierra Leone to Slovakia, from Pakistan to the Philippines, we see the rise of a disturbing phenomenon in international life – illiberal democracy.[lxvii67]

Zakaria also declares that: "half of the 'democratizing' countries in the world today are illiberal democracies." Leaders in these illiberal democracies argue that they need the authority to bring order to chaotic societies. However, unchecked centralization of power within a government has been the enemy of liberal democracy. Illiberal democracies gain a measure of legitimacy from the fact that they are reasonably democratic.[lxviii68]

Zakaria strongly warns *against* allowing an ethnic group to take power over other competing ethnic groups. "Once an ethnic group is in power, it tends to exclude other ethnic groups. Compromise seems impossible…. Political competition that is so divisive can rapidly degenerate into violence."[lxix69] In Iraq, there are two distinct ethnic groups, Arabs and Kurds; as well as two distinct factions of Islam, Sunnis and Shiites. Certainly, the concern is that if the Shiites, the largest of the groups, assumed power, they would be reluctant to relinquish it – unless by force.

My recommendation is that the United States should *not* follow Zakaria's guidance, but instead support illiberal democracy in Iraq if it evolves in this manner, with a long-term goal of moving Iraq towards becoming a liberal democracy. Therefore, the U.S. should support whoever the Iraqi people elect as president, even if the elected president begins implementing non-liberal, non-democratic policies. This is the approach America is currently pursuing with Russian President Vladimir Putin. (Putin is consolidating his power while curtailing the basic rights of the Russian people in order to effectively combat organized crime, oligarchs, terrorists, and other internal security issues.) The belief is that once the internal security environment in Russia has stabilized at a minimal level, liberal measures will be reinstated.

This approach allows for liberal democracy in Iraq to evolve *over time* as recommended by many scholars from Graham Fuller to Amy Chua. Certainly, Iraq's oil and natural gas wealth, as well as its highly-educated population and middle class, could serve as the foundation for liberalism to evolve in Iraq. Perhaps a derivation of Zakaria's hypothesis is more relevant today. Maybe an illiberal democracy could be a *precondition* for a liberal democracy, as Record and Terrill implied. Given that Iraq experienced or possesses many of the prerequisite factors for democracy to flourish, to include a history of democratic liberalism under British colonial rule, a highly-educated population, significant national wealth, and a stable middle class, I would recommend this approach at this stage for Iraq.

Such a transition from an illiberal to a liberal democracy is not unprecedented in history. In every part of the planet, governments have successfully transitioned from a democratic dictatorship to a liberal democracy. In Southeast Asia, for example, both Indonesia and the Philippines have made the transition. In Africa, South Africa has made the transition. And, in Latin America, Mexico and Brazil have made the transition. Given time, perhaps Iraq could make the transition as well in the Middle East.

However, as Iraq transitions from a totalitarian dictatorship to an illiberal (and eventually a liberal) democracy, it is important to keep in mind the political risks involved. Whenever a nation goes through a political transformation, it takes on the risk of state failure and political instability. P.H. Liotta and James Miskel state that: "it does appear that it is at the transition point to a democratic form of government that a state's risk of failure and instability is greatest."[lxx70] They advocate a policy and long-term strategy of "adaptive democracy" for Iraq, along the lines of Jordan, where there are elements of both Islam and liberal democracy being implemented simultaneously to various degrees. They conclude that: "As adaptive democracy begins to take root in various places, we may find that in the 'Muslim world'…one size simply does not fit all."[lxxi71]

Conclusion

Perfect is the enemy of the good. At this point, given the continued insurgency and general unrest within Iraq, most political pundits do not think it is possible to establish a legitimate national government. Therefore, I think the U.S. policymakers should aim a little lower regarding their goal for a democratic Iraq, and accept a less-than-perfect democratic government initially. Iraq needs the strong leader that an illiberal government features to overcome the numerous national insurgencies, while fostering stability and security within the country. This is the same approach the United States is taking with many of its close allies, to include Russia. Hence, this approach would not be unprecedented or unreasonable.

Where there are already numerous illiberal democracies in the Muslim and Arab worlds, from Morocco to Egypt, and from Lebanon to Qatar, there are a few successful liberal democracies as well, such as Turkey and Indonesia. Therefore, the United States could pursue the idea that an illiberal democratic government in Iraq is still better than the brutal dictatorship that Saddam Hussein had implemented. Furthermore, such a government in Iraq could evolve into a liberal or "adaptive" democracy over time with the appropriate political and economic motivations.

An illiberal democracy is not what the Bush administration had envisioned when they advocated a regime change in Iraq as it certainly is not likely to promote the spread of liberal democracy throughout the rest of the Middle East. However, it is the best we can hope for at this point, and much better than the alternative of a protracted civil war.

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