

American Plans to Build Democracy in the Middle East After 9/11: the Case of Iraq

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Abstract

The “Freedom Agenda” of President George W. Bush for the Middle East assumed that the liberation of Iraq from the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and the start of political change would trigger the process of democratization of the entire region. Encouraged by financial and economic support, Arab countries should have been willing to implement political and educational support, which would lead to the creation of civil society and grassroots political changes initiated by society itself. A number of mistakes made by the Bush administration in Iraq has not only caused the mission of the democratization of Iraq to be a failure, but also influenced the situation that today Iraq is closer to being a failed state than a democracy.

Keywords: United States, Iraq, Terrorism, Extremism, Democracy, Middle East

Introduction

The first signal of the fact that the administration of President George W. Bush had a “Freedom Agenda” for the Middle East was the message he gave in the State of the Union in 2002, in which the president stressed that the US will promote and support democratic values throughout the world, including in Islamic countries (*President Delivers State of the Union Address*). In June 2002, President Bush argued that “the peoples of the Islamic nations want and deserve the same freedoms and opportunities as people in every nation” (*President Bush Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point*).

After the announcements came the time to act, firstly to liberate the Afghan people from the Taliban regime, and then to overthrow the dictator, Saddam Hussein, in Iraq. The purpose of this article is to analyze the declarations and actions of the administration of President George W. Bush in the democratization of Iraq. It also aims to show the errors committed by the Americans, which essentially influenced the failure of the mission to spread democracy and freedom in the Middle East. Here it is important to answer the following questions: What actions did the G.W. Bush administration take to democratize Iraq? What mistakes were committed? Can democracy be introduced by military intervention? Is the American model of democracy so versatile that it can be adapted by Iraq? What mistakes were made during the creation of the Constitution of Iraq? Were the Iraqis ready for the introduction of democracy? At what level is democracy functioning in Iraq 15 years after the US invasion? Did the change of power in Iraq after 2003 contribute to the strengthening of rights and freedoms of Iraqis? There will also be an attempt to answer a final question: what is the future of Iraq – will it transform itself into a democratic state or fall apart?

The American Initiative to Democratize the Middle East

Before President George W. Bush issued an official order to launch the war in Iraq in December 2002, Secretary of State Colin Powell announced a bold plan to build a democracy in the Middle East. For this purpose, the *U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative* – MEPI was created, the aim of which was to carry out economic, political and educational reforms in the region. The results of this program were to be the spread of democracy and a free market in the Middle East, which in turn would bring prosperity, political freedom, women’s empowerment and modern education (*The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative: Building Hope for the Years Ahead, The Middle East Partnership Initiative Story*). MEPI was to be based on four pillars.

The first – economic cooperation to fight against unemployment in the region by carrying out economic reforms, increased investment and private sector

development. The second pillar was political, connected with the strengthening of civil society and political systems, and the development of a free and independent media. The Bush administration offered the Arab countries support with the holding of free and fair elections, strengthening democratic processes through training members of political parties and journalists, promoting the rule of law through education on rights and civil liberties, as well as reforms of the courts, which was to contribute to the strengthening of domestic law. The third pillar concerned education – it assumed greater opportunities for higher education, improvement in the quality of education, expanding access to education and development of professional skills, which would result in a decrease of unemployment in the region (*The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative: Building Hope for the Years Ahead, The Middle East Partnership Initiative Story*).

The fourth pillar referred to the empowerment of women in the Middle East, including their increasing participation in political and economic life. Particular emphasis was placed on training in order to increase the competitiveness of women in the labor market. Public awareness campaigns were also to be carried out, promoting gender equality and women's rights (*Empowering Women*).

In addition to MEPI, other programs were introduced in subsequent years, including the *US-Middle East Free Trade Area – MEFTA*¹ in May 2003; the *Greater Middle East Initiative – GMEI*² in February 2004 and the *Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative – BMENA*³ in June 2004. All the programs had a similar goal – to stabilize the economic, political and social situation in the region,⁴ and the starting point was to be Iraq. President Bush believed that freeing the oppressed Iraqi people from Saddam Hussein's regime would start a "domino effect" and

1 MEFTA's aim was to focus on cooperation between countries in order to increase trade, investment from the USA and the whole world, as well as to support the internal reforms that constitute the rules of a legal state, protection of private property, creation of convenient conditions for the growth of the economy and the welfare of society. This program was to support the diversification of the economy of the Middle East, to improve its state, to create new places of work in a rapidly growing society and finally to stimulate US export (See more: Bolle 1-16).

2 The main aim of GMEI was to open markets and to export democracy to the Arab world. GMEI realized wide ranged programs that were to solve various regional problems such as: preparation and the conducting of free elections, improvement of independent media, the fight against bribery, increase in the level of education, creation of new places of work, an increase of women rights ,and an increase in the possibility to enter the job market (See more: Lewis).

