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James M. Duhe
SUNY Geneseo

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Imposing Democracy: State Building and the War on Terror

Submitted by James M. Duhe



Abstract

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 fundamentally reprioritized US foreign policy. In this environment the Bush administration crafted what came to be known as the Bush Doctrine. Though a precise definition of the Bush Doctrine remains contested, definitions typically include the idea that the United States may preemptively attack countries harboring terrorists, and that the US should support the spread of democracy. But, after eight years, the United States is not safer. This paper analyzes democratization as a theory and as an element of the Bush Doctrine through case studies of Iraq and Afghanistan. By tying the notion of victory in the War on Terror to democratization, the United States has angered many Afghans and Iraqis, wasted an enormous amount of resources, and damaged its relations with other countries. Overall, efforts by the Bush administration to impose democracy in these countries have counterproductive at combating terrorism. I conclude with policy prescriptions for the Obama administration, namely that America must remove itself from the political processes of Iraq and Afghanistan, rebuild ties with the international community, and develop a strategy for complete American withdrawal from these areas.

Since September 11, 2001 terrorism has been a chief concern of American national security. The days of US protection from foreign threats because of its geography are long gone. Al Qaeda displayed not only its ability to attack the United States, but that it was capable of doing so from American soil. From lone snipers to anthrax delivered through the mail, Americans became acutely aware of the potential for additional terrorist attacks. Fortunately, many experts agree that terrorists generally lack the logistical capabilities necessary to inflict mass casualties. Unfortunately, terrorists are constantly working to overcome these obstacles. Instead of conducting grandiose attacks, terrorists may use smaller, inexpensive strikes that require low levels of technical expertise and training. Regrettably, states (especially liberal democracies like the United States) have great difficulty countering this approach toward violence. States are bound by international norms and laws. Democracies like the United States are further constrained in the application of violence and surveillance in counterterrorism by popular consent. Given the ability of terrorist organizations to adapt and overcome state defenses, alternative methods are needed for states to preserve their national security from terrorist attacks.

In this environment, the Bush administration crafted what would later

become known as the Bush Doctrine. Although the precise definition of the Bush Doctrine is still in dispute, definitions typically include legitimizing preemptive strikes against perceived aggressors and using United States—supported democratization as a weapon in the “War on Terror” (for example, see Monten 2005). American backed democratization is a particularly interesting element of the War on Terror because it was a subtle tool capable of changing both government and citizenry. However, despite attempts by the Bush administration to use democratization to further its foreign policy agenda of eliminating terrorism, democratization in Iraq and Afghanistan has proved disastrous. In this paper, I will show how despite rational theoretical backing, problems resulting from the pledge to democratize Iraq and Afghanistan have greatly diminished America’s capability to wage the War on Terror.

Definitions and Terms

For this study, it is important that the language used be as clear as possible. Thus, for the purpose of this essay, I must define several words. Essential to my argument is democratization. For this term, I borrow a definition from Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder’s book *Electing to Fight*. To democratize is to, “try to create favorable institutional conditions in the sequence most likely to foster successful, peaceful democratic transitions” (2007, 16). This definition is exceptional because it identifies the essence of democracy (governance with popular sovereignty rested in the will of the people); but, does not necessitate a successful transition to democracy. This is important be-

cause, despite best intentions, there is no guarantee that democratization will actually result in the formation of a democratic state. This is very logical. Since it is impossible to predict the future, how can a reasonable definition of democratization be contingent on the emergence of a democratic state? Additionally, within the span of human history, no state is eternal. While the United States has been a relatively stable democracy for over the past 150 years, there is no guarantee that autocracy will not prevail in 100 years. It would be unfair to discount the long history of American democracy because of the potential emergence of an autocratic state in the future. The central argument of this paper regards the problems associated with continued American presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. Thus, to understand the motivations for continuous American involvement in these two countries, it is vital to perceive democratization as a process rather than a result.

War on Terror is the next important term to define. War on Terrorism, Global War on Terrorism, War on Terror, and terrorist are terms that were widely used by the Bush administration to describe and define its counterterrorist activities since 9-11. One of the largest obstacles to any serious study of US policy since this time has been the disambiguation of such confusing language. Discouragingly, the Bush administration made no effort to clarify its terms. In fact, in the case of prisoner detentions at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, the Bush administration intentionally obfuscated these terms to provide leeway in gathering intelligence (Hersh 2004, 264). Thus, since the Bush administration has not identified

precise definitions, we must therefore look towards a practical usage. For this paper, I adapt Bruce Hoffman's definition and define terrorism as any attack conducted by a substate actor with the intent to cause fear in a given population achieve as an end (Hoffman 2006, 33). A "terrorist" is any person who commits an act of terrorism. Finally, terror is an emotion that can be evoked through acts of terrorism.

The decision to limit terrorism to the attacks of substate actors is very intentional. Admittedly, this is a hotly debated topic in the field of counterterrorism. Many argue some states have intentionally attacked civilians with the intention of instilling fear just like a substate actor would. Proponents of this belief might argue that actions by Nazis in concentration camps during the Holocaust should be considered terrorism just like the actions of the 9-11 hijackers; all human suffering caused by terrorism is equal. Thus, some might perceive separation between state-sponsored terrorism and substate terrorism, as unnecessary, ultimately reducing the effectiveness of counterterrorism at combating human suffering. However, allowing state sponsored terrorism into this discussion will becloud the topic at hand. The states of interest in my investigation are Afghanistan and Iraq. Prior to the American invasion in these countries, governments were brutally authoritarian. Both states would frequently commit horrible acts against citizens with the intent of inciting fear. Thus, the two groups must be separated if only to distinguish the actions of the former Iraqi and Afghani regimes from the actions of current substate groups currently in these countries.

