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Long Time Coming

Bruce E. Moon

Prospects for Democracy in Iraq

When George W. Bush declared the end of major combat operations from the deck of the USS *Abraham Lincoln* on May 1, 2003, he also lashed the future of U.S. foreign policy to the question of how long the democratization of Iraq would require: “The transition from dictatorship to democracy will take time, but it is worth every effort. Our coalition will stay until our work is done. Then we will leave, and we will leave behind a free Iraq.”¹ A few months later, President Bush clarified his vision of the stakes, but not the timetable: “The failure of Iraqi democracy would embolden terrorists around the world, increase dangers to the American people, and extinguish the hopes of millions in the region. Iraqi democracy will succeed—and that success will send forth the news, from Damascus to Teheran—that freedom can be the future of every nation. The establishment of a free Iraq at the heart of the Middle East will be a watershed event in the global democratic revolution.”²

In the nearly six years since then, the pronouncements of policymakers have not advanced the time frame beyond the imprecision introduced by former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld: “Democracy’s hard. It’s tough stuff, and it takes time.”³ They have been riddled with contradictions and vagaries that do little to specify the duration of the “hard journey” said to be required: declarations that “Iraq is now free” appear in the same speeches as warnings that “democracy will take time,” and that “it will not happen over night.” Such open-ended projections, equally compatible with interpretations ranging from months to centuries, provide little guidance for the serious assessment of pol-

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The author thanks Chaim Kaufmann, Rajan Menon, Kevin Narizny, and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

1. Jarrett Murphy, “Text of Bush Speech,” <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/05/01/iraq/main551946.shtml>.

2. George W. Bush, “President Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East,” remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy at the United States Chamber of Commerce, Washington, D.C., November 6, 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html>.

3. David Stout, “Rumsfeld Warns Iraq’s Neighbors against Aiding Zarqawi,” *New York Times*, June 1, 2005.

icy options. Yet, a realistic assessment of the likely political future of Iraq, as well as of other extreme autocracies, remains critical to charting a course for U.S. policy.

Pundits, policymakers, and presidential candidates have offered opinions on the pace of political change in Iraq, but they have cited neither well-established theories of democratization nor rigorous social science evidence to support their views.⁴ Scholars have an obligation to address such policy-relevant questions as how long it will take for Iraq to democratize, but thus far comparative, theoretically informed empiricism has been notably absent.

The result is confusion about both Iraq's present accomplishments and its future course. Elections are lauded as symbolic of the arrival of democracy, but every democratic theorist agrees that there is far more to democracy than elections. The voter turnout of the courageous Iraqi people is said to signal the triumph of democracy, but history shows that it has never been the unwillingness to vote that has prevented democracy, but rather the failure to honor the results of those elections.⁵ An Iraqi-headed government may embody sovereignty, but scholars of democracy are unanimous that the tricky part of maintaining the monopoly on the legitimate use of force lies not in creating instruments of power, but in constraining its illegitimate exercise. That requires a web of respected institutions, mobilized interests, and deeply rooted values, not foreign armies. Immediate problems—forming a government, holding an election, or maintaining security—have been addressed as if their resolution would be decisive in engineering a democratic Iraq, without consulting the historical record of democratization elsewhere.

This article seeks to fill these gaps by fashioning a working hypothesis out of theory and evidence culled from the past experience of states similar to Iraq. Its motivation rests on the conviction that analysts should take into account

4. Opinions range from Anthony Cordesman—"The notion that Iraq will suddenly emerge as a stable democracy and will change the rest of the Arab world crosses the line between neo-conservative and neo-crazy"—to Colin L. Powell's: "We reject the condescending notion that freedom will not grow in the Middle East or that there is any region of the world that cannot support democracy." See Cordesman, quoted in *USA Today*, November 11, 2002; and Powell, "The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative: Building Hope for the Years Ahead," Heritage Lecture, No. 772 (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, December 12, 2002).

