4. BLINDFOLDING DEMOCRACY: BLUEPRINTING BALLOTS FROM BULLETS

Introduction

As the product of conflict, democratizing Afghanistan and Iraq was neither a local initiative nor the top-priority task of the occupation forces. Changing regimes may have driven the United States towards democratizing both, but the causal factor for Afghanistan began with the need to punish Taliban for the 9/11 events and for Iraq to punish Saddam Hussein for a string of flagrant violations.\(^1\) In part because the former proved a more compelling case, elicited wider global support and sympathy, produced direct U.S. responses, and created a democratization model, at least on blueprint, Iraq’s future was foretold. When George W. Bush met his advisors in Crawford, Texas, on August 21, 2002, to discuss Iraqi regime change, conflict received higher priority than democratization in the discussions. Five days later, at the Veterans of Foreign War Association convention, Vice President Dick Cheney alleged Iraq was building weapons of mass destruction (WMD). By then the president had established what he called the Future of Iraq Project (FIP), and under its aegis during September 3–5, 2002, the Democratic Principles Working Group (DPWG) held its first meeting. A more critical DPWG meeting, held between October 8 and 10 in Wotton Park, Surrey, suggesting Great Britain was privy to U.S. plans, paved the way for the Iraq Opposition Conference in London from December 14, and coincided with the U.S.-U.K. sponsored U.N. Resolution 1441 imposing sanctions on Iraq. Clearly the Afghanistn engagement created an Iraqi opportunity and a democratization model for implementing.

Beforehand, however, the conflict had to be concluded quickly, as in Afghanistan. Through “shock and awe” on the battlefront, U.S. troops reached Baghdad on the 20th day of April, and five days later, on

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\(^1\) Saddam being “a guy that tried to kill my dad,” was one of the original reasons George W. Bush offered for the war. See John Lewis Gaddis, “A grand strategy of transformation,” *Foreign Policy*, issue 133 (November–December 2002), 54, but see 50–55.
April 14, 2003, the Pentagon ended the war. Yet, when Ambassador L. Paul Brenner, III, replaced General Jay Garner as the Civilian Administrator in Iraq, unveiling the democratization blueprint failed to reproduce the military “shock and awe” politically—even by mid-2008. What happened?

What led fractious groups to the negotiating table, no less under U.S. coordination? How was the United States able to shift so expeditiously from conflict to democratization? What distinguished the operationalized version of democratization from its generic counterpart? Ultimately, how did the Afghani experience compare with the Iraqi? Just as Chapter 3 accounted for a handful of prior considerations raising a number of questions, three sections below address some of those questions under three headings: (a) the nature of the blueprint developed; (b) identifying actors, interests, and cleavages; and (c) ground-level developments from conflict to cooperation.

Building a Blueprint

As Table 4.1 suggests, since Iraq had a model to follow and Afghanistan did not, planning was tighter, initiated earlier, and bred higher expectations in Iraq than in Afghanistan. This is not to say George W. Bush treated the Iraqi war as the mother of all wars in the same way Saddam Hussein approached the 1991 Operation Desert Storm against George H.W. Bush. He had the 9/11 events to avenge in Afghanistan, but unfolding developments there fell within the margins of expectations. Iraq, on the other hand, had strayed into unpredictable zones several times since 1990, and just about every U.S. president since then had more than a few scores to settle with Saddam, not to mention new plans to fulfill. One of Bush’s plans, as noted in the previous chapter, was to utilize the post-9/11 atmosphere to replace dictatorship with democracy in the Middle East. But it was secondary to removing Saddam. In capturing these nuances, Table 4.1 conveys more light at the end of the Afghani democratization tunnel than the Iraqi.

Thirteen Comparative Dimensions

The blueprint for both differed, as the first dimension addresses. For Afghanistan, separate blueprints for conflict and democratization were supervised by the United States and the United Nations, respectively; but for Iraq, both dimensions were brought together and implemented