3 The main assumption of BMENA was to improve the engagement and cooperation between society and regional governments in the scope of economic, social and political reforms. This initiative created conditions to start a dialogue over the direction of reforms between regional government representatives, countries from the G8 group and local business leaders (See more: *Broader Middle East/N. Africa Partnership*).

4 More information about initiatives taken by the Bush administration in the scope of democratization of the Middle East see: Carothers 4-7; Waško-Owsiejczuk 2015, 24-32.

initiate a process of political transformation in the region. “The establishment of a free Iraq in the heart of the Middle East will be a watershed event in the global democratic revolution” (*Remarks by President*).

The Imposition of Democracy by Force

Believing that the American model of democracy is so versatile that it could be adopted in all circumstances, Americans chose to carry out the ambitious goal of giving the Iraqis an accelerated course in democracy. The plan of the Bush administration was to be carried out according to the following script – after the overthrow of the regime, a liberated and happy nation would prepare a new constitution together with the Americans, conduct elections and elect a new parliament, government and president. As it turned out, the plan to democratize Iraq was much more difficult than originally expected. It didn't help that from the beginning of the invasion many mistakes were made, whose consequences are visible to this day.

The first mistake of the Bush administration was trying to introduce democracy by force. The best chance for adapting a democratic system in a country without a democratic tradition is when the process is evolutionary rather than revolutionary, initiated from the bottom up by society, not by foreign governments. Contrary to the assurances of the US administration, Iraqis did not greet US soldiers with flowers like liberators, but saw them as aggressors (Dziekan 198). Attempts to introduce democracy through military intervention created fertile ground for the development of extremist groups in Iraq, which were able to recruit new members using propaganda with a message that Islam was being attacked by the West, and that Iraqis should stop the imperial ambitions of the Americans (Waško-Owsiejczuk, 2017).

The second mistake was the lack of legitimacy for the actions of US troops in Iraq by the United Nations. Bush's decision to go to war in Iraq had no basis in international law, so it was illegal in nature. Americans had no legitimate reasons for entering the territory of Iraq. Accusations by the Bush administration of the alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction by Saddam Hussein, and his connections with Al-Qaeda, were not confirmed by evidence provided by the Americans (*Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction*), and were not sufficient reason to enter the territory of another sovereign country. It is worth noting that Iraq was not involved at that time in any aggressive action abroad. President Bush was not stopped by the millions of anti-war protesters around the world, nor the lack of consent of the UN Security Council. The lack of legitimacy from the United Nations for the US military operation meant that coalition soldiers not only faced the strength of the Hussein regime, but also that of ordinary citizens of Iraq, who saw the Americans as invaders who came to fight.

How to Control the Chaos in Iraq?

The third mistake of the Bush administration was the lack of developed plans for the stabilization mission in Iraq. The propaganda document outlining the plan was published as late as 2005. The plan was divided into three stages: the first was to build democratic institutions and structures responsible for security and to conduct key economic reforms that would create the foundation for a strong economy. The second stage included the adoption of a constitution and the organization of democratic elections, with a fully constitutional government emerging from the process. This was supposed to be an example for other reformers in the region, who would be encouraged by the effectiveness of political change in Iraq and would follow the example of the Iraqi government. In addition, at this stage, there was supposed to be a fully operational service responsible for the security of Iraq, able to maintain order in the country, and the economy was to be moving in the direction of achieving its economic potential. The last stage idealistically assumed that Iraq would defeat terrorists and insurgents; thus in the region there would be peace, union, stabilization and security, and the democratically elected government would be an equal partner in the global war on terrorism. Americans were to give support to Iraqis in countering false propaganda and manipulation of the public in the election. The US government assumed that America's enemies may want to obtain legal authority in Iraq by being close to local community leaders and influencing them. Moreover, there were plans for the building of sustainable, pluralistic national institutions that would protect the interests of the Iraqis and facilitate the integration of the country into the international community. Support in this area would include the creation of an economic basis for a self-sufficient economy by rebuilding the infrastructure of Iraq, reforming the economy, connecting it to the international business community and improving the living conditions of the inhabitants of the country (*National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*). The long awaited strategy for Iraq was not a breakthrough, nor did it introduce any new solutions. The document was filled with idealistic generalities, and was more in the form of a "wish" list than anything else.

US troops coped with the first phase of the operation, which was to overthrow the Hussein regime, without any major problems. However, the biggest challenge was to control the situation in the second phase, the stabilization mission, due to the fact that liberated Iraq plunged into chaos (Ricks 2011). Violence and lawlessness prevailed in the country, with looted shops, government buildings, banks, power plants and factories. Before the Americans invaded Iraq, Hussein released prisoners, who were involved in the destruction of public facilities and the oil industry. They were armed with guns, rocket-propelled grenades and explosives which they stole from weapon storage facilities that the Americans hadn't secured. In many places, the civilian population was deprived of electricity and water, which

intensified social frustrations. This difficult situation enflamed conflicts between nationalities and ethnicities. Problems with bringing order to “liberated” Iraq were mainly due to strategic mistakes committed by the Bush administration. One of them was the assignment of too few troops to control the situation. An army of 150,000 US troops was sufficient to overcome the forces of Hussein, but was too small to bring order to a country of 25 million people (Tanner 249–250).