5. As Samuel P. Huntington put it, "The problem is not to hold elections but to create organizations." See Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968). For a demonstration that individual-level expressions of support for democracy are only weakly linked with societal-level democracy, see Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, "Political Culture and Democracy: Analyzing Cross-Level Linkages," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (October 2003), pp. 61–79.

the details that make Iraq unique only in concert with a generalization of frequently asked questions.⁶ “Can Iraq democratize?” is better answered after considering, “Have other nations with Iraq’s experience become democratic?” “How long will it take?” surely requires one to ask, “How long has it taken for similar nations?”⁷

This comparative method offers a benefit beyond Iraq. The analysis will help to define what should be considered realistic outcomes if regime change is contemplated in the other two-thirds of the Bush administration’s “axis of evil,” Iran and North Korea. U.S. policy in Afghanistan must also depend inevitably on judgments about its political future, which this analysis may also help to illuminate.

The study identifies cases comparable to Iraq based on two simple intuitions. First, the more autocratic the nation, the longer it will take to achieve democracy. Second, the more prolonged the autocracy, the more difficult and protracted any democratic transition will be. The first section of the article begins by exploring the theoretical reasoning that informs the central expectation: extreme and long-established autocracies transit to democracy only over long expanses of time. The second section introduces a metric that enables me to compile a list of states comparable to Iraq in the intensity and duration of their autocratic experience. After a review of the political history of Iraq in the third section, I use that measure in the fourth section to summarize the experience of those nations subsequent to their extreme autocratic periods. In the fifth section, I move beyond historical comparison to a theory-driven structural analysis designed to determine whether conditions in Iraq are more similar to those established autocracies that have democratized or to those that have not. In the process, the central claim is tested in an alternative way, the robustness of the findings to the Third Wave era is assessed, and the effect of previous U.S. military occupations is evaluated.⁸ The sixth section produces a

6. These would include security problems, ethnic conflicts, regional complications, cultural predictions, and external involvement. A good example of an ideographic approach is Daniel Heradstveit and Helge Hveem, eds., *Oil in the Gulf: Obstacles to Democracy and Development* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2005). Blueprints for the design of a democratic system include Adeed I. Dawisha and Karen Dawisha, “How to Build a Democratic Iraq,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 3 (May/June 2003), pp. 36–50; and Chappell Lawson, “How Best to Build Democracy: Laying a Foundation for the New Iraq,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (July/August 2003), pp. 206–207.

7. No set of past cases can definitively predict the future of a current one, because there are always unique attributes that make the parallels imperfect. Rather than beginning with this “impossibility theorem,” however, I address the objections to generalization in a later section.

8. The term “third wave” was introduced in Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), to refer to the de-

composite projection based on both the structural analysis and historical experience.

Why Privilege Historical Prediction?

Previous theory advances a wealth of factors that affect democratic prospects, and any of them could be used to identify nations comparable to Iraq. Because my principal interest lies in forecasting rather than theory testing, however, the main analysis relies on a conclusion that is undisputed in the empirical literature: the best prediction of a nation's level of democracy is its past level.⁹ This finding of a strong serial correlation is validated by the analysis below, but I begin by elucidating why, despite theoretical differences, most accounts agree that democratization is a necessarily slow process characterized by "hysteresis," a physics term that means, literally, to be late.¹⁰ It describes systems that react slowly and at a lag to the forces applied to them, so that they depend on past history as well as current forces.¹¹

mocratization of about thirty countries between 1974 and 1990. Here, as elsewhere, the term is expanded to encompass the period since 1990 as well, during which it has been suggested that democratization is easier than it had been earlier. For the most cogent argument that the post-Soviet experience should not be grouped with the earlier transitions, see Michael McFaul, "The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in the Postcommunist World," *World Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (January 2002), pp. 212–244.

