

## America's War on Terror: Democracy is No Panacea

Nine days after the attacks of September 11, the President declared America's war on terror had begun. After the Bush Administration perceived early successes in Afghanistan, spreading democracy became one of the key policies supporting America's strategy for the war on terror. Over time, the President came to view the promotion of democracy as a positive and transformational change agent for the Middle East and Muslim-majority countries. In the years since, however, significant questions have emerged regarding the feasibility and sustainability of democracy in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. Additionally, with the elections of groups such as Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, U.S. policymakers have tamped down their calls for democracy.

This paper begins by tracing the decision-making process with respect to democratizing Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the broader Muslim world. The following two sections analyze that policy choice in light of the scholarly research and intelligence available at that time; research and intelligence that suggested effective democracies were unlikely to take hold in either country. The fourth section analyzes the policy choice based on the current research, with the benefit of hindsight. The final section attempts to measure the effectiveness of the democratization policy choice, first in broad terms of the war on terror, and then more specifically with polity measures. The data appears to confirm what the research and intelligence suggested: effective democracies were unlikely to take hold in either Afghanistan or Iraq.

## Tracing the Decision to Democratize

### *Afghanistan*

Democracy as a policy response to the attacks of 9/11 came quickly, perhaps haphazardly, and it was initially limited in scope: Afghanistan. Once U.S. policymakers assessed Afghanistan as an initial success, however, they began to conceive of democratization as a policy that could transform the Muslim world while also reducing terrorism. President Bush embraced democracy promotion, believing it could be the transformation necessary to solve the problem of Islamic extremism.<sup>1</sup>

As policymakers prepared to launch strikes to root out al Qaeda, they did not initially plan to conduct regime change in Afghanistan. Planning efforts left open the possibility that the Taliban might cooperate sufficiently and, therefore, be allowed to remain in power.<sup>2</sup> Two weeks after the attacks of 9/11, the CIA initiated covert operations in coordination with the Northern Alliance. The first formal expression of regime change appears to have occurred at an October 3 meeting of the principals, which did not include the president. At that meeting, Secretary of State Powell said he wanted leadership in Kabul available to fill the void left by the removal of the Taliban; leadership that represented all of the Afghan people.<sup>3</sup> The former Afghan king had indicated he would help in the process, but would not accept any formal role in a new government. The U.S. launched its first airstrikes on October 7. Military operations focused on a light American ground presence, utilizing

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<sup>1</sup> Council on Global Terrorism, *State of the Struggle: Report on the Battle against Global Terrorism*, ed. Lee Hamilton and Justine A. Rosenthal (Washington, D.C: Council on Global Terrorism : Brooking Institution Press, 2006), 83.

<sup>2</sup> Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 130.

<sup>3</sup> Woodward, *Bush at War*, 191–2.

Northern Alliance ground troops augmented by limited CIA and special operations forces, all of which would be supported by airpower.

Policymakers did not initially concern themselves with the issue of Afghan governance. The days immediately following the terror attacks of 9/11 were confusing and chaotic for all Americans. National security policymakers focused first on defending the homeland, then on attacking al Qaeda.<sup>4</sup> The first expression of policy towards Afghanistan that was not threat related came in the form of humanitarian aid, with America's first airstrikes containing military-style Meals Ready to Eat (MREs). What a future government in Afghanistan might look like, however, received scant attention early on.

In part, the lack of attention to Afghan governance issues resulted from how quickly military operations began and how successful they were. Within the first week of airstrikes, Pakistani and U.N. officials began pressuring the U.S. government to slow the Northern Alliance advance. They wanted an interim government in place before the Northern Alliance took Kabul.<sup>5</sup> Despite those attempts, the Northern Alliance did enter Kabul and establish a quasi-government before a broad-based, internationally recognized interim government could be appointed.

On November 10, President Bush spoke before the U.N. General Assembly, where he articulated his support of U.N.-led efforts to broker a post-Taliban government that would represent all Afghans.<sup>6</sup> Several days later during a meeting between presidents Bush and

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<sup>4</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (Government Printing Office, 2011), 330–2.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Baker, Molly Moore and Kamram Khan, and Washington Post Foreign Service, "Rebels Delay Move Against Kabul; Devising Plan for New Government in Afghanistan Becomes Priority," *The Washington Post*, October 11, 2001, sec. A.

<sup>6</sup> George Bush (United Nations General Assembly, New York, November 10, 2001), <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011110-3.html>.

Putin, both leaders stressed the importance of a “broad-based government” for Afghanistan and the significant role of the U.N. in the process.<sup>7</sup> On Pearl Harbor Day, President Bush delivered a speech aboard the USS Enterprise. During the portion of his comments focused on Afghanistan he said, “Most of all, that country needs a just and stable government. America is working with all concerned parties to help form such a government. After years of oppression, the Afghan people -- including women -- deserve a government that protects the rights and dignity of all its people. America is pleased by the Afghan progress in creating an interim government -- and we're encouraged by the inclusion of women in positions of authority.”<sup>8</sup>

Several weeks later, the U.N.-brokered talks concluded in Bonn, Germany. The talks aimed to place the various Afghan groups front and center, with the U.N. and international community taking a supporting role.<sup>9</sup> Afghans would govern themselves, assisted by a light international footprint to help bolster their capacity.<sup>10</sup> The final agreement read, in part, “*Acknowledging* the right of the people of Afghanistan to freely determine their own political future in accordance with the principles of Islam, democracy, pluralism...” Hamid Karzai took the oath as interim President of Afghanistan on December 22, 2001.