The fifth error of the Bush administration was the de-Ba’athification of the Iraqi security forces, which consisted of an army of 385,000 soldiers, 285,000 police officers and 50,000 officers in the presidential security services (Pffinner 80–82). Assuming that the soldiers and police officers from the time of Saddam Hussein posed a potential threat to both the formation of new government authorities, and to American units, it was decided to build Iraqi security forces from scratch (Dobbins et al. 53–55). Even then the Bush administration was warned about the consequences of such a decision. It was strongly suggested that Iraqi soldiers and police officers should continue to be paid in order to gain their support and minimize the risk of them joining the fight against the US coalition. Ignoring this criticism, instead of only removing loyalists to Saddam Hussein from the armed forces, a decision was made to dissolve all security structures, resulting in hundreds of thousands of destitute men left with no means to survive. It is worth noting that this substantial group not only had military training but also weapons, munitions and armored vehicles (See more: Slevin A01; Hirsh). It cannot be considered a coincidence that former officers of the army of Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi Intelligence personnel are currently in the ranks of the terrorist organization called the “Islamic State.” They have experience, tactics and useful knowledge in the form of battle plans and smuggling networks, which in the 1990s were used by the regime in order to avoid sanctions, and now make it easier for terrorists to illegally trade petrol (See more: Sly).

Another mistake the Bush administration made was the introduction of a ban against BASS party members seeking employment in the public sector, which during the reign of Saddam Hussein served him as a tool for controlling society and the country. Rather than only depriving the closest associates of Hussein employment, 85 to 100 000 people lost their jobs (*Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 1: De-Ba’Athification Of Iraqi Society*). A significant proportion of this number were rank and file party members who only joined its ranks in order to be able to remain employed. The result of this decision was not only an increase in frustration among the tens of thousands of educated people who could not find employment in Iraq, but also the depriving of sectors such as health, transport, energy, telecommunications and education of competent employees. Many of them joined the ranks of extremist groups, hoping that with the elimination of the occupier in the form of the American coalition, they would be able to play an important role in the new Iraq (Pffinner 76–80; Swansbrough 146).

Double Standards Used by the Americans an Obstacle to the Democratization of the Middle East?

Another mistake the Americans made that increased the problem of democratization of Iraq and the entire Middle East, was turning a blind eye to the unethical and illegal actions of US forces. Various events, such as the disclosure of information about the torture of prisoners in Abu Ghraib by US soldiers,⁵ the use of white phosphorus as a weapon in the battle of Fallujah,⁶ as well as the accidental shooting of civilians,⁷ resulted in an increase in anti-American sentiment in the region that undermined the credibility of the mission to promote US democracy in the Middle East. As a result, there has been an increase in anti-American sentiment around the world, which in turn facilitated the actions of terrorists who wanted to recruit volunteers to fight in defense of the Muslim world against the domination of the United States (See more: Datta 8; Nasr).

Another mistake made by President Bush was the lack of consistency between his statements and actions, the use of double standards in relation to regimes friendly to the United States, as well as being influenced by particular interests, rather than the common good. When issuing the decision to illegally attack Iraq, George W. Bush wanted to convince the public that this was a mission to free the oppressed Iraqis and bring them democracy. The main message was to show that US soldiers entered Iraq on moral grounds, in defense of innocent women and children from a brutal dictator (*President Bush Addresses the Nation*). An example of the use of double standards by this president of a superpower can be taken from his speech in November 2003 during the celebration of the 20th anniversary of an organization called the *National Endowment for Democracy*. During his lecture, he emphasized the contribution of Egypt in bringing peace to the Middle East. When referring to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he criticized Palestinian leaders for blocking reform and encouraging violence. In Bush's opinion, it was them, and not the Israeli authorities, that "were the main obstacle to peace." He praised the governments of Jordan and Kuwait for the way their elections had been conducted; Saudi Arabia for taking the first steps towards reform; and the government of Yemen for the introduction of a multi-party system (*Remarks by President*).

5 In May 2004, "The New Yorker" presented various cases of Americans torturing Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib where they were beaten, undressed, raped, electrocuted, led on a leash and had cold water poured over them (See more: Hersh).

6 In November 2004, during the battle of Fallujah, American soldiers used white phosphor not only to light the battle field (which is allowed by International Law) but also as a weapon (See more: Burns).

7 In April 2010, WikiLeaks published records that presented the murder of dozens of civilians in the suburbs of Bagdad by American soldiers (See more: *Collateral Murder*).