9. See Kristian S. Gleditsch and Michael D. Ward, "Double Take: A Reexamination of Democracy and Autocracy in Modern Politics," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (June 1997), pp. 361–383; John O'Loughlin, Michael D. Ward, Corey L. Lofdahl, Jordin S. Cohen, David S. Brown, David Reilly, Kristian S. Gleditsch, and Michael Shin, "The Diffusion of Democracy, 1946–1994," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (December 1998), pp. 545–574; Yi Feng and Paul J. Zak, "The Determinants of Democratic Transitions," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (April 1999), pp. 162–177; James R. Scarritt, Susan M. McMillan, and Shaheen Mozaffar, "The Interaction between Democracy and Ethnopolitical Protest and Rebellion in Africa," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 7 (September 2001), pp. 800–827; Bruce E. Moon, Jennifer Harvey Birdsall, Sylvia Ceisluk, Lauren M. Garlett, Joshua J. Hermias, Elizabeth Mendenhall, Patrick D. Schmid, and Wai Hong Wong, "Voting Counts: Participation in the Measurement of Democracy," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Summer 2006), pp. 3–32; and Joe Foweraker and Todd Landman, "Economic Development and Democracy Revisited: Why Dependency Theory Is Not Yet Dead," *Democratization*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (February 2004), pp. 1–20.

10. Hysteresis is used especially to denote systems that do not return completely to their original state after a disturbance has been removed. For instance, if you push on a piece of putty it will assume a new shape, but when you remove your hand it will not return to its original shape entirely or quickly. Political systems are similar: Saddam Hussein's hand will affect the shape of Iraqi governance long after his direct influence has ended.

11. For example, Ibrahim El Badawi and Samir Makdisi find that nations close the gap between their actual level of democracy and the level expected on the basis of their current structural conditions at a rate of 4 to 5 percent per year. See El Badawi and Makdisi, "Explaining the Democracy Deficit in the Arab World," *Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance*, Vol. 46, No. 5 (February

Structural explanations, whether in the modernization or dependency traditions, contend that democratization unfolds slowly because it requires complex, multifaceted evolution in the political, social, and economic realms. This approach invariably identifies relatively enduring national qualities as requisites of democracy: income level and economic structure, class structure and inequality, education, colonial legacy, dependency, geographic region, religion, and ethnic divisions.¹²

Actor-oriented explanations that attribute greater importance to elite behavior see democratic possibilities in a broader range of circumstances, but they are scarcely more optimistic concerning the time frame required.¹³ They generally portray democratic transitions as staged processes that begin with a democratic opening (i.e., the breakdown of an authoritarian regime), then register a democratic breakthrough, and conclude with democratic consolidation.¹⁴ Although the first two of these stages can usually be identified as discrete events triggered by identifiable agents, democratic consolidation—"the process by which a newly established democratic regime becomes sufficiently durable

2007), pp. 813–831. Robert J. Barro similarly estimates that 25 percent of the adjustment occurs over five years and almost 70 percent over twenty years. See Barro, "Determinants of Democracy," *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 107, No. 6, pt. 2 (December 1999), pp. S158–S183.

12. See Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (March 1959), pp. 69–105; Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited: 1993 Presidential Address," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (February 1994), pp. 1–22; Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 1966); Kenneth A. Bollen, "World System Position, Dependency, and Democracy: The Cross-National Evidence," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (August 1983), pp. 468–479; Ronald Inglehart, "The Renaissance of Political Culture," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (December 1988), pp. 1203–1230; Ross E. Burkhardt and Michael S. Lewis-Beck, "Comparative Democracy: The Economic Development Thesis," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (December 1994), pp. 903–910; Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyn Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992); Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and Facts," *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (January 1997), pp. 155–183; Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Renske Doorenspleet, "The Structural Context of Recent Transitions to Democracy," *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (May 2004), pp. 309–335.