Obviously Global War on Terrorism, and the War on Terrorism do not connote the same thing. Furthermore, neither of these terms actually describes American counterterrorist policy since September 11, 2001. To be at war with terrorism is to be at war with an action. In this sense, an analogous policy to the War on Terrorism is the equally ineptly named American War on Illegal Immigration. Both illegal immigration and terrorism are abstract concepts. Although one might be able to identify a perpetrator of terrorism just as one may be able to identify an illegal immigrant, it is impossible to single out illegal immigration or terrorism. Because it is intangible, terrorism cannot be fought on a battlefield. One could attack terrorism insofar as the causes of terrorism could be eliminated, but attacking terrorism itself does not really mean anything. Because of this, neither of these terms will be used in my paper.

It is worth mentioning that another problem with the phrase Global War on Terrorism is that it alludes to US counterterrorist activity on a scale that is much larger than reality. America has made no great effort to eliminate terrorist movements that do not threaten US interests. For example, US activity to destroy the PKK or the Tamil Tigers has been notoriously absent from the War. Some may argue that this absence is actually a tactic in itself (Byman 2009, 472). By not going to war against all terrorism everywhere, the United States is less likely to draw the ire of terrorist groups that might otherwise have left America alone. Really, the War on Terror is with the terrorists who seek to harm the United States. For all these reasons, Global War on Terror is an

inappropriate term to describe U.S. policy since 9-11.

I argue that War on Terror is the most suitable term to describe current US action. First, War on terror eliminates ambiguity in distinguishing between a terrorist and a freedom fighter who employs terrorism. It treats both of these groups the same. So long as a person uses terror to advance his agenda he is a terrorist and may be attacked by the United States. Furthermore, war on terror does not imply intent to eliminate terrorism itself. This is a necessary element in any description of current US counterterrorist policy since terrorism, as was just discussed, is virtually impossible to eliminate.

I would be remiss to ignore the recent change in recent policy changes made by the Obama administration regarding terminology. In March 2009, the Obama administration stated it was removing the term Global War on Terrorism and all similar terms from the lexicon of United States foreign policy (Baker 2009). Interestingly, the phrase chosen to replace War on Terror is Overseas Contingency Operation. Such a gesture was certainly intended to eliminate the implication that the United States is at war with Islam, and to break from the unending dedication of American resources to counterterrorism. As will be discussed later, I can certainly agree with these goals. However, the new term the Obama administration has chosen is not particularly good either. Breaking down the phrase, the first word is rather misleading. While it may be true that many of the fronts in the War on Terror are across the ocean, this is certainly not always the case. The idea to form the

Department of Homeland Security, was created immediately following 9-11, and was intended to “create a comprehensive and shared” national vision for the purpose of “defeating terrorism” (Office of Homeland Security 2002, i). The Bush administration correctly viewed the need for both domestic and international efforts to eliminate terrorism. By renaming the War on Terror as an overseas activity, appreciation for the utility of a two-pronged approach to fighting terrorists may be forgotten. The word “Contingency” is mystifying. For what activity is the exercise of American might strength a contingency? Diplomacy against terrorist is not an option. As stated, substate actors are less susceptible to the sticks and carrots of traditional diplomacy. The only word that accurately describes U.S. policy is Operation, which is really a meaningless term on its own. Since this term does a very poor job at actually describing American policy, I believe it would be best to continue using the term War on Terror.

American Motivations

Let us now turn to the reasons for US democratization. After all, there must have been some purpose to the efforts that have now cost the United States almost \$864 billion (United States Congress Congressional Research Service, 16). A historical approach is best for understanding current motives. Realpolitick has typically guided American efforts at regime change (Pie Minxin, Amin Samia, and Garz Seth 2006, 64). “Only [since the early twentieth century has America’s political ideals and its need to sustain domestic support for] nation-building compelled it to try to establish democratic rule in target nations.” (Pie et al.

2006, 65) To look beyond such gross simplifications of US policy as, “blood for oil,” the Bush administration’s motives for invading and democratizing Iraq and Afghanistan certainly included security. Afghanistan had been the safe haven for al Qaeda under the Taliban. In fact, al Qaeda underwent much of its organizational development in Afghanistan during the 1980s while fighting the Soviets. In what turned out to be a tragic irony, much of al Qaeda’s development occurred as a direct result of American armament and training of mujahedeen during the Soviet Invasion (Bhutto 2008, 112-114). As al Qaeda was discovered to be the principal organizer of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, it was no surprise that the United States saw Afghanistan as a major battleground in the War on Terror.

The case of Iraq was a bit more complicated. Initially, the United States claimed that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) it had acquired through a covert weapons development program (Galbraith 2006, 70). Had this been the case, Iraq would have been in violation of numerous international laws; notably, United Nations Security Council Resolutions 687, 678 and 1441 which all explicitly forbade Iraq from possessing or developing WMDs after the 1991 Gulf War. This breach of international law is obviously serious, but even if Iraq had possessed such weapons, it lacked the delivery system necessary to attack the U.S such as intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Nevertheless, the Bush administration argues that the Iraqi government under Saddam Hussein had the potential for selling

or distributing WMDs to enemies of America. Admittedly, this was rather unlikely. The secular Arab-nationalist Ba’ath Party (Iraq’s governing party) would have been a strange bedfellow for the Sunni Islamist al Qaeda. An example of this disconnect is exemplified by Osama bin Laden’s offer to Saudi King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz al Saud of the use of al Qaeda forces to defend Saudi Arabia from Iraq during the first Gulf War. Although the offer was not accepted, it underscores the acrimonious relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda. Nevertheless, the Bush administration argued that an Iraqi alliance with al Qaeda against the United States was possible, thereby exacerbating American fear of terrorism. Given the stakes in nuclear conflicts, the fear created by the Bush administration was strong enough to cull dissent, even from many Democrats in Congress (Althaus and Largio 2006, 4). No American wanted to be responsible for opposing regime change in Iraq if the connection between the two groups were true.