This speech is a clear example of double standards, using properly chosen arguments depending on whom the assessment is related to. Consequently, President Bush defended the faithful US ally – Israel, issued an unusually mild assessment of the pro-American governments of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan, where he saw significant progress in spreading freedom and democracy despite the fact that these countries routinely violated human rights, civil and political liberties, and the level of democracy, especially in Saudi Arabia, is not among the highest (*Arab Democracy*). The use of double standards has exacerbated the problems of the legitimacy of the American mission to spread democracy in the Middle East and progress in the process of democratization of the region. Other governments feared that, just like Iraq, they would lose their power through cooperation with the United States, and as a result they were very distrustful of American programs connected to political reform. Most of the population in the region was convinced that the Americans were more interested in their oil deposits than the good of the Iraqi people. Bush's critics accused him of a total lack of credibility in the implementation of US policy to promote democracy in the Arab world, and of creating favourable conditions for the development of Islamic extremism (Achcar).

The Lack of Consistency in the Implementation of Programs Promoting Democracy

Another mistake the Bush administration made was to allocate too little funds for the implementation of political reform programs and the lack of consistency in their implementation. Although the amount of \$600 million that Americans have spent since 2002 until today (*About MEPI*) for the implementation of grant programs such as MEPI seems to be considerable, compared to US spending on security in the region, the budget for the promotion of democracy in the Middle East is more symbolic than strategic. For comparison, annual US spending on military programs in Iraq is nearly \$400 million (McInerney et al.). The lack of consistency in the implementation of programs promoting democracy, meant that money was spent to support other initiatives than originally expected. For example, the MEPI program was designed in such a way that instead of supporting big government projects, it was to provide funding for smaller initiatives to build partnerships between NGOs and local civil society groups (See more: Yerkes et al.). The idea was that by supporting grassroots groups and building the foundations of civil society, Americans would have a better chance of adapting democracy in Iraq. While the concept was good, its implementation left much to be desired.

One of the distinguishing features of MEPI compared to other American programs was to be its refusal to finance government projects for the benefit of citizens'

initiatives. However, the vast majority of the funds, over 70 percent of the MEPI budget, was allocated to government programs, including workshops and seminars for Arab officials. Civil society projects were only allocated 18 percent of the budget. According to Sarah E. Yerkes and Tamara Cofman, this testifies to the fact that under the MEPI funded projects, no immediate controversy arose to question contemporary rulers, hence the American program operated within rules strictly defined by Arab governments (Yerkes et al.), most of which sought to maintain the status quo, and to not introduce major changes to the system (Yacoubian 14–16).

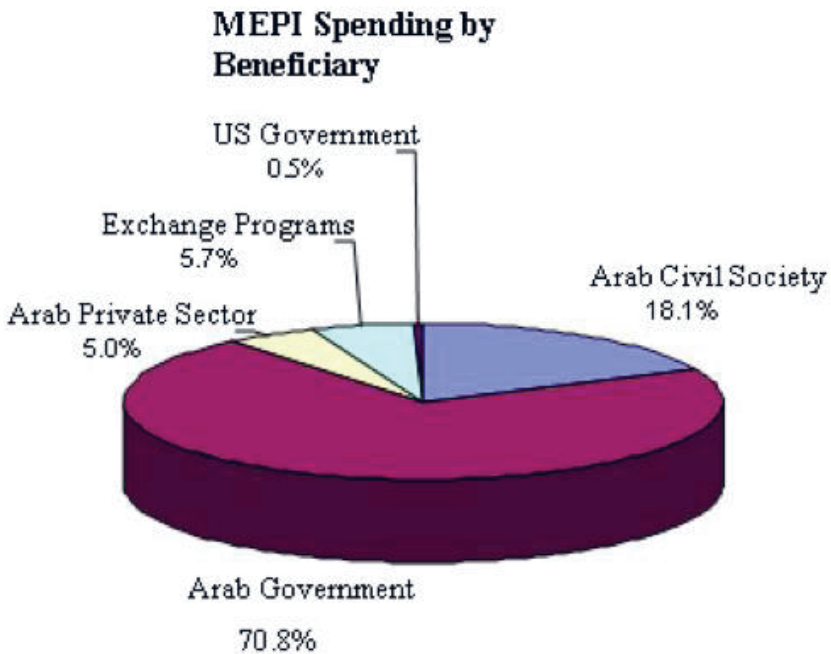


Chart 1. U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative Spending by Beneficiary
Source: Yerkes et al.

The plans of the Bush administration assumed the emergence of local leaders in civil society, which the Americans would provide with financial and technical support, while helping to develop grassroots movements, which in turn would lead to a velvet revolution dissolving the regimes present in the Arab countries. In fact, not much of MEPI funds were spent for this purpose. Most expenditures were earmarked to finance government projects, undermining the idea of the program and increasing mistrust among Arab activists who did not see MEPI as a tool to change the system (Yerkes et al.).

An American Style Democracy in Iraq?