13. See, for example, Herbert Kitschelt, "Political Regime Change: Structure and Process-driven Explanations?" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 86, No. 4 (December 1992), pp. 1028–1034; and Guillermo O'Donnell and Phillippe C. Schmitter, "Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies," in O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

14. See Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); and Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (January 2002), pp. 5–21.

that a return to nondemocratic rule is no longer likely”—is inherently a longer-term proposition.¹⁵

From the standpoint of either of these schools of thought, it is easy to see why rapid democratization is rare.¹⁶ Democratic consolidation must take time because the conditions necessary for it are themselves the outcomes of protracted processes.¹⁷ First, a minimally competent and effective state must hold power and monopolize the legitimate means of force within identified borders.¹⁸ To do so, it must dominate the military, competing groups, and other

15. Mark J. Gasiorowski and Timothy J. Power, “The Structural Determinants of Democratic Consolidation: Evidence from the Third World,” *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 6 (December 1998), p. 740. This is also where most transitions break down: the authors report that nearly a third of third world democracies collapse before the first (postfounding) election, about half before the first change in power has been effected, and more than 60 percent within twelve years. See Timothy J. Power and Mark J. Gasiorowski, “Institutional Design and Democratic Consolidation in the Third World,” *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (April 1997), pp. 123–155. For the determinants of democratic collapse, see Jon C. Pevehouse, “With a Little Help from My Friends? Regional Organizations and the Consolidation of Democracy,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (July 2002), pp. 611–626; and Abraham Diskin, Hanna Diskin, and Reuven Y. Hazan, “Why Democracies Collapse: The Reasons for Democratic Failure and Success,” *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (July 2005), pp. 291–309.

16. A third theoretical approach to democratization, which emphasizes diffusion, is more ambiguous as to speed but selective in the circumstances under which democracy is likely. See Harvey Starr, “Democratic Dominoes: Diffusion Approaches to the Spread of Democracy in the International System,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (June 1991), pp. 356–381; Harvey Starr and Christina Lindborg, “Democratic Dominoes Revisited: The Hazards of Governmental Transitions, 1974–1996,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (August 2003), pp. 490–519; O’Loughlin et al., “The Diffusion of Democracy”; and Kristian S. Gleditsch and Michael D. Ward, “War and Peace in Space and Time: The Role of Democratization,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (March 2000), pp. 1–29. For example, during the most rapid phase of democratization, a nation may be expected to close nearly a quarter of the gap between its own level of democracy and that of its neighbors each year. See, for example, Daniel Brinks and Michael Coppedge, “Diffusion Is No Illusion: Neighbor Emulation in the Third Wave of Democracy,” *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (May 2006), pp. 463–489. The undemocratic “neighborhood” surrounding Iraq, however, precludes democratization through the diffusion channel. Another literature finds that short-term economic downturns destabilize all governments, but do not necessarily bring democracy. See, for example, Mark J. Gasiorowski, “Economic Crisis and Political Regime Change: An Event History Analysis,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 89, No. 4 (December 1995), pp. 882–897; and Michael Bernhard, Christopher Reenock, and Timothy Nordstrom, “The Legacy of Western Overseas Colonialism on Democratic Survival,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (March 2004), pp. 223–250.

17. See Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan, “Toward Consolidated Democracies,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (April 1996), pp. 14–33.

18. The manifest inability of the Iraqi state to exercise control belies the claim that Iraq should be considered democratic because elections have been successfully conducted. Until the state is providing all the services and functions expected of government, with the modest aid of outside forces, no assessment of a system’s level of democracy can be meaningful. By definition, a democratic government must actually be governing. In practice, the gravest threats to democracy occur when the state attempts to balance these governance challenges with the constraints imposed by the democratic principles discussed below. For example, it is relatively easy to provide security or to respect civil liberties, but devilishly difficult to do both at the same time.

authoritarian enclaves. It must extend its rule across the country, extracting resources necessary for its operation, delivering services, and maintaining order. This requires the construction of bureaucracies, the authoring of legislation and administrative rules, the recruitment and training of personnel, and so on. When few officials carry over from the previous regime, staffing these agencies with technocratic, management, and political experience is itself a long-term project. This is the monumental task barely under way in Iraq, most visibly in the areas of security and utility service provision. Daunting as it is, it constitutes merely state building, a necessary forerunner to democracy building.