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<sup>7</sup> “National Security Advisor Briefs Press,” *White House Archives*, November 15, 2001, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011115-9.html>.

<sup>8</sup> “President: We’re Fighting to Win - And Win We Will,” *White House Archives*, December 7, 2001, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/12/20011207.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Simon Chesterman, “Walking Softly in Afghanistan: The Future of UN State-Building,” *Survival* 44, no. 3 (September 2002): 39.

<sup>10</sup> Chesterman, “Walking Softly in Afghanistan,” 38.

## *Iraq*

Five years before the U.S. invaded Iraq, Congress and President Clinton enacted a law authorizing 97 million dollars for opposition forces who would remove Saddam from power and promote democracy in Iraq.<sup>11</sup> President Bush, though, needed little legislative encouragement. By this point in the war on terror, buoyed by perceived success in Afghanistan, the President frequently articulated his conviction that America had a responsibility to free people. Some critiqued his conviction as potentially paternalistic. The President responded that the freed would not see it as such, rather they would see it as liberation.<sup>12</sup>

In January 2003, the President met with several Iraqi dissidents. They articulated a favorable picture of what a post-Saddam Iraq could look like. Each spoke optimistically of future democracy in Iraq, noting the technological skills of the citizenry while discounting what they perceived as overblown commentaries regarding the Sunni-Shia split. The President engaged them in an aggressive give and take. For most of his questions they had compelling answers. When asked about the possibility of the U.S. being seen as imposing its will, they had no response.<sup>13</sup> The President told them that, regardless, Iraqis should be left to choose their own leaders.

Concurrently, Vice President Cheney became concerned the State Department was failing to embrace the President's vision for democracy in Iraq and the potential democratic transformation of the Middle East. He perceived that Secretary Powell and

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<sup>11</sup> Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 10.

<sup>12</sup> Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 88.

<sup>13</sup> Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 258–60.

others at State viewed democracy in Iraq and the broader transformation as unattainable.<sup>14</sup> Marginalized before 9/11, this event appears to have further isolated Secretary Powell and diminished his influence within the Bush Administration.<sup>15</sup>

On March 4, Doug Feith, the Under Secretary of Defense, briefed the President and the NSC on U.S. objectives with respect to Iraq. They included moving Iraq towards democracy, followed by Iraq serving as a model for the region. Most of the other objectives were complimentary, focused on political and societal issues, rather than military matters.<sup>16</sup> As the tone of the objectives suggested, the promotion of democracy was used as partial justification for the invasion of Iraq.<sup>17</sup> U.S.-led coalition airstrikes began March 20, 2003.

In October 2003, President Bush again drew parallels to ongoing efforts in the war on terror with World War II. Meeting with the Japanese Prime Minister, President Bush commented that in much the same way that America and Japan enjoyed a positive relationship after the war, at some point in the future the Iraqi and American presidents would share a similar relationship.<sup>18</sup> Eight months after the invasion of Iraq, President Bush presented a “new policy, a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East.”<sup>19</sup> The President’s lofty ambitions for the Middle East and his connecting current events to World War II could be interpreted as politically motivated. Notwithstanding, the consistency with which he talked about freeing other peoples suggests the President’s rhetoric belied a true

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<sup>14</sup> Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 284.

<sup>15</sup> Woodward, *Bush at War*, 13–14.

<sup>16</sup> Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 328.

<sup>17</sup> Jeremy Sharp, *U.S. Democracy Promotion Policy in the Middle East: The Islamist Dilemma* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2006), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 419.

<sup>19</sup> Mark N. Katz, *Leaving without Losing: The War on Terror after Iraq and Afghanistan* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 23–4.

passion and a perceived responsibility to liberate the oppressed. Whether feasible or not, whether politically motivated or not, President Bush appeared to believe that trying to bring freedom to other nations was the right, and necessary, thing to do.

In June 2004, the United States transferred power to an interim Iraqi government and elections were held in January 2005.<sup>20</sup>

### *After the Elections*

After the first elections in Afghanistan and Iraq, President Bush intensified his calls for democracy in the Middle East, promoting democracy as a cornerstone of his war on terror strategy.<sup>21</sup> In his second inaugural address, he focused on democracy and similar issues. During the speech, he implied that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were partly about freedom and, by extension, democracy. He mentioned “freedom,” “liberty,” “democracy,” or some variant thereof 46 times.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, his 2006 National Security Strategy celebrated the “extraordinary progress in the expansion of freedom, democracy, and human dignity” that had occurred since 2002, while continuing to build on the 2002 strategy.

The January 2006 elections that brought Hamas to power, however, may have had a tamping effect on the Bush Administration’s push for broader democratization. The Hamas victory, along with other Islamist inroads made by the Muslim Brotherhood and Hezbollah,

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<sup>20</sup> Dominic Johnson and Dominic Tierney, *Failing to Win: Perceptions of Victory and Defeat in International Politics* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 245.

<sup>21</sup> Raphael Perl, *Combating Terrorism: The Challenge of Measuring Effectiveness*, November 23, 2005, 4.

<sup>22</sup> Helene Cooper, “Talking Softly About Democracy Promotion,” *The New York Times*, January 30, 2009, sec. U.S. / Politics, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/30/us/politics/30web-cooper.html>.

brought a chorus of criticism against the President.<sup>23</sup> Researchers and political commentators suggest this resulted in the Administration de-emphasizing democratization.<sup>24</sup> However, a review of the President’s State of the Union addresses calls that assessment into question. While 2005 does appear to have been the apex for pro-democracy rhetoric, the 2008 address placed second—two years after Hamas’ victory.