Another mistake of the Bush administration was trying to bring democracy to Iraq, US-style, guaranteeing the right to vote in the new government for all citizens, which had to overcome ethnic and religious conflicts. The idea might have been well-meaning, but is it reasonable to question whether the Iraqis were ready for the introduction of democracy? In 2003, skeptics pointed to the fact that Iraqis were too fragmented a society for democracy to be maintained (See more: Byman). Given the unstable ground for the construction of democracy in Iraq, where after many years of rule by the Hussein regime and the war, the economy of the country was destroyed, fraught with economic sanctions, with no non-governmental political organizations, and enormous distrust between feuding ethnic and religious groups, an American-style democracy in Iraq seemed to be an unrealistic dream. This was confirmed many years later by Donald Rumsfeld himself. Rumsfeld acted as Secretary of Defense for the Bush administration, and was one of the main architects of the plans for the democratization of Iraq (See more: McCarthy). Even if democracy had a chance of being adopted in Arab countries, the Americans failed in its implementation. Assuming that local governments approached the plans of political reforms with great distance and distrust for fear of losing power, showing good practices and the teaching of democracy would not be sufficient. What was needed was also a strong incentive in the form of lucrative deals, such as accession to the World Trade Organization, as well as economic and financial assistance to countries that would decide to introduce political reforms (Yacoubian).

The problem was also the image of the United States, which no longer inspired confidence among the Arab states. The use of double standards in politics, human rights violations, and their use of torture, resulted in the weakening of the meaning, and even undermined the credibility of US initiatives associated with the rule of law, democracy and freedom in the region. Due to the fact that the American administration implemented political reform programs without wider consultation with the governments of Arab States, leaders looked for ulterior motives in the US initiatives, such as the desire to increase the control and influence of the superpower in Muslim countries (*The Greater Middle East Initiative*). This was especially true in the context of US access to oil and local markets, as well as the expansion of its network of military bases in the Middle East (Achcar). Some researchers emphasized that the strategic mistake was in not taking into account the role of political Islam, which could constitute the most powerful force for the proposed political changes in the Middle East (Yacoubian).

Iraq during the Reign of Nouri al-Maliki

Another mistake made by the Bush administration in 2006 was to support the candidate Nouri al-Maliki as prime minister of Iraq, with hope for the establishment of a consensus between the warring ethnic and religious groups in the region. He was to be a leader that would unite Iraq and lead it to democracy. Maliki, who during the Hussein regime was part of the opposition, quickly gained the support of the Iraqis and the Americans, thanks to announcements about bringing consensus between the minority Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish populations and declarations to withhold cooperation with Iran. However, it soon turned out that Maliki's statements about the desire for unity and putting the common good above any special interests proved to have no basis in reality. As indicated by the press, Maliki broke almost every promise he had given after his re-election as prime minister in 2010. Despite declaring a commitment to nominate candidates for Interior minister, Defense minister and Intelligence Chief, he did not fill these positions, and filled this power vacuum himself. He ruled with a strong hand, fighting and persecuting the opposition, breaking the law, and controlled the judiciary, police, army, intelligence services, media, and the income from crude oil. The amount of power he had was not much less than what Saddam Hussein had had. It was noted that "under these circumstances, renewed ethno-sectarian civil war in Iraq was not a possibility. It was a certainty" (Khedery).

Even if in the beginning it might have seemed that the holding of democratic elections, the emergence of government and the adoption of the constitution in Iraq would be beneficial for society, what occurred was that the foundations of a rickety democracy (See more: Kiwerska 2), "were replaced by an authoritarian ruler of several ethnic and sectarian autocrats" (Ghanim viii). Maliki effectively made sure that in the new democratic, sovereign and independent Iraq there would be no respect for civil liberties, the rule of law, and the constitution (Dodge). The withdrawal in December 2011 of American troops from Iraq removed the last barrier Maliki had to face before the introduction of the brutal repression of Sunni political leaders. Elections in Iraq can be described as a farce whose aim is to divide the spoils between the corrupt elites. Instead of the rule of law, the country is torn by corruption, nepotism and despotism. Behind the facade of democracy the most deprived are of course the people of Iraq, where nearly a quarter live in poverty without sustainable access to basic services, electricity or drinking water, while the government draws huge profits from oil exports (Mardini et al.). With all the inconveniences of everyday life, having access to satellite TV, the Internet and mobile networks is of little consolation for Iraqi citizens.

Haste was another mistake of the Bush administration, which wanted to hold elections, form a government and adopt a new constitution as soon as possible.

Writing a constitution was a much easier task than working out a political agreement and the allocation of power between Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds. It was faster to prepare a new constitution and announce “another success” in building democracy in Iraq (*Bush: America’s Security Directly Linked to Freedom in Middle East*), than to spend time on difficult long negotiations and talks. Rather than impose its political and economic model on the people, the Bush administration should have tried to understand the internal dynamics of the region. Imposing an artificial institutional framework within an apparent democracy can not solve social problems and is not a way of developing a political agreement based on mutual trust and partnership (Caryl). Some researchers have pointed out that despite the noble declarations of the Bush administration, it was not interested in committing itself to the long and slow process of building democratic institutions in the countries of the Middle East. According to James M. Lindsay, the US President gave a clear signal that the role of the superpower in the process of democratization of the region was reduced to overthrowing the rule of tyrants and giving the public the possibility to develop a democratic system on their own. The theory went like this – “we give people freedom and it is up to them to build a democracy” (See more: Reynolds).