In both cases, United States policy was to effect regime change. The Taliban was deposed because of the asylum it granted to al Qaeda operative. Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, the President of a country the United States believed was in contravention of international law and conspiring with terrorists, was removed from power as well. But once the dust settled after the invasions, new governments were needed for the two countries. To strengthen its national security, the United States needed to ensure that any successor government would be friendlier towards the United States than its predecessor. One possibility was for American instillation of a

dictatorship (as had been the hallmark of US foreign policy throughout the Cold War). However, American officials likely realized the danger in empowering dictators in already unstable countries particularly given the nature of terrorism. Arguably, support of dictatorships and authoritarianism was what led to the conditions in Afghanistan and Iraq in the first place. Instead, the Bush administration turned to democratization as the answer to its security dilemma.

Forging a Democratic Peace

In his essay "Perpetual Peace" written in 1795, the political philosopher Immanuel Kant outlined what he believed would be necessary to stop states from going to war with one another. Although the terminology differs slightly between Kant's time and today, he essentially argued for three things: that all countries to democratize, that the depth and number of involvements of states in Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) increase, and that international trade increase (Kant [1795] 1970, 93-98). Kant reasoned that democracies only tend to go to war in self defense (Kant [1795] 1970, 98). Thus, if all countries were democracies, there would be no war.

A democratic Iraq and Afghanistan would certainly not have been the end to all war everywhere. Nevertheless, the Bush administration reasoned that if these countries became democratic, they would absorb democratic ideals, and be likely to attack, or support attacks perpetrated against, the United States (Gause III, 2005). Of course, changing the "hearts and minds" of potential terrorist was an important goal. A strictly

state-focused approach would not necessarily have influenced subgovernmental terrorist groups. Theoretically however, encouraging democracy would also help diminish the potential for terrorism. The diminished potential would be through the growth of robust civil societies. The London School of Economics provides an excellent definition of civil society as, "the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. Civil society is theoretically divorced from activities of the state, though in practice, this relationship may be negotiated" (London School of Economics, 2004). This concept is certainly familiar to Americans. From local religious groups to political action groups, Americans participate in many different manifestations of civil society. Important to this discussion is that many groups in civil society seek to effect change. Civil society provides a medium through which citizens can express discontent with the status quo without resorting to violence. Furthermore, to extrapolate from the theories of Ashtoush Varshney, the associations created by civil society might even help prevent the emergence of violence amongst Iraqis. This was an important consideration because of the deconstructed power relationship during the former Hussein regime between ruling Sunni and the demographically dominant Shi'a (not to mention the Kurds in Northern Iraq. Thus, in the aftermath of the Iraq and Afghanistan invasions, the United States began reestablishing the two countries as democracies.

To their credit, the Bush administration realized some of the serious roadblocks to democracy in these two states, and did attempt to remove them. Immediately after

the invasions, the Bush administration lifted many of its trade barriers with Iraq and Afghanistan. Theoretically, this enabled more international trade for the two countries. Furthermore, the United States brought in the Army Corps of Engineers and hired over 180,000 independent contractors to assist in the reconstruction of state infrastructure. As of August 2008 this has cost the United States Government over \$100 billion for Iraq alone (United States Congress. Congressional Budget Office 2008, 16). Ironically much of the infrastructure had been destroyed either as a direct result of American attacks during the invasion or by indigenous pillaging immediately following them. Assisting in infrastructure projects supported the development of business, in turn, promoting international trade. Furthermore, by providing Iraqis with basic amenities, the United States was clearly reaching out to the Iraqi polity in the hopes that a future elected government would not be explicitly anti-American.

The situation in Afghanistan was even worse than the situation in Iraq. Larry Goodson explains, "After conflict or regime change, societies usually require some degree of reconstruction... but the destruction in Afghanistan in late 2001 was far beyond what is usually encountered in such disrupted societies" (2006, 153). Because of this major issue, the United States relied on anti-Taliban groups to establish a process for transitioning sovereignty of Afghanistan to a freely-elected Afghan government rather than a US led coalition force (Goodson 2006, 157). This process, as laid out in the Bonn Accords, was obviously a pivotal step

in establishing democracy in Afghanistan. Democratic governance is impossible without a democratically elected government. By relying on local Afghans to establish democracy, the United States – specifically the military – was free to fighting Taliban forces in the Afghan countryside. However, the lack of benchmarks for successful democratization combined with the inability of the United States to eradicate the Taliban from Afghanistan has prolonged the American presence without any end in sight.

Democratic Peace Theory (DPT) may have been a feasible solution for stopping terrorism, so long as it was executed properly. Although invasion and subsequent democratization are inherently state-level actions, the Bush administration believed these methods better than the alternative of trying to root out specific terrorist organizations. To a degree, they were correct. It is very difficult to completely destroy a terrorist group. First, simply finding a group may prove problematic. Obviously, as a subgovernmental group, there is no terrorist "state." Nor is there necessarily a need for one. With the advent of high-speed internet and the pervasiveness of telecommunications, terrorists can live virtually anywhere. Nevertheless, terrorist groups are attracted to weak and failed states such as Afghanistan or post-invasion Iraq (Gvosdev and Takeyh. 2009, 80). Weak and failed states may either be too weak to eliminate terrorists, or may even collude with certain organizations. This relationship provides terrorists with official documentation such as visas for travel, and provides a safe haven during the counterterrorist offensives of other countries. This was certainly the case for Afghanistan

which, under the Taliban, had worked with al Qaeda to train the Afghan military from 1997-2001 (Wright 2006, 355). For countries like the United States, the protection afforded to terrorist groups in weak and failed states from international norms respect state sovereignty can seriously infringe on effective counterterrorist campaigns (Patrick 2009, 102).