President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses							
	’02	’03	’04	’05	’06	’07	’08
Number of times liberty, freedom, democracy or some variation was mentioned	25	18	27	46	37	22	39

(Source: State of the Union transcripts.<sup>25</sup>)

A review of all seven speeches indicates the President increased his use of democracy and freedom language after the first elections in Iraq and Afghanistan, with a noticeably higher word count in the years following those elections than before.

### **Analyzing Democratization as a Policy Choice in the War on Terror, Part 1**

*Based on the pre-9/11 scholarly research*

The scholarly research provides insight into two key questions regarding the U.S. policy choice to promote democracy as part of the war on terror strategy. First, the research helps answer the question of whether or not democracy should have been expected to succeed in Afghanistan and Iraq. Then, more broadly, the scholarly research

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<sup>23</sup> Steven R. Weisman, “Bush Defends His Goal of Spreading Democracy to the Mideast,” *The New York Times*, January 27, 2006, sec. Washington, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/27/politics/27diplo.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Katz, *Leaving without Losing*, 23–4; Glenn Kessler, “U.S. Policy Seen as Big Loser in Palestinian Vote,” *The Washington Post*, January 28, 2006, sec. World, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/27/AR2006012701562.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Available at [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com).

can help answer the question of whether democratic forms of government are more likely to experience fewer terror attacks as compared to other polities.

The research available prior to regime change in Afghanistan and Iraq suggested that establishing a functioning democracy would be quite challenging in either country. Regarding democracy in Muslim states, a sizeable corpus of research cautioned that many democracy enablers, cultural and institutional, could not be found within the Islamic tradition.<sup>26</sup> Several notable scholars agreed obstacles existed, but they assessed them as surmountable.<sup>27</sup> Looking at democracy more broadly, Lipset highlighted cultural factors as determinants of success. He cautioned that culture is “extraordinarily difficult to manipulate.”<sup>28</sup> Seven years prior to 9/11, Lipset wrote that successful democracies in Muslim-majority countries were “doubtful.” He argued that an enduring democracy necessitated a connection between efficacy and legitimacy that the population could observe. Progress in either the political or economic arenas, he said, would build perceived legitimacy and help cement democracy.<sup>29</sup> With respect to Afghanistan in particular, Barro observed that democracy was unlikely to take hold because of low education levels, the marginalization of women, and the patchwork of different ethnicities.<sup>30</sup> Zakaria stressed the potential problems associated with ethnic fractionalization and democracy, noting the

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<sup>26</sup> Alfred C. Stepan, “Religion, Democracy, and the “Twin Tolerations,”” *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (2000): 47.

<sup>27</sup> Niloofar Afari et al., “Psychological Trauma and Functional Somatic Syndromes: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis,” *Psychosomatic Medicine* 76, no. 1 (January 2014): 2–11; John Esposito and John Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>28</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, “The Centrality of Political Culture,” *Journal of Democracy* 1, no. 4 (1990): 82–3.

<sup>29</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, “The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited: 1993 Presidential Address,” *American Sociological Review* 59, no. 1 (February 1, 1994): 6, 17.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Barro, “Don’t Bank on Democracy in Afghanistan,” *Business Week*, January 21, 2002, 18.

chance of war could actually increase if democracy were introduced in a country that did not yet have a liberal culture or institutions.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Amitai Etzioni, a former advisor to President Carter, highlighted the difficulties of a society jumping from “the Stone Age to even a relatively modern one.” He pointed to the failed experiences of the World Bank and U.S. foreign-aid programs, ultimately concluding that democratic failure would result in Afghanistan.<sup>32</sup> These observations highlight the tension between the legitimate aspirations of President Bush and his national security team with the numerous obstacles that the pre-9/11 research had already identified.

A point made by Machiavelli may bear repeating: “Therefore a prince, so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal, ought not to mind the reproach of cruelty; because with a few examples he will be more merciful than those who, through *too much mercy*, allow disorders to arise” (emphasis added).<sup>33</sup> The prioritization of the legitimate desire for Afghans to be politically free above an analysis of the scholarly research may provide an example of “too much mercy” on the part of the United States. During the author’s time in southern Afghanistan in 2010, numerous observations corroborated Machiavelli’s caution. In slightly more than half of all villages, the elders refused the free gifts offered by their government. They refused because they feared insurgent reprisals for “collaborating with the enemy” (i.e., the Afghan government). At shuras across the province, village elders consistently expressed their top concern—lack of security—and the subsequent predicament the Afghan government and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) put them in. The elders first choice was to have security provided for them 24/7, but

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<sup>31</sup> Fareed Zakaria, “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy,” *Foreign Affairs*, December 1997, 35.

<sup>32</sup> Amitai Etzioni, “USA Can’t Impose Democracy on Afghans,” *USA Today*, October 10, 2001.

<sup>33</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Excerpts in Class Handout, 1532, 3.

there was not enough Afghan or ISAF manpower for that. Instead, Afghan security forces and ISAF would periodically patrol the villages. This “drive by” security arrangement infuriated the elders because it placed them at increased risk from the insurgents. Once the government or ISAF forces departed the villages, the insurgents swept in and accused the villagers of cooperating with the government or ISAF infidels. After accusing the village leaders, the insurgents would destroy equipment and property, assault villagers, or kidnap elders. Therefore, the elders pleaded for the government and ISAF to either provide security 24/7 or no security at all. The middle ground of providing some security coverage, while seemingly merciful from the government and ISAF’s perspective, brought increased harm to the villagers. The point was effectively made at one of the shuras as an elder stood weeping before the government and ISAF officials. He jabbed his finger towards the assembled officials and shouted, “We do not want anymore of your mercy.”