Second, the state must assume a democratic form in which executive power is subordinated to the rule of law. Incentives for law-based behavior must be institutionalized, and elites must be habituated to honoring the constraints they impose. Mechanisms and procedures must be empowered to keep office holders accountable to the public will, and some agency must arise to animate them. Norms of compromise among elites must be internalized as well as externally enforced by some system of checks and balances. Such attitudes are not endemic to all political cultures; they are eroded by autocratic environments; and the institutions that embody them do not arise naturally.¹⁹

Third, mass attitudes and habits must be developed to demand popular consent and to reward it with citizen cooperation. The democratic state must command the loyalty of the population, even when citizens disapprove of policies, doubt the officials who adopt them, and lament the outcomes they generate. The near-unanimously perceived legitimacy of the state must become its central resource, but that presupposes acceptance of nationhood as embodied in the state. Further, such political capital accumulates much more slowly through performance and precedent than does the attachment to charismatic autocratic personalities or identity-based allegiances. It appears that many Iraqis feel greater loyalty to ethnic groups and their militias than to the government and its security forces, a pattern rooted in Iraq's political history.

Fourth, civil society (e.g., independent media) and political society (e.g., political parties) must flourish if democratic norms are to guide political and social behavior.²⁰ Policy dissent must be tolerated, and authority challenges must be protected. Elections must be made meaningful by widespread, well-

19. See John Waterbury, "Fortuitous Byproducts," in Lisa Anderson, ed., *Transitions to Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 261–283.

20. See Larry Diamond, "Toward Democratic Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (July 1994), pp. 4–17.

informed political participation. For the political system to achieve stability, that participation must be motivated at least as much by negotiable policy preferences as by the polarizing rigidity of group identity or personal loyalty that mark most immature political systems. The dominant showing of religious and ethnic parties in Iraqi elections greatly weakens the secular forces most likely to produce democratic compromise.

These requirements explain why democratic change is either incremental or subject to reversal when it is not. They also suggest that democracy will arise much less frequently and be consolidated much more slowly in nations such as Iraq that have experienced extreme autocracy for an extended period. As the above discussion makes clear, this is partly a result of the autocratic experience itself and partly the continuing effect of the slowly changing structural conditions that were responsible for the extreme autocracy in the first place.

Defining "Established Extreme Autocracy"

The first step toward establishing the roster of nations that may provide insight into Iraq's future is to characterize political systems in a way that facilitates comparison. The most recent data set of the Polity project is the obvious choice.²¹ I rely on Polity IV's 21-point scale of institutionalized democracy, which subtracts a 10-point autocracy scale from a 10-point democracy scale to

21. The Polity data set is introduced in Keith Jagers and Ted Robert Gurr, "Tracking Democracy's Third Wave with the Polity III Data," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (November 1995), pp. 469–482. It is widely regarded as the most reliable and valid of the available data sets, and it offers the greatest coverage, encompassing nearly 200 countries for each year between 1800 and 2007. See Gerardo L. Munck and Jay Verkuilen, "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (February 2002), pp. 3–34; and Moon et al., "Voting Counts." Polity's conception of democracy is unusually well documented via the writings of its founders, its exemplary codebook, and other materials, which include Ted Robert Gurr, "Persistence and Change in Political Systems, 1800–1971," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (December 1974), pp. 1482–1504; and Monty G. Marshall and Keith Jagers, *Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800–2006, Dataset Users' Manual*, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>, which is also the source of the data used throughout this article. There are, of course, many data sets on democracy, each utilizing its own definitions, but all agree that Iraq belongs in the most autocratic category. See, for example, Mike Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, Fernando Limongi, and Adam Przeworski, "Classifying Political Regimes," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Summer 1996), pp. 3–36; Michael Coppedge and Wolfgang H. Reinicke, "Measuring Polyarchy," in Alex Inkeles, ed., *On Measuring Democracy: Its Consequences and Concomitants* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1991), pp. 47–68; Mark J. Gasiorowski, "An Overview of the Political Regime Change Dataset," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (August 1996), pp. 469–483; Moon et al., "Voting Counts"; Tatu Vanhanen, "A New Dataset for Measuring Democracy, 1810–1998," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (March 2000), pp. 251–265; and the data sets on autocracy cited above.