Another problem for most counterterrorist activity is identifying the organizational structure of terrorist organizations. Unlike the hierarchical style of “old terrorism,” “new terrorism” is characterized by its nodal quality. Cells operate independently, and there is no direct links up or down a chain of command. Lacking the ability to link one terrorist to another, it is almost impossible to determine the size and leadership of a terrorist group. Furthermore, since the cells operate independently, “leadership” may even be an antiquated concept in the organizational structure of terrorist groups. When the United States attacked Afghanistan, and killed or capture many of who it believed to be top al Qaeda leaders, the movement did not die. In fact, as of this writing, Taliban forces have conquered much of the Swat region, just over the border in Pakistan. Even with Osama bin Laden in hiding, branches of al Qaeda live on and continue to fight and recruit. This resiliency combined with other qualities of new terrorism such as religious motivations and a desire to maximize casualties calls for a non-state focused response (Howard 2009, 113). Since terrorists do not control states, they cannot be dealt with through coercion or tribute. To them, victory is zero-sum. Ad-

mittedly, the very notion of a “new” terrorism versus and “old” terrorism is debated. However, the characteristics of the terrorists fought in the War on Terror resemble “new terrorists” rather than “old terrorists.” This is why I distinguish between the two groups.

It was not entirely unreasonable for the Bush administration to believe that its attempts to democratize Afghanistan and Iraq should have been successful. Since WWII America has successfully democratized two states: Japan and West Germany. Both of these democracies emerged from war-ravaged countries after having been previously ruled by authoritarian governments. Democratization occurred in both places despite a recent cult-of-personality surrounding the former leader as well (particularly salient for Iraqi reconstruction). Furthermore, since these countries democratized, neither had been involved in an international conflict. In fact, since WWII, Japan has not developed an official offensive military (albeit, this tradition sprang from provisions established in a Constitution drawn up by American military officials (Ike 1950, 24)). If the United States could harness the characteristics of successful democratization in Japan and West Germany, perhaps it would be possible to turn Afghanistan and Iraq into democracies as well.

Taken at face value, the reasons for, the Bush administration’s invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan are fairly reasonable. States, unlike amorphous terrorist groups, are easily identifiable and targetable by the military. The services these states provided to al Qaeda could be reduced or eliminated entirely through regime change. Democratization, had it been carried out properly,

could have further reduced the potential for terrorism.

The Shortcomings of Democratization

With such a theoretically sound theory for democratization, why has democratization in Iraq and Afghanistan been a hindrance to the War on Terror? The answer lies in how democratization has been shaped by political elites to define success in the two countries. In Afghanistan, after the initial invasion, the United States spent most of its time fighting against Taliban in the hills of Afghanistan. The United States correctly believed that by creating a secure environment in Afghanistan, it would be more likely that a democratic government could flourish (Fukuyama 2006, 234). However, neither the safe environment nor democracy ever emerged. To this day that United States military continues to fight against Taliban and al Qaeda forces throughout Afghanistan. The fighting is so intense that in late March 2009, President Barak Obama ordered an additional 17,000 troops to Afghanistan to “partner with Afghan security forces and go after insurgents along the border” (Obama 2009). Because of this instability, the Afghan national government has yet to gain control over the whole country. Facing internal insurrection, a burgeoning illegal drug trade, and a lack of infrastructure, Afghanistan has been unable to develop into the democracy necessary for DPT to take effect. Democracy has become the single criteria for victory in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, it has proven elusive.

As discussed earlier, before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the United States used the

presence of WMDs and the association of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden as a *casus belli*. So certain was the United States that it would encounter weapons of mass destruction during the invasion that media personnel were imbedded into American military squadrons (Galbraith 2006, 86—87). However, after the invasion, in an international investigation by members of the Coalition of the Willing to determine if Saddam Hussein possessed WMDs at the time of the invasion. The report came back negative (Duelfer 2004). Internationally embarrassed and responsible for a failed state, the United States began to democratize Iraq. Admittedly, Iraq needed reconstruction independent of the presence or absence of weapons of mass destruction. However, for lack of any other legitimate reason for the invasion, the U.S. turned to democratization as the criteria for success. Thus, democratization, while a theoretically sound means of encouraging peace, has become an excuse for a continued American presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is this continued presence that has caused serious damage to the ability of the United States to wage the War on Terror.

The Problems of Continued United States Presence

Angry Afghanistan, Infuriated Iraq

One of the most obvious problems resulting from a continued U.S. presence based on democratization has been the anger aroused in Iraqi and Afghani citizens. Instead of being greeted, as Vice President Richard Cheney predicted, as “liberators,” Coalition troops have been met with intense and overt hostility. It is far outside the

scope of this essay to discuss the legitimacy of this anger. However, suffice to say that it exists, and it has a significant impact on how Iraq and Afghanistan have undergone democratic changes. It should be noted that anger is not necessarily just a negative element in state building. In fact, history has shown that anger can be used as a catalyst for regime change. However, anger, particularly when anger causes violence, makes the emergence of democratic institutions much less likely (*Electing to Fight*). As the United States continues its stay in Iraq and Afghanistan on the grounds that a democratic state will eventually emerge, this anger is counterproductive for achieving American objectives.

The emergence of religiously motivated political parties and ethnic separatist movements must be considered regarding their impact on democratization. Rather than address the specific goals of particular organizations, it is most useful to group them together when analyzing their impact on democratization efforts. For example, while one group may want an Iraqi Sunni state while another may desire a free Kurdish state, the most important aspect of these groups is that they all inhibit the ability of the US to engage in state-building, and have damaged Iraqi or Afghani conceptions of national unity.