States in transition from autocracy to democracy have more political violence within their borders than do either strongly democratic or autocratic states. In terms of stable, entrenched democracies, the research is divided on whether democracy reduces terrorism more effectively than other forms of government or not. On the one hand, scholars such as Rudy Rummel and Ted Gurr contend that democracies provide a system within which grievances can be non-violently addressed, whereas autocracies are much more prone to political violence because they deny their citizens alternate forms of political communication.<sup>34</sup> On the opposite side, researchers like Havard Hegre suggest that democracies are home to increased amounts of political expression, both non-violent and

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<sup>34</sup> W. Eubank and L. Weinberg, “Terrorism and Democracy: Perpetrators and Victims,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no. 1 (March 1, 2001): 156.

violent.<sup>35</sup> Studies suggest developed and stable democracies do have lower levels of political violence, but so do harshly authoritarian states. Higher levels of political violence, however, tend to occur in intermediate regimes, such as infant democracies.<sup>36</sup>

## **Analyzing Democratization as a Policy Choice in the War on Terror, Part 2**

### *Based on the pre-war intelligence*

The Administration planned the Iraq War for more than a year and authorities have declassified much of the pre-war intelligence. As a result, ample intelligence is now available to the public. Conversely, for the war in Afghanistan, essentially no intelligence regarding governance issues is available since the war came quickly after the 9/11 attacks and the military had no plans for Afghanistan until after September 11<sup>th</sup> (beyond tactical plans to attack bin Laden).<sup>37</sup> Much of the available intelligence regarding Afghanistan comes from the 9/11 Commission Report, but it does include useful information for analyzing the decision to democratize. Therefore, no analysis of the policy choice to promote democracy in Afghanistan is provided here with respect to pre-war intelligence.

As for Iraq, the policy choice to promote democracy appears to have discounted significant portions of the pre-war intelligence. In August 2002, a CIA report noted that Iraqi culture has been “inhospitable to democracy.” The report went on to say that absent

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<sup>35</sup> Eubank and Weinberg, “Terrorism and Democracy.”

<sup>36</sup> Håvard Hegre, Tanja Ellingsen, Scott Gates and Nils Petter Gleditsch, “Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816-1992,” *American Political Science Review*, no. 01 (March 2001): 42; Daniel Byman, *The Five Front War: The Better Way to Fight Global Jihad* (Hoboken, N.J: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 158–9.

<sup>37</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 135–7, 208, 332.

comprehensive and enduring US and Western support, the likelihood of achieving even “partial democratic successes” was “poor.”<sup>38</sup>

In late 2002, the CIA provided a slightly more optimistic assessment which said most Shia would conclude that a “secular and democratic Iraq served their interests.”<sup>39</sup> At the same time, a DIA report asserted that Shia preferences could not be accurately assessed because of the fear and repression they lived under.<sup>40</sup> Several months later, the CIA released another assessment indicating the potential for democratic stability would be “limited” over the next two years, but a US-led coalition “could” prepare the way for democracy in five to 10 years.<sup>41</sup>

Additionally, the National Intelligence Council (NIC) published two Intelligence Community Assessments in January 2003, which the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence described as the “best available ‘baseline’” of prewar assessments on postwar Iraq.<sup>42</sup> The reports described democratic concepts as “alien to most Arab Middle Eastern political cultures.”<sup>43</sup> The NIC also noted “Iraqi political culture does not foster liberalism or democracy.” As a result, they assessed the potential for the democratization of Iraq as a “long, difficult, and probably turbulent process.”<sup>44</sup> In a particularly prescient set of

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<sup>38</sup> United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Report on Prewar Intelligence Assessments About Postwar Iraq* (Washington, D.C., May 25, 2007), 103.

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Report on Prewar Intelligence*, 100.

<sup>40</sup> U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Report on Prewar Intelligence*, 93–4.

<sup>41</sup> U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Report on Prewar Intelligence*, 97.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Report on Prewar Intelligence*, 4.

<sup>43</sup> National Intelligence Council, *Regional Consequences of Regime Change in Iraq*, January 2003, 30.

<sup>44</sup> National Intelligence Council, *Principal Challenges in Post-Saddam Iraq*, January 2003, 5.

comments, the NIC assessed that “political transformation is the task...least susceptible to outside intervention and management.”<sup>45</sup>

### **Analyzing Democratization as a Policy Choice in the War on Terror, Part 3**

*Based on the post-9/11 scholarly research*

Since the two wars began, the research has burgeoned, enabling a more critical examination of the Bush Administration’s policy choice to aggressively promote democracy as part of their overall war on terror strategy. Scholars have advanced a number of compelling findings and arguments about the Bush Administration’s policymaking process, as well as why democracy has proved so problematic in both countries. As to the former, James Pfiffner suggests President Bush did not employ a systematic decision-making process with respect to Iraq, and that the president preferred substantive discussions take place with only a small cadre of his closest advisors.<sup>46</sup> Such a style could easily result in intelligence and research being overlooked, or the close-knit group could unwittingly succumb to groupthink.