The Future of Iraq – a Democratic State or a Fallen One?

When, in 2002, Iraqis went to the polls to choose a president, there was only one candidate on the ballot, namely Saddam Hussein, who had continuously ruled the country since 1979. Taking into account the statements of the Iraqi government, which indicated that 100% of those eligible to vote had participated in the elections (Trumbull IV et al. 332–333), it is visible that a common occurrence during the Hussein regime was the falsification and manipulation of data, forcing voters to vote under the threat of imprisonment. The next election the Iraqis participated in were held in completely different circumstances, after the overthrow of the Hussein regime, based on the new Constitution of 2005, which in the preamble announced “a new Iraq, an Iraq of the future free from sectarianism, racism, discrimination and exclusion” (*Iraqi Constitution*).

In 2005, Iraqis could choose a minister from six thousand candidates for a seat in Parliament. They invited international observers to monitor the proper conduct of elections. A huge opportunity for improving the situation and status of women in Iraq was the decision to ensure women 25% of the seats in parliament. The high turnout at the next elections in 2010, when more than 12 million Iraqis went to the polls, was declared a “milestone.” The media showed images of smiling and dancing people in the streets of Iraq (*Barack Obama hails Iraq election ‘milestone’*).

Therefore, can we conclude that democracy has prevailed in Iraq? If democracy was to be represented only by numbers – in this context, the turnout during elections or public support for the government, we could regard Iraq as a democratic country. However, when ranked in the Democracy Index, where the electoral process and pluralism are measured along with the functioning of the government, political participation, political culture and civil liberties, Iraq occupies 115th place out of 167 countries in the world in terms of the level of democracy (See more: *Democracy Index*).

Table 1. Democracy Index 2015

	Rank	Overall score	Electoral process and pluralism	Functioning of government	Political participation	Political culture	Civil liberties
Bosnia and Herzegovina	104	4.83	6.50	2.93	3.89	4.38	6.47
Nepal	105	4.77	3.92	4.29	4.44	5.63	5.59
Burkina Faso	106	4.70	4.42	4.29	4.44	5.63	4.71
Morocco	107	4.66	4.75	4.64	3.89	5.63	4.41
Nigeria	108	4.62	6.08	4.29	3.33	5.00	4.41
Mozambique	109	4.60	4.42	3.57	5.56	5.63	3.82
Palestine	110	4.57	4.75	2.14	7.78	4.38	3.82
Sierra Leone	111	4.55	6.58	1.86	2.78	6.25	5.29
Pakistan	112	4.40	6.00	5.71	2.78	2.50	5.00
Cambodia	113	4.27	3.17	5.71	3.33	5.00	4.12
Myanmar	114	4.14	3.17	3.57	4.44	6.88	2.65
Iraq	115	4.08	4.33	0.07	7.22	4.38	4.41
Armenia	116	4.00	4.33	2.86	4.44	2.50	5.88
Authoritarian							
Mauritania	117	3.96	3.00	4.29	5.00	3.13	4.41
Algeria	118	3.95	3.00	2.21	3.89	6.25	4.41

Source: Democracy Index 7.

In many cases, reality verified noble declarations, like the greater participation of women in political life. As it turned out, women in Iraq now have less political influence than in the entire period since the US invasion in 2003 (Schmidt et al.). It is a fact that they gained more rights “on paper,” but this did not translate into more political participation of women in Iraq. Al- Maliki, who reluctantly cast women in positions of government, made an exception for the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, which is seen more as a “ceremonial department” and is poorly financed and regarded as a minor portfolio (Salbi). It is no secret that the rights of women and children in Iraq are not observed, but the government, in violation of the Constitution and international law, wanted to go a step further, disregarding public opinion. In 2014, the Minister of Justice in Iraq put forward a legislative proposal which allows for, among others, the legalization of marriages between children and adults, lowering the age for girls to the age of nine. Up to now the legal age limit was 18, or 15 in the case of parental consent. Another controversial provision of the bill applies to the legalization of marital rape, to be legally permissible in the context of meeting the sexual requirements of a woman’s husband (McElroy).