Although the amount of money and manpower spent on private contractors to rebuild Iraq and Afghanistan has been immense, by far the United States military has played the largest role in reconstruction. Not only has the American military engaged in civil reconstruction, but its efforts to pro-

vide security to the two countries are indispensable for the emergence of democratic states. Although there is no clear, universal answer as to precisely what is needed and in what order conditions need to emerge to create democracy. Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder (from whom my definition for democratization was taken) have written extensively since 1995 regarding the ordering of democratic institutions necessary for democracy to emerge. These two scholars argue in their book *Electing to Fight* that without the development of democratic institutions there can be no security, and thus, democracy, much less DPT, will not function. Others may claim that without security there can be no democratic institutions, obviously inhibiting democracy (Forman 2006, 196). No matter which side of this chicken—egg debate the reader falls, suffice to say that security is an crucial element important part to the state building process.

Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier in this essay, terrorist attack methodology is remarkable for its simplicity, destructive capability and inability to be detected. Thus, despite its superior weaponry and training, one of the greatest threats to the American military in Iraq and Afghanistan has been terrorist attacks. Roadside bombs and small arms fire are a constant problem for the American military, and the costs of carrying out these attacks as opposed to preventing them seriously favors the attacker over the victim (Howard 2009, 113). Thus, while the United States has pegged victory in the War on Terror on the emergence of democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is attempting to create democracy in an environment extremely hostile to the American presence.

Now consider how all of this within the context of the emergence of religiously motivated political organizations and separatist movements on democratization. These two types of organizations are considered linked in this essay because they share an important characteristic: they both tend to reject US involvement in state development. In Iraq, separatist movements cannot support US efforts because, at present, the US is not attempting to break up the Iraqi state. Admittedly, this is not always the case. Until 2006, prior to the Bush administration's troop "surge" in which an additional 30,000 troops were deployed to Iraq, the idea of a three state system was very possible. This is exemplified by the January 2005 referendum in which Iraqis in the Northern Kurdish region voted for their independence from the rest of Iraq. (Galbraith 2006, 193) Even though the Kurds in Northern Iraq had been an invaluable asset to the United States during the 2003 invasion, allowing the region to secede from the Iraqi state was an untenable solution for the Bush administration and the Maliki government. To allow a portion of Iraq to remove itself from the negotiating table regarding Iraqi reconstruction could have opened the floodgates for secession by other groups.

Afghanistan is in a different situation, but one no less hindered by separatist organizations. To fully grasp the difference, it should be recognized that the American invasion in 2001 was done with significant assistance by native Afghans. The United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (UFI, and known to Western media as the "Northern Alliance") had worked exten-

sively with the United States and Great Britain during the 2001 invasion. Immediately following the capture of Kabul, the UFI packed government positions with its cadres (Weinbaum 2006, 127). However, the ethnic composition of the North Alliance was such that it was dominated by Tajiks, Panjshiris, and Uzbeks; all relative minorities in Afghanistan. Absent from the alliance, and thus, the new government, were Pashtuns and Shia Muslim Hazaras which were the largest groups in Afghanistan, but whose members resided in eastern and southern parts of the country. As the Afghan bureaucracy became occupied by Northern Alliance loyalists, warlords from southern and eastern Afghanistan began to see perceive the newly formed Afghan government as illegitimate (Weinbaum 2006, 129). Thus, while the United States concerned itself with security in Afghanistan, the Afghan national government proved ineffective at governing in areas much beyond Kabul.

As for the specific dangers posed to democratization by religiously motivated political parties, distrust among Sunni and Shiites in Iraq almost caused a breakup of the state (Galbraith, 2006, 181-208). Iraqis Shiites, the majority Muslim faction in Iraq, had been the dominant force in drafting the Iraqi Constitution. Of course, Shiite dominance of the constitutional process was unacceptable to Sunni Iraqis who, with the De-Baathification of the Iraqi government, had already begun to see democratization as a not-so-subtle effort to remove Sunnis from the governing process. Furthermore, attempts by the Sunnis to take control of the government through democratic reform

were viewed by many former Ba'athists as a threat to their power. This caused Sunni representatives to object to "nearly everything that was proposed," (Galbraith 2006, 194) Subsequent attempts by the United States by the United States to pacify Sunni dissent ostracized the Shiite majority who felt that America was not really interested in forming a genuine democracy. Religious political parties were the logical outcome. They acted a the perfect venue for Sunnis to extend their political control over the process. As a minority group, political power was at a premium of importance.

With power concentrated in a few groups, and with the groups competing for power, sectarian violence erupted on a horrific scale. Sunni groups attacked Shiia groups and vice versa. With each attack came retaliations. Bigger attacks yielded bigger retaliation. The massive upswing in sectarian violence after the 2006 bombing of the al Askari Mosque is an excellent example of the blood feud that consumed Iraq. Retaliations were common. It is believed that the bombing was the immediate cause of as many as 165 deaths, and most likely contributed to the upswing in violence that occurred for the months after the attack where average deaths per day rose from 11 to 34. (Galbraith 2006, 246) The violence was so prominent, a US intelligence reports released as late as August 2007 noted the disturbing frequency of sectarian violence as a major obstacle in establishing peace in Iraq.

Essentially, the political motivated religious groups and the separatist movements were fulfilling the gap in civil society generated by the destruction of the old re-

gimes. Civil society is the lifeblood of democracy. Ashutosh Varshney , a scholar on ethnic conflict and civic life, defines civil society as "the part of our life that exists between the state on one hand and families on the other that allows people to come together on a variety of issues (2002, 4). Without the connections made through civil society, Varshney posits that the potential for violence in communities will increase. Although Varshney wrote these words of wisdom regarding the relationships between Hindus and Muslims in India, the same statement could easily be applied to Sunnis, Shi'a and Kurds in Iraq, or Tajiks and Pashuns in Afghanistan. Without civil society there is violence, and as violence increases, the likelihood of democratization decreases.