Regarding the challenges of democratizing both countries, researchers point to the historic challenges of Muslim-majority states adopting democratic norms, ethnic and / or religious fractionalization, lack of liberal institutions or culture, poor rule of law, and the animus felt towards the democracy promoter (i.e., the U.S.) by many in the Muslim world.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> National Intelligence Council, *Principal Challenges in Post-Saddam Iraq*, 9.

<sup>46</sup> James Pfiffner, “Decisionmaking, Intelligence, and the Iraq War,” in *Intelligence and National Security Policymaking on Iraq: British and American Perspectives* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 217–8.

<sup>47</sup> Zakaria, “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy”; Bernard Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” *The Atlantic* 266, no. 3 (1990): 47–60; Samuel Huntington, “The Lonely Superpower,”

In addition, two lesser-known arguments are germane and will be addressed further. The first focuses on *how* the Bush Administration promoted democracy and the second looks at *who* was being democratized. While the idea of America promoting democracy abroad is nothing new, how it has been promoted over time has changed. Jonathan Monten outlines the two predominate ways in which America has historically sought to export democracy.<sup>48</sup> The first, and preferred choice until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, relied on America's example, akin to the shining city on a hill. America's efforts to win other nations to democratic forms of governance primarily took place within America's borders, such that other nations could see the example and be enticed to emulate it. The second method, Monten terms "vindicationism." It includes setting a positive example, but adds active, external measures to promote democracy. President Bush, Monten argues, embraced a version of vindicationism-plus by adding a coercive element. Monten goes on to say the U.S.' hegemonic status not only made coercion possible, but in some respects almost unavoidable.<sup>49</sup> Had U.S. power not been such an overmatch for any would-be competitor, the Bush Administration would likely have been less bold. Policymakers believed their use of power was virtuous. As a result, they did not consider that their use of power might be coercive, unwelcome, or self-seeking.<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, the Bush Administration believed democratic success would beget democratic success, such that bandwagoning would result rather than other nations and

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*Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 2 (March 1, 1999): 35–49; Francis Fukuyama, "Why is Democracy Performing So Poorly?" *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 1 (January 2015): 13.

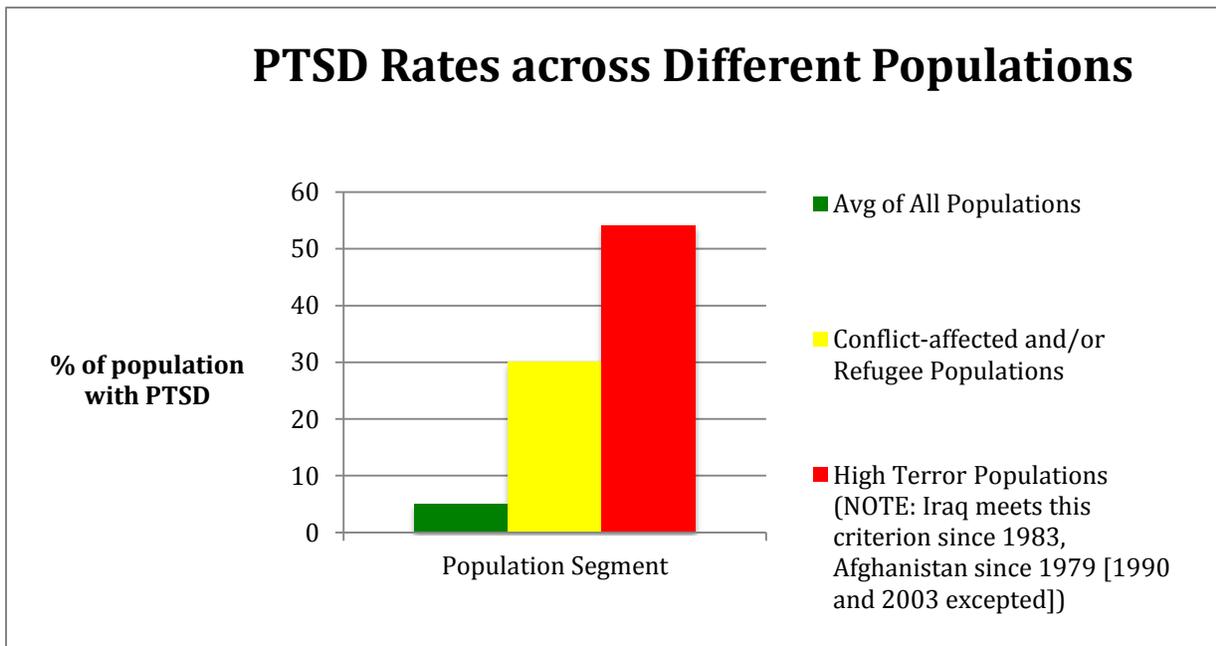
<sup>48</sup> Jonathan Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in U.S. Strategy," *International Security* 29, no. 4 (April 1, 2005): 112–115.

<sup>49</sup> Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine," 116.

<sup>50</sup> Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine," 146.

actors attempting to balance against U.S. power.<sup>51</sup> Assumed bandwagoning also contributed to the expectation that U.S. military power would facilitate a pacific transition to democracy beyond Iraq and Afghanistan. As the President claimed, a “free Iraq can be an example of reform and progress to all the Middle East.”<sup>52</sup>

The second argument looks at who was being democratized. It does not appear that U.S. policymakers gave any consideration to the mental health status of the Afghan or Iraqi populations prior to pursuing a policy of democratization. Specifically, the effects of decades of severe trauma visited upon both populations were ignored. A meta-analysis of conflict-affected and refugee populations published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* suggests that PTSD rates among the Iraqi and Afghan populations may have



been above 50 percent before the U.S. launched military strikes (see above figure).<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Monten, “The Roots of the Bush Doctrine,” 148–9.