Some people saw the ratification of the Iraqi Constitution in 2005 as “a significant milestone in the journey from Saddam Hussein’s authoritarian rule to democratic governance.” Theoretically, society gained the distribution and balance of power, elected by universal suffrage in the regular parliament, civil rights and liberties, and an independent judiciary system (Trumbull IV et al. 331–332). As it turned out, the practical application of democratic principles was not that simple. Not everyone saw the new Constitution of Iraq as a success. In contrast to the Americans, some Iraqis believed that “the new constitution emphasized differences and divisive issues rather than focusing on the uniting elements of Iraqi society.” Iraqi political scientist Saad N. Jawad gives two reasons for the errors committed by the Americans. The first reason was their obliviousness to the history of the Iraqi state and the Iraqi identity, limiting the Iraqi state to national minorities in the form of Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds. This resulted in the highlighting of differences and social problems instead of focusing on the common elements among Iraqis. As an example, he cites the American Constitution which focuses on unity and freedom as elements uniting and connecting the whole of its diverse society, despite the differences among them. The second reason for the errors made by the US administration was their haste. Because of the resistance of the Iraqi population against the occupation of their country, and a growing number of dead soldiers and civilians, Americans wanted to leave Iraq as soon as possible. They could not do so before the adoption of the Constitution, and therefore introduced an accelerated schedule of work on the document, so that President Bush could announce triumphantly that democracy in Iraq had been introduced. It is worth noting that the document that was to be fundamental for the functioning of society was prepared within two months. According to Jawad, this process completely ignored the fact that previously accelerated processes of constitution-making in other countries, such as Bosnia or Afghanistan, had ended in failure. This rush to draw up the Iraqi constitution meant the document had deep structural, legal and political drawbacks and shortcomings, from which emerged a number of disagreements, divisions and problems in the further process of the democratization of the country (Jawad 4–5).

An example is the situation after the elections of 2010, when the largest party al-Iraqi won the election, and wanted to form a government. The problem was that the Constitution of Iraq did not clearly specify who had the right to form a new government – whether it was the largest party or the largest coalition. At the request of al-Maliki, the federal court was asked to resolve the issue, and after a few months ruled that al-Iraqi had no right to form a new government. Given the fact that the head of the Federal Court was a member of the electoral list of al-Maliki, the judgment may have been very controversial, but not surprising. In this way, the right to form a new government was not given to the party

that won the elections, but to the one who took second place (*Dawa Party*). All because of the lack of clarity in the constitutional provisions and biased interpretation of the court (Jawad 21). Another example is the broad and loose provision in the Constitution giving the government the right to combat terrorism. Using its own interpretation of the rules, this provision allowed authorities to combat any backlash, not only against the political opposition. Examples are social demonstrations in Iraq in 2011 as part of the opposition to corruption and a demand by society to improve basic services. Breaking the right to freedom of expression given by the Iraqi constitution, the protest was brutally suppressed by the authorities. The numerous cases of arrests, and even the disappearance of opposition figures accused of “terrorist activities” (Jawad 23) with no concrete evidence, cannot be forgotten. Jawad claims that “the Constitution of Iraq is a major factor in consolidating this chaotic situation.” Given the fact that the war in Iraq occurred over a dozen years ago, after which Iraqis participated in four elections, in theory, the situation in Iraq should be better now than just after the invasion. In contrast, as statistics show, today Iraq is on the top of the list of the most dangerous and corrupt countries in the world (Jawad 21).

The problems of modern Iraq are not only ethnic differences and religious frustrations with a lack of access to drinking water, food, sanitation and electricity, massive unemployment and poverty, corruption, nepotism, lack of rule of law, political and economic instability, lack of respect for civil liberties, but also the low level of security resulting from the presence of the terrorist organization known as the “Islamic State.” On the one hand, the problems outlined above, and the last elections of 2014, carried out with the assistance of the army and police, with the deserted streets of Baghdad, closed stores, introduced prohibition of moving cars, dozens of victims of terrorist attacks (*Iraq elections kick off amid threat of bomb attacks, huge security presence*), testify to the fact that Iraq is closer today to a failed state (*Fragile States Index*) than the original vision of President Bush’s Iraq as a “City on the Hill” (See more: Byman), which would launch the process of democratic transformation throughout the Middle East.

On the other hand, we have to keep in mind that it took modern democratic societies generations to learn how to function in a democracy. After more than a decade since the US invasion of Iraq, we can only conclude that Iraq today is not a democracy, but it may be that the Iraqis need time to make mistakes, to develop consensus, and even their own form of a political system which will be adequate for their identity and cultural traditions, needs and the possibilities for society.