The Poppy Production Dilemma

The inability to administer governance on the part of the Afghan national government has enabled a massive upswing in the production of poppy in parts of Afghanistan. Afghanistan possess little arable land. Rocky, dry, and lacking even basic infrastructures in some regions, it is very difficult for Afghan farmers to scratch out a living. Because of the inhospitable climate, Afghanistan's main agricultural products are limited essentially to the few things that can grow easily. Among these are certain types of nuts, figs, and poppy. Poppy, a plant from which opium can be extracted, is used in the production of many types of narcotics such as heroin and morphine. These drugs are intensely lucrative, and their production poses a serious concern for the fledgling Afghani government. Lawlessness and poor infrastructure makes the logistics of curtailing the production of poppy very difficult.

Nevertheless, the unmitigated production of these goods can be very harmful. Drugs production and sale are a problem for any government, particularly those with poor domestic support facilities (rehabilitation centers, public health care clinics, etc.). Furthermore, the sale of poppy has been linked to narco-terrorism, and is a chief element in terrorist funding (Weinbaum 2006, 133). Ironically, during the reign of the Taliban, poppy production had been outlawed. However, after the Northern Alliance came to power, and certainly after the Northern alliance lost the ability to administer government across Afghanistan, poppy production has reached an all-time high (Weinbaum 2006, 126). Thus, the United States and the newly formed Afghan government finds itself in the tenuous position of both needing to stop the production of a crop that can be synthesized into a controlled substance, and the need for farmers to subsist. The United States has placed itself in a no-win situation regarding poppy production. If the United States destroys poppy crops to discourage narco-terrorism, it harms the wellbeing of Afghan farmers thereby decreasing the likelihood of the emergence of a middle class and harming democratization (Moore 1966, xxii). If the United States allows the poppy crops to grow, previous efforts to stabilize Afghanistan are undermined. No matter what it does, America is hemorrhaging resources. A continued American presence based on the emergence of a democratic state will only prolong the bleeding.

Unending Investment

The central theme of this paper is how continued American presence in Iraq

and Afghanistan in the name of democratization has reduced the ability of the United States to wage the War on Terror. A strained and previously engaged military, damaged American confidence in political leadership, and the accumulation of massive debt from invasion and reconstruction all reduced the ability of the United States to respond to future dangers. In this section, I will explore how and why these costs have accumulated.

Speaking in fiscal terms, the war has cost Americans a phenomenal sum of money. In a Congressional report released October 15, 2008, Congress admitted to allocating almost one trillion dollars to fighting the War on Terror (including all invasion and reconstruction activity in Afghanistan and Iraq) (United State Congress Congressional Report Service 2008, 16). This number is incredible. It is almost one thirteenth of average annual American GDP (Purchasing Power Parity) in 2007 (World Bank, 2007). Some critics of the War on Terror even claim this number is deflated. Joseph E. Stiglitz, a Nobel-prize winning economist, claims the costs of the war could actually be as high as \$4 trillion (HERSZENHORN, 2008). To appreciate these numbers, think of how this money was not used. Even if the money was still only used to reduce the threat of terrorism, there were certainly other, better, uses for it. By comparison, between 2003 and 2007, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) received appropriations from Congress in the amount of \$5 billion dollars (United States Congress. Congressional Budget Office 2008, 3). This is not to suggest that economic development is a

suitable alternative from democratization in the War on Terror. However, by providing humanitarian assistance, the United States might at least have reduced the animosity many in Iraq and Afghanistan feel towards the United States. Had Iraq and Afghanistan turned into model democracies, these costs may have been bearable. However, this has not been the case.

The United States military has also suffered as a result of its democratization efforts. The U.S. military is engaged in tasks for which it was not designed. American soldiers predominantly trained for combat environments, not the sort of peacekeeping missions necessary for state building and reconstruction (Dobbins 2006, 223). As mentioned earlier, the US military did possess a few resources that would be helpful for democratization such as the Army Corps of Engineers for assistance in creating civil infrastructure. However, these efforts have obviously proven insufficient. The sheer quantity of money that has been spent on private contractors and by Nongovernmental organizations in Iraq and Afghanistan is a testament to this deficiency.

The credibility of American political elites has also suffered immensely because of the continued American presence in these two countries. In the immediate aftermath of 9-11, President George Bush experienced record approval ratings; what many considered to be a manifestation of the “rally ‘round the flag” effect (Muller 2005, 47). In the run up to the war in Iraq, the Bush administration received another spike in approval. However, as the conflicts dragged on, as American expenses and casualties

mounted, and as the amount of time necessary for successful democratization became clearer, American public opinion waned. A poll conducted by CBS asked 844 American adults nationwide, “Do you think the result of the war with Iraq was worth the loss of American life and other costs of attacking Iraq, or not?” In August 2003, 46% of those surveyed said that they believed the costs were worth the results while 45% thought the costs were not worth it with 9% unsure (CBS News Poll, 2009). In March of 2008, CBS polled the same group and discovered that according to their survey, support had gone down significantly. In March 2008, only 29% of those surveyed thought the costs were worth it while those who believed the results were not worth the costs rose to 64% of those surveyed with 7% unsure. This negative sentiment was directly reflected in American views of President Bush. In a Newsweek poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International asked 1,003 adults nationwide, “. . . Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bush is handling the situation in Iraq?” In May 2003, less than one month after the initial invasion of Iraq, 69% of Americans said that they approved of the Bush administration’s handling, while only 26% disapproved with 5% not sure. In August 2005, over two years later, American views had obviously changed. Again, Princeton Survey Research Associates International conducted the poll. This time, 34% of Americans approved, 61% disapproved, and 5% were unsure. At the end of the second Bush term, the same poll found 68% of Americans disapproved of Bush’s handling of Iraq (Newsweek Poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research

Associates International, 2009). One popularly cited reason for why Americans stopped favoring the war and supporting American military leadership is “casualty phobia” (Feaver Gelpi and Reifler 2009, 8). This argument state argues that there may be initial support for the use of force, but the support evaporates rapidly and irrevocably at the sight of body bags.” (Feaver Gelpi and Reifler 2009, 8). This certainly seems logical. As the criteria for American victory in Iraq and Afghanistan was made unattainable, each life lost in the conflicts became more deplorable. Obviously, as the United States prolongs its stay in Iraq and Afghanistan for the sake of democratization, it is likely that the credibility of political elites may suffer further damage.