<sup>52</sup> Monten, “The Roots of the Bush Doctrine,” 150.

<sup>53</sup> Steel Z et al., “Association of Torture and Other Potentially Traumatic Events with Mental Health Outcomes among Populations Exposed to Mass Conflict and Displacement: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis,” *JAMA* 302, no. 5 (August 5, 2009): 543. The chart is

In addition to estimated PTSD rates nine times higher than the global average, the data also suggests that the Afghan and Iraqi populations had high rates of major depression prior to the U.S. invasions. The meta-analysis indicates that over 40 percent of people who were exposed to several potentially traumatic events (e.g., combat, violence with a weapon, being forcibly displaced from home) and high terror rates met the criterion for Major Depressive Disorder.<sup>54</sup> That criterion applied to Afghanistan for 20 of the 21 years preceding the U.S. invasion, while Iraq met those conditions for the preceding 17 years.

An array of destabilizing behaviors and cognitive processes accompany these high rates of mental disorders, and they frequently result in unhealthy outcomes. They include an increase in substance abuse, being fired, divorce, self-harm, and the harming of others.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, they include decreased initiative, trust levels, reasoning skills, and ability to

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reprinted from Erik Goepner, "An Enduring Argument Against Counterinsurgency," *Small Wars Journal*, September 27, 2012, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/an-enduring-argument-against-counterinsurgency>.

<sup>54</sup> See Gibney, Cornett, Wood, & Haschke, (2012) *Political Terror Scale 1976-2012*. From the Political Terror Scale Web site: <http://www.politicalterrorscale.org/>.

<sup>55</sup> Rangaswamy Srinivasa Murthy et al., "The World Health Report 2001 - Mental Health: New Understanding, New Hope," *WHO*, accessed January 6, 2015, <http://www.who.int/whr/2001/en/>; American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, DSM Library (American Psychiatric Association, 2013); Deborah Schofield et al., "The Personal and National Costs of Mental Health Conditions: Impacts on Income, Taxes, Government Support Payments due to Lost Labour Force Participation," *BMC Psychiatry* 11, no. 1 (2011): 72; Stephen Stansfeld, Rebecca Fuhrer, and Jenny Head, "Impact of Common Mental Disorders on Sickness Absence in an Occupational Cohort Study," *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 68, no. 6 (June 1, 2011): 408–13; E. Fuller Torrey, "Violent Behavior by Individuals With Serious Mental Illness," *Psychiatric Services* 45, no. 7 (July 1, 1994): 653–62; Jeffrey Swanson et al., "Violence and Severe Mental Disorder in Clinical and Community Populations: The Effects of Psychotic Symptoms, Comorbidity, and Lack of Treatment," *Psychiatry* 60, no. 1 (1997): 1–22; Terrance Wade and David Pevalin, "Marital Transitions and Mental Health," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 45, no. 2 (June 1, 2004): 155–70.

concentrate.<sup>56</sup> Finally, people who have been heavily traumatized, similar to the Afghans and Iraqis, are more likely to yield to learned helplessness.<sup>57</sup> This psychological phenomenon manifests over time, as an individual increasingly perceives no connection between their own efforts and the outcomes that result. Self-efficacy gives way to hopelessness. As a result, the individual no longer puts forth effort, instead they surrender to their circumstances.<sup>58</sup> The behavioral and cognitive changes that frequently accompany severe trauma would appear to inhibit the successful initiation of democracy.

### **Measuring the Effectiveness of Democratization in the War on Terror**

This section begins by analyzing several measurements related to the overall war on terror. While this paper has focused on only one component of the war on terror strategy (i.e., the promotion of democracy), macro indicators provide a useful starting point for the analysis. Then, the analysis will turn to measures specifically related to governance and democracy.

America's efforts in the war on terror have not achieved the desired objectives.

Whether measuring the number of global terror attacks, number of attacks against the

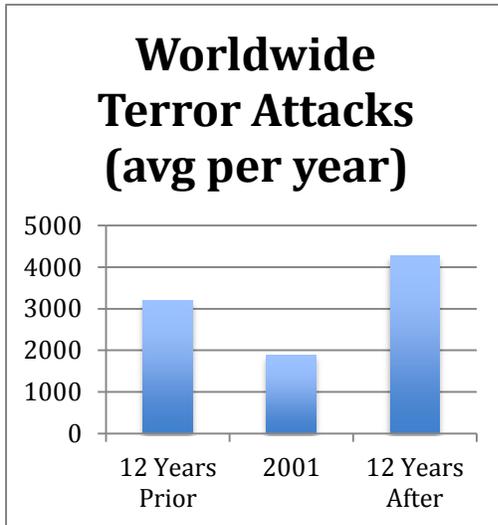
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<sup>56</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*; Chris Brewin et al., "Memory for Emotionally Neutral Information in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Meta-Analytic Investigation," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 116, no. 3 (2007): 448–63; Pia Pechtel and Diego Pizzagalli, "Effects of Early Life Stress on Cognitive and Affective Function: An Integrated Review of Human Literature," *Psychopharmacology* 214, no. 1 (March 2011): 55–70.