yield a continuous measure in which pure autocracy is scored -10 and full democracy $+10$. The democracy/autocracy conceptions of Polity, rooted in the theoretical work of Harry Eckstein and Ted Gurr on authority relations, emphasize the range of political participation in the recruitment of the chief executive and the extent of constraints on executive power. In fully democratic systems, chief executives are elected in open, formal competition by broad electorates, and, once in office, are heavily constrained by statutory limitations and by other actors (especially elected legislatures).²² In pure autocracies, political participation is repressed, and chief executives with unlimited authority appropriate power directly or are designated by a closed group.²³

To identify a benchmark for successful democratization, I adopt the criterion of a Polity score of $+7$ or more, which recognizes a “coherent democracy, with institutionally strong, or internally consistent, authority patterns.”²⁴ Coherent democracies are more stable and enduring than incoherent polities (“anocracies”), which have substantial features of both democracy and autocracy (or lack the effective institutions of either) and are coded between $+6$ and -6 .²⁵ Nations scored at -7 and below are considered “coherent autocracies.”²⁶

22. Harry Eckstein and Ted Robert Gurr, *Patterns of Authority: A Structural Basis for Political Inquiry* (New York: Wiley, 1975).

23. For coding details, see an earlier version of this article, “Can Iraq Democratize? How Long Will It Take?” paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Honolulu, Hawaii, March 1–5, 2005. To demonstrate that the conclusions do not rest on any idiosyncrasies in the Polity data, it is augmented whenever possible with Freedom House’s ratings, which are available only since 1972 (see <http://www.freedomhouse.org>). The Freedom House conception of “freedom” is more eclectic than Polity’s emphasis on democratic institutions and empirically more sensitive to civil liberties. Yet, the two theoretically different data sets are in close empirical agreement—83 percent of the variance in one is shared by the other—as shown in Moon et al., “Voting Counts.”

24. Jaggers and Gurr, “Tracking Democracy’s Third Wave with the Polity III Data,” p. 474 n. 12.

25. For a further discussion of coherent and incoherent polities, see Gurr, “Persistence and Change in Political Systems”; Robert Harmel, “Gurr’s ‘Persistence and Change’ Revisited: Some Consequences of Using Different Operationalizations of ‘Change of Polity,’” *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (June 1980), pp. 189–214; Mark Irving Lichbach, *Regime Change and the Coherence of European Governments* (Denver: University of Denver, 1984); and Jaggers and Gurr, “Tracking Democracy’s Third Wave with the Polity III Data.”

26. The $+/-7$ standard was originally defined by Polity and has been used frequently in studies examining various consequences of democracy relevant to declared U.S. interests, especially in the “democratic peace” literature. See David L. Rousseau, Christopher Gelpi, Dan Reiter, and Paul K. Huth, “Assessing the Dyadic Nature of the Democratic Peace, 1918–88,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 90, No. 3 (September 1996), pp. 512–533; Edward D. Mansfield and Jack L. Snyder, “Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength, and War,” *International Organization*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Spring 2002), pp. 297–337; Jonathan W. Keller, “Leadership Style, Regime Type, and Foreign Policy Crisis Behavior: A Contingent Monadic Peace?” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (June 2005), pp. 205–232; and Axel Hadenius and Jan Teorell, “Authoritarian Regimes: Stability, Change, and Pathways to Democracy, 1972–2003,” Working Paper, No. 331 (South Bend, Ind.:

To isolate nations most like Iraq, I add the category of “extreme autocracies”—those coded at -9 or -10 . In 2007 there were six of them: two “pure autocracies” scored at -10 (Qatar and Saudi Arabia), plus four others coded -9 (North Korea, Swaziland, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, which are different only in that they lack a hereditary monarchy). For convenience, I refer to Iraq by the -9 rating it held from 1978 through 2002, though Polity has assigned it no score since it fell under foreign domination in 2003. Extreme autocracies are distinguished from other coherent autocracies most clearly by the absence of executive constraints and political participation, both of which are central to the potential for a democratic transition.²⁷