But what has enabled the hemorrhaging of American dollars, lives, and domestic credibility in the name of democratization? The answer lies in the epistemological ambiguity of important terms in the War on Terror. Few American politicians stood against the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. To do so would have been political suicide in a democratic society. Similarly, in the weeks leading to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, few politicians stood against the Bush administration. The stakes for being wrong were simply perceived as too high by most politicians (Ravi 2005, 55). Because of this uniform political support, the Bush administration introduced a number of terms into the discussion of the War on Terror. Two of the most important terms for this discussion were “victory” and “democracy.” On May 2, 2003, U.S. President George Bush landed in full fighter regalia on the deck of the

U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln. The purpose of President Bush’s visit to the Abraham Lincoln was to declare as the banner behind him said, Iraq was “Mission Accomplished.” As is now known all too well, the mission was not yet finished. Nevertheless, the Bush administration made winning military campaigns against Iraq seem like the only criteria for a successful invasion (Ravi 2005, 45). However, when weapons inspectors concluded Iraq never possessed a WMD program, the Bush administration changed “victory” again. This time, victory took the current definition of a fully democratic Iraq. Of course, there no explanation was ever provided about exactly what a fully democratic Iraq meant. Internationally accepted free and fair elections? High voter registration and participation? The Bush administration never explained. Despite this ambiguity, in a November 30, 2005 address where he discussed strategy for the war in Iraq, George Bush used the term “victory” 15 times, and even posed a sign that said, “Plan for Victory” next to his podium (Berinsky Drukman, 2007, 128) Even though the definition for victory had changed, it was clear that the Bush administration still expected it. On a similar note, the Bush administration remained steadfast against the use of timetables for withdrawal from the two countries, and because of its precarious position, was unable to ensure the developing Iraqi government reached Washington-approved checkpoints. When Afghanistan’s parliamentary elections were postponed from 2004 until 2005, the United States could only watch (United Nations Information Service 2005). Removing support for the nascent Afghani national

government would not have yielded faster democratization. All that the United States could do was keep promoting security in Afghanistan and hope for better election conditions in 2005.

Unfriendly Friends

The Bush administration did a spectacular job of alienating U.S. allies throughout the War on Terror. Immediately following 9-11, nations around the world flocked to America's support. From long time allies like Britain to countries with which the U.S. has had cooler relations such as Iran and Libya, international solidarity against the hijackings was astounding. Immediately after the attack, the nineteen members of NATO invoked Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty stating, that "an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all." The members of NATO went even further by pledging action including the "use of armed force." (Gordon 2002, 5) However, two and a half years later, in the weeks leading up to the United States invasion of Iraq, relations between the United States and its allies soured.

Prior to the war, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), had been investigating Iraq. These organizations are international bodies charged with investigating countries possessing nuclear technology for their compliance with international law. In the case of Iraq the IAEA and UNMOVIC were responsible for investigating Iraqi compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1441.

Resolution 1441 offered Saddam Hussein a final opportunity to have Iraq comply with previous United Nations Security Council resolutions restricting Iraq's possession of both a nuclear material and certain prohibited armament in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War (The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1441, 2009). However, the investigation of Iraq was not fast enough for the Bush administration. Citing Iraqi unwillingness to allow inspectors into certain areas, the Bush administration claimed that Iraq was not fully disclosing its weapons program and was therefore in contravention of Resolution 1441 (Galbraith 2006, 102). The Resolution contained no specific triggers for military action. Nevertheless, U.S. representative to the United Nations John Negroponte did comment that, "If the Security Council fails to act decisively in the event of a further Iraqi violation, this resolution does not constrain any member state from acting to defend itself against the threat posed by Iraq, or to enforce relevant UN resolutions and protect world peace security." It was Negroponte's caveat that would later be used by the Bush administration as a justification for the Iraq invasion.

The international community was not supportive of U.S. military action in Iraq. Particularly after IAEA and UNMOVIC investigators presented evidence for Iraqi compliance to Resolution 1441, the international community saw U.S. militarism as disconcerting (Wall, 125). Although the United States would claim that it assembled a "Coalition of the Willing" to support it during a war with Iraq, the coalition was strongly influenced by bribes and coercion by the United States (Anderson Bennis and

Cavanagh 2003, 8—10). Those countries that were not part of the “Coalition” were ostracized, in many cases by the American public itself.

France in particular experienced American rancor through boycotts of French products, jokes focusing on French military cowardice, and even childish renaming of items that contained the word “French” (i.e. “french fries” became “freedom fries”). None of this is good for utilizing the international goodwill created after 9-11. For their part, “The French see a new aggressive strain of messianic universalism in U.S. policy, a willingness to impose democracy by use of the U.S. military.” which they see as deeply troubling (Wall 2004, 126). As the United States continues its presence in Iraq and Afghanistan because of a dedication to the emergence of democracy, this view is unlikely to change.