<sup>57</sup> Steven Maier, "Exposure to the Stressor Environment Prevents the Temporal Dissipation of Behavioral Depression/learned Helplessness," *Biological Psychiatry* 49, no. 9 (May 1, 2001): 763; Neta Bargai, Gershon Ben-Shakhar, and Arieh Y. Shalev, "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Depression in Battered Women: The Mediating Role of Learned Helplessness," *Journal of Family Violence* 22, no. 5 (June 6, 2007): 268, 272, 274.

<sup>58</sup> Lyn Abramson, Martin Seligman, and John Teasdale, "Learned Helplessness in Humans: Critique and Reformulation," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 87, no. 1 (1978): 50.

homeland, fatalities caused by terrorists, number of Islamist-inspired terror groups or the amount of fighters aligned with Islamist-inspired terror groups, the measurements suggest U.S. efforts in the war on terror have achieved disappointing results. As the figure shows,



during the 12 years prior to 9/11, terrorists committed an average of just over 3,200 attacks annually. In 2001, that number dropped to under 1,900 attacks. Since the U.S. initiated its war on terror, however, the average number of attacks has climbed to almost 4,300 per year.<sup>59</sup> Regarding the U.S. homeland, the attacks of 9/11 were a statistical

outlier, making it difficult to determine if other similarly sized attacks might have followed.

In the 13 years before 2001, there were five Islamist-inspired terror attacks in America.

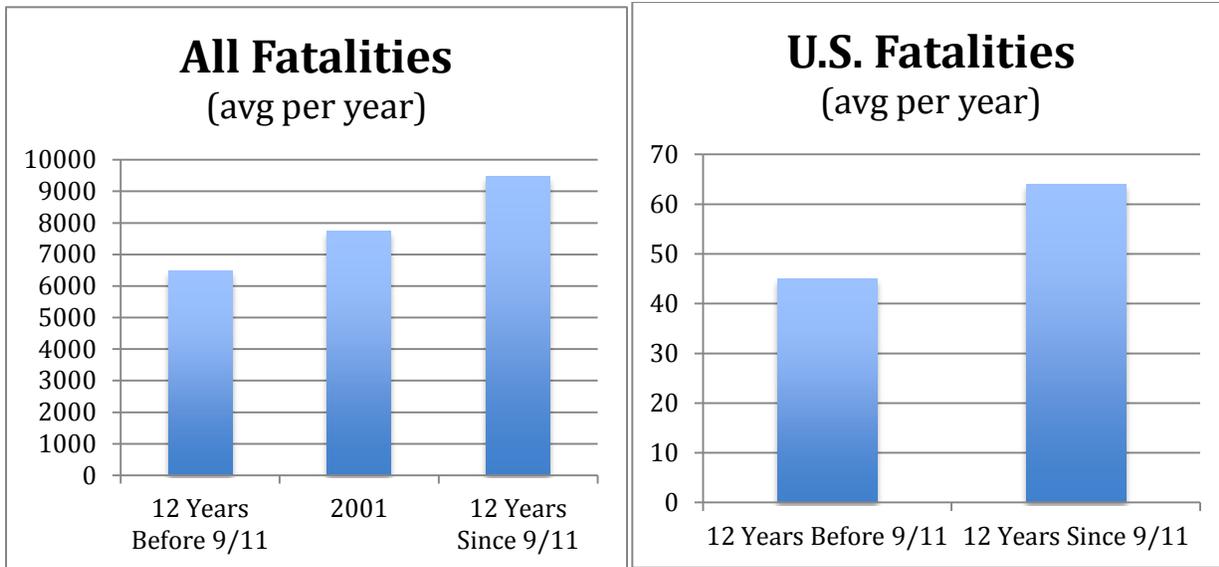
That compares to four attacks in the 13 years since.<sup>60</sup> Another 63 Islamist-inspired terror attacks against the homeland have been thwarted over the past 13 years, as well.<sup>61</sup>

Similar to the rise in worldwide terror attacks, the number of fatalities have likewise climbed, but at a faster rate. As shown in the All Fatalities figure below, nearly 6,500 people were killed worldwide per year in terror attacks for the decade-plus before 9/11. In 2001, more than 7,700 were killed. Then, in the 12 years since, the annual average has risen to just under 9,500. The before and after numbers for U.S. citizens killed by acts of terrorism

<sup>59</sup> Data from the Global Terrorism Database, available at <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>.

<sup>60</sup> National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2013). Global Terrorism Database [globalterrorismdb\_0814dist-1.xlsx]. Retrieved from <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>.

<sup>61</sup> David Inserra and James Phillips, "67 Islamist Terrorist Plots Since 9/11: Spike in Plots Inspired by Terrorist Groups, Unrest in Middle East," *The Heritage Foundation*, April 22, 2015, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2015/04/67-islamist-terrorist-plots-since-911-spike-in-plots-inspired-by-terrorist-groups-unrest-in-middle-east>.



are similarly discomfoting, with 45 killed per year before 9/11 and 64 each year since.<sup>62</sup>