Constraints on the chief executive, which imply the existence of competing institutions and elites, provide an important channel of political change. As

Kellogg Institute, University of Notre Dame, November 2006). Although the most recent Polity codebook proposes a cutoff at $+/-6$, as will become clear, lowering the bar from $+7$ to $+6$, $+5$, or even $+4$ affects few cases. Other plausible cutoff points would incline the analysis toward greater pessimism. Robert A. Dahl argues that $+8$ is more appropriate. See Dahl, *On Democracy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980). Christian Davenport and David A. Armstrong find that human rights are much better upheld at $+8$ and above. See Davenport and Armstrong, “Democracy and the Violation of Human Rights: A Statistical Analysis from 1976 to 1996,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (July 2004), pp. 538–554. The most authoritative study on the diffusion of democracy—a key issue for the Bush initiative to spread democracy in the Middle East—also uses $+8$. See O’Loughlin et al., “The Diffusion of Democracy.” Brian Lai and Dan Slater use $+6$, but report that their results would be no different at either $+5$ or $+7$. Lai and Slater, “Institutions of the Offensive: Domestic Sources of Dispute Initiation in Authoritarian Regimes, 1950–1992,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (January 2006), pp. 113–126.

27. For an elaborate exposition of Polity’s coding of these cases and a comparison with the far more common profile of autocracies rated -7 , see Moon, “Can Iraq Democratize?” In 2007 the best known members of this latter group of eleven (plus four rated -8) are China, Cuba, Kuwait, and Syria. The most notable historical cases include the Soviet Union between Joseph Stalin and Mikhail Gorbachev, almost all of the Eastern European states during the Cold War era, and Afghanistan for the majority of the last forty years. Other recent efforts to distinguish among authoritarian regimes also place these states in the most autocratic category. Hadenius and Teorell recognize five major types of autocracy, five minor types, and six hybrids, largely on the basis of “modes of power maintenance” that correspond roughly to Polity’s “executive selection” criteria. They identify Iraq as an amalgam of a military and a one-party state, a category that manifests the highest level of autocracy among any of those sixteen categories. Hadenius and Teorell, “Authoritarian Regimes”; and Axel Hadenius and Jan Teorell, “Pathways from Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (January 2007), pp. 143–157. The “extreme autocracies” discussed in this article are scattered among their “monarchies,” “military regimes,” and “one-party states,” all of which exhibit very low democracy scores. Larry Diamond codes all nations for 2001 and includes all of my “extreme autocracies” except Uzbekistan as “politically closed authoritarian regimes,” a category of the most autocratic nations distinguished from electoral authoritarian regimes by the absence of multiparty electoral competition and “pluralism.” See Diamond, “Thinking about Hybrid Regimes,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (April 2002), pp. 21–35. Barbara Geddes distinguishes a subset of “personalist” regimes such as Saddam’s Iraq from other military and single-party regimes and expects them to have greater difficulty in democratizing. See Geddes, “What Do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years?” *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 2 (June 1999), pp. 115–144.

Guillermo O'Donnell and Phillipe Schmitter put it, "There is no [democratic] transition whose beginning is not the consequence—direct or indirect—of important divisions within the authoritarian regime itself."²⁸ Political change in the former Soviet Union illustrates the significance of this effect. The Soviet Union was coded as an extreme autocracy (−9) for slightly less than twenty years, ending with the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953. With the subsequent return of executive constraints and the end of one-man rule, it was considered −7 until Mikhail Gorbachev's liberalization began in 1987. Although the Soviet Union in its last three decades was autocratic, there is little doubt that it was markedly less autocratic than it had been under Stalin (and dramatically less autocratic than Iraq when Saddam Hussein held unlimited power). For example, it is hard to imagine the perestroika evolution that occurred in the 1980s arising directly out of the Stalin period without the intervening years, during which cracks in the autocracy allowed shoots of proto-democracy to emerge. The more diversified leadership and greater differentiation of power in states with executive constraints breeds a very different