Policy Prescriptions

Given these grotesque realities, what steps should the Obama administration take to correct America’s course in fighting the War on Terror? The answer to this is in three parts. First, the United States must extricate itself from the politics of Iraq and Afghanistan as much as possible. Secondly, the US must reducing instances of overt hostility towards Muslims within US military practices. Finally, the Obama administration needs to work to heal relationships between the US and the international community while convincing the international community to share the burden of state building when necessary. These three tactics will address the major obstacles to the War on Terror that have arisen as a result of attempts by

the United States to democratize Iraq and Afghanistan. These recommendations are a start. Had the Bush administration undertaken these policies in the early days of the two invasions, it is unlikely that conditions would have degenerated as seriously as they have. Thus, the impacts of these actions are likely to carry repercussions that may not have necessarily have occurred if implemented sooner. The above prescriptions are likely to encounter serious problems in implementation. However, “obstacles on the ground” must be addressed one way or another if the United States seeks to correct its mistakes

It is important to mention that as of this writing, the Obama administration has taken several significant steps towards many of these goals. However, much more work is needed before the ill—effects of attempts to democratize Afghanistan and Iraq can be eradicated. As President, Barack Hussein Obama (a Democrat, America’s first black President, and a man with Muslim family) is in a unique position to shape how the United States fights the War on Terror. Now, the only question that remains is if he is up to the challenge.

American removal from Iraqi and Afghani governance is critical. Without this, all other measures to fix the problems generated by these democratizations may be fruitless. At a basic level, governments must concern themselves with two things: legitimacy and sovereignty. Lacking either of these things will result in the devolution of society into lawlessness. Without sovereignty, governments are unable to control citizens. Without legitimacy, constant internal power struggles will make a unified

government impossible. While its presence in Iraq and Afghanistan may assist in governmental sovereignty (the United States military has extensively trained local Afghanis and Iraqis in combat and security measures (Obama, 2009)) it has hindered governmental legitimacy in the process. With separatist groups and religiously motivated political groups jockeying for power, such chinks in legitimacy of the new governments with weak civil societies may be fatal.

While it may not be feasible for the United States to quickly and completely divorce itself from Iraq and Afghanistan, it can certainly start by removing itself from much of the politics of the two countries. The Obama administration must develop a list of objectives the United States will pursue in these countries, and fulfill them at the discretion of the host governments. Furthermore, these goals need to be apolitical and object goods for all Iraqis and Afghanis. A good example of this is security. Simultaneously, the United States must create a list of goals and it expects the Iraqi and Afghani governments to accomplish. These goals must be reasonable and they also must be accompanied by reasonable timetables. Despite its weaknesses in fighting terrorism, the United States military is certainly more capable of upholding security than the infant governments. Furthermore, if the United States enforces security everywhere equally, not just in areas that are friendly toward America, the potential for harming the legitimacy of indigenous governments may diminish. However, the Iraqi and Afghani governments must work diligently towards democracy for American efforts to be fruitful.

Interestingly, if this policy is undertaken, it is likely that American objectives and Iraqi and Afghani objectives may sync on a number of key issues. Both the Iraq and United States governments want al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) agents apprehended. Working with the Iraqi government may be the best way to achieve this, while simultaneously making it more difficult for AQI to gain supporters who are against the US presence. By creating delineating responsibilities and goals, the United States will be providing strong support to democratization, but in such a way that it will more likely result in a full democracy.

A serious blunder of the Bush administration was the impact of American counterterrorist activity on the perceptions of Muslims around the world. The problem was so significant that one of the major focuses of President Obama's first trip abroad was to assure the "Muslim world" that the United States, "is not and will never be at war with Islam" (Cooper, 2009). Of course, soundbites from President Obama may not be sufficient to outweigh Muslim antipathy. Overt targeting of Islam and Muslims in the War on Terror have scarred American relations with many Muslims (Pew Global Attitudes Project, Pew Research Center, 2009). To correct its course, the United States must not allow further cause to those who think the United States is at war with Islam. Obama has made significant strides in this regard. Closing the infamous American military base and prisoner detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba is an excellent first step. As discussed, intentionally removing the phrase "War on terror" from the lexicon of American foreign policy is another step

in the right direction. These efforts must be continued if the United States is ever to win back the public opinion of Muslims around the world.

Finally, the United States must work to reintegrate the international community into the War on Terror. America had widespread international support after 9-11. However, the costs of involvement to America combined with American pomposity have made it unlikely for other countries to volunteer in the War on Terror. Contributing to this unease is the knowledge that Tony Blair, Prime Minister of Britain and chief supporter of the United States during the Iraqi Invasion, received so much domestic backlash that he lost his position as PM. Similarly, politicians in countries like Australia and Spain came to power with promises that they would remove their country from the Coalition. This is obviously a problem for the United States which already supplies the majority of resources for the two conflicts. President Obama's charge will thus be twofold for reintegrating the international community into the War on Terror. First, he will need to convince politicians that they will not necessarily lose popular support just by assisting in the War. Second (although related), President Obama needs to impress upon the international community that fighting terrorists must be a concern of every country. If Barack Obama can get more countries in the world invested in the notion of preventing terrorist attacks, then proving that politicians will not lose domestic support will come naturally. Without the international involvement in the War on Terror, costs to Americans will be much higher, and the likelihood for success will be

much lower.

Conclusion

In this essay I have shown how democratization has harmed the ability of the United States to wage the War on Terror. Theoretically, democratization may have been the solution for rebuilding Iraq and Afghanistan after the United States invaded. However, poor planning, and insufficient resources have stymied the emergence of democratic institutions in these two states. Despite this slowness in democratization, political elites have defined victory in these two countries as the emergence of fully democratic governments. This decision has angered many indigenous Iraqis and Afghans, necessitated enormous and continual resource investment from the United States, and has tarnished U.S. image internationally. Despite these issues, American policy can be corrected. The Obama administration must work to differentiate the War on Terror from what many Muslims perceive as a "War on Islam." Furthermore, the Obama administration must develop concrete criteria for victory and abide by those criteria for committing a judicious withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan. Finally, the Obama administration must involve other countries in the War on Terror. This is important both because it will enable the United States to defer some of the expenses of the War on other countries, but also because the goals of the War on Terror are beneficial to all states. These tasks will be difficult to achieve, but not impossible. By halting America's tireless commitment to democratization in Iraq and Afghanistan, in the long run, the United States will be in a much better position to wage the War on Terror.

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