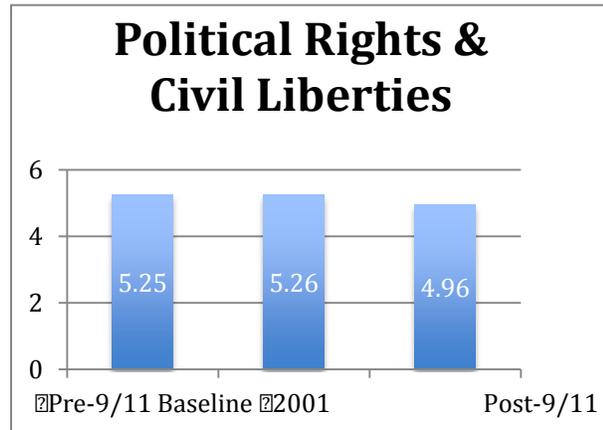
A final macro measurement for the war on terror examines the number of Islamist-inspired groups identified by the Department of State (DoS) as foreign terror organizations and how many fighters comprise those groups. Since 2000, the overall number of foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) increased by 86 percent, from 29 to 54. The subset made up of Islamist-inspired FTOs, though, grew by 185 percent, from 13 to 37 groups.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, the number of fighters within those groups has dramatically increased from an estimated 32,200 in 2000 to more than 110,000 in 2013.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Data from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2013). Global Terrorism Database [globalterrorismdb\_0814dist-1.xlsx]. Retrieved from <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>.

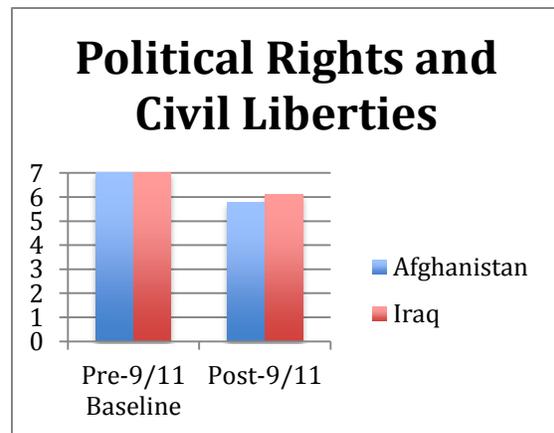
<sup>63</sup> Bureau of Public Affairs Department Of State. The Office of Website Management, “2000 (Patterns of Global Terrorism),” March 23, 2006, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2000/>; Bureau of Public Affairs Department Of State. The Office of Website Management, “Country Reports on Terrorism 2013,” *U.S. Department of State*, April 30, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2013/index.htm>; Martha Crenshaw, “Mapping Militant Organizations,” *Stanford University*, accessed March 27, 2015, <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups>.

<sup>64</sup> Martha Crenshaw, “Mapping Militant Organizations,” *Stanford University*, accessed March 27, 2015, <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups>. See also

Unlike the overall measures of performance for the war on terror which have all worsened since 2001, governance and democracy measures are not as clear-cut. Freedom House’s indicators show a marginal, but statistically insignificant, improvement for the 47 Muslim-majority countries since 2001. As the figure highlights, the average political rights and civil liberties’ scores for all Muslim-majority states were essentially identical in the years prior to, and including, 2001. Since that time, they have improved by nearly 6 percent (Freedom House scores range from 1 “most free” to 7 “least free”).<sup>65</sup> However, the chi-square results indicate the difference in pre- and post-9/11 scores were not statistically significant ( $X^2=7.819$ ,  $p=0.729$ ). Though insignificant, the modest improvement is noteworthy as freedom scores declined worldwide for the past nine years.<sup>66</sup>



As for Afghanistan and Iraq, they had the lowest possible Freedom House scores for the years prior to 9/11 (i.e., 7). Scores for both countries have improved since, though neither has yet been listed among the 125



Department of State Country Reports and Patterns of Global Terrorism at <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/>.

<sup>65</sup> Data from <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world#.VTwGJBd422k>.

<sup>66</sup> Arch Puddington, “Discarding Democracy: A Return to the Iron Fist,” *Freedom House*, 2015, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2015/discarding-democracy-return-iron-fist#.VRIay2Z422k>.

countries currently meeting the definition of an “electoral democracy.” The Polity IV Project from the Center for Systemic Peace provides another governance measurement. Their assessment of Afghanistan is unchanged from 2001. Throughout the past 13 years, they have assessed the country as “moderately fragmented,” meaning 10 to 25 percent of Afghanistan is ruled by authorities unconnected to the central government.<sup>67</sup> The assessment of Iraq, though, has changed rather dramatically. In the decade prior to the U.S. invasion, they assessed Iraq as extremely autocratic. Beginning in 2003 and holding for the next six years, they assessed Iraq as seriously fragmented, with between 25 and 50 percent of the country being ruled by authorities that were not connected to the central government. Then, beginning in 2010, Iraq was listed as slightly democratic and that assessment remained through 2013, which was the last year recorded.<sup>68</sup> No assessment has been made since the Islamic State established itself in sizeable portions of the country, so it is quite likely that the next report will list Iraq as moderately or seriously fragmented.

## **Conclusion**

The decision to include democracy promotion as a key part of the war on terror did not happen immediately. Rather, it appears to have occurred in response to perceived early successes in Afghanistan. Policymakers apparently missed or ignored much of the research and intelligence available at the time that indicated the numerous challenges to successfully democratizing Afghanistan and Iraq. Additionally, the research since then

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<sup>67</sup> Monty Marhsall, Ted Gurr, and Keith Jagers, *Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2013: Dataset Users' Manual* (Vienna, VA: Center for Systemic Peace, 2014), 13.

<sup>68</sup> Monty Marshall, Ted Gurr, and Keith Jagers. 2014. *Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2013*. [p4v2013-2.xls]. Retrieved from <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html>.

tends to corroborate the earlier research. Finally, the quantitative measures indicate that attempts to democratize did not help achieve the desired outcomes in the war on terror, though minor gains in democracy measures were observed.