Table 2. Fragile States Index 2015

FRAGILE STATES INDEX 2015		TOTAL	DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURES	REFUGEES AND IDPS	GROUP GRIEVANCE	HUMAN FLIGHT	UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT	POVERTY AND ECONOMIC DECLINE	LEGITIMACY OF THE STATE	PUBLIC SERVICES	HUMAN RIGHTS	SECURITY APPARATUS	FACTIONALIZED ELITES	EXTERNAL INTERVENTION
1	South Sudan	114.5	9.8	10.0	10.0	6.9	8.8	9.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
2	Somalia	114.0	9.6	9.8	9.5	9.2	9.0	9.1	9.3	9.3	10.0	9.7	10.0	9.5
3	Central African Republic	111.9	8.4	10.0	9.6	6.9	9.7	8.3	9.5	9.9	10.0	9.8	10.0	9.8
4	Sudan	110.8	8.7	10.0	9.7	8.8	7.9	8.6	9.6	8.8	9.6	9.5	9.8	9.8
5	Congo (D. R.)	109.7	9.5	9.4	9.5	7.1	8.8	7.9	9.0	9.7	10.0	9.5	9.5	9.8
6	Chad	108.4	9.7	10.0	8.2	8.6	9.1	7.8	9.3	9.7	9.4	8.8	9.5	8.3
7	Yemen	108.1	9.2	9.1	9.4	7.5	8.1	9.3	9.3	8.2	9.1	10.0	9.4	9.5
9	Syria	107.9	8.1	10.0	10.0	7.4	7.0	7.5	9.9	8.2	10.0	10.0	9.9	9.9
8	Afghanistan	107.9	9.3	9.1	8.9	8.1	7.2	8.6	9.7	9.3	8.6	10.0	9.3	9.8
10	Guinea	104.9	9.0	8.7	8.7	7.2	7.6	9.2	9.9	9.8	8.2	8.9	9.6	8.1
11	Haiti	104.5	9.5	8.2	6.7	9.3	9.3	9.1	9.4	9.1	7.4	7.5	9.1	9.9
12	Iraq	104.5	8.2	8.9	10.0	8.1	7.8	6.9	9.2	7.5	8.9	10.0	9.6	9.4
13	Pakistan	102.9	9.0	8.9	10.0	7.0	7.3	7.7	8.6	7.9	8.4	9.6	9.2	9.3
14	Nigeria	102.4	8.8	7.5	9.9	7.1	8.8	7.6	9.1	9.1	8.8	9.9	9.8	6.0
15	Cote d'Ivoire	100.0	8.1	9.0	8.7	6.7	7.9	7.1	8.5	9.0	7.9	8.3	9.1	9.7
16	Zimbabwe	100.0	8.7	8.4	7.8	8.0	8.1	8.0	9.0	8.5	8.3	7.9	9.7	7.6

Source: Fragile States Index 35–36.

Conclusions

The plans of President George W. Bush to bring about the democratization of Iraq were wishful in character. He was interested in fast and spectacular effects; every stage of the democratization of Iraq was done in haste and often with a lack of reflection. It was wrongly assumed that the model of American democracy is so versatile that it can be adapted to all conditions. The artificially imposed model meant that the process of democratization in Iraq occurred very superficially, without deeper social change. In the current situation, in the absence of the rule of law, unfair court sentences, no respect for civil liberties, widespread corruption and nepotism, what is happening in Iraq is a democratic facade, with the authorities being closer to an authoritarian regime than a democratic one.

The fact is that the Bush administration did not plan in detail the democratization of Iraq. They started with the assumption that they would perform the hardest part of the job in the form of overthrowing the Hussein regime, and democracy would be implemented by a liberated and happy nation. As it turned out, the biggest challenge was the establishment of order and stability in Iraq after the overthrow of the dictatorship. A number of mistakes made by the Bush administration contributed to the failure of the mission of the democratization of the region. The very idea of democracy by force, imposed by another state was a wrong decision, and it influenced the development of extremism in Iraq and the emergence of terrorist groups like the "Islamic State," which now occupies considerable territory in Iraq and Syria. A lack of legitimacy from the UN for military intervention in Iraq, as well as supporting their arguments with false evidence, only strengthened the argument jihadists had in recruiting new members to fight against the American occupation. Haste in making important decisions played a key role in the mistakes. The lack of properly developed plans for the stabilization of Iraq, the dissolution of the Iraqi security forces and the ban on working in the public service for members of the BASS party, deprived key sectors of skilled workers and expanded the circle of people willing to fight against the Americans. In addition, the implementation of US programs for political reform left much to be desired. Due to the reluctance on the part of Arab states, the majority of implemented programs dealt with economic aid. The reluctance stemmed from two reasons – fear that the example of Iraq in other Arab countries would lead to the overthrowing of their governments by force, and the double standards applied by the Americans in relation to the friendly pro-American regimes whom the US praised for their democratic progress (e.g. Egypt). The key for the growth of anti-American sentiment in the region was the disclosure of the use of torture by Americans against Iraqi prisoners.

Haste also had a negative impact on the shape of the new constitution, which instead of providing the foundation for a functioning democratic system is a tool used by the authorities to interpret laws according to their interests and legitimacy

of their unlawful activities. A mistake of the Bush administration was to trust Maliki, who was to lead Iraq to democracy, freedom and the rule of law, but in fact sought to introduce an authoritarian regime. Rather than solve the problems of ethnic and religious conflict, he exacerbated the conflict which led to the growth of extremism in Iraq. He effectively made sure that civil liberties, the rule of law and the Constitution would not be respected within the country, resulting in the current situation in Iraq, which is closer to a failed state than a democracy.⁸

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⁸ The text was written in 2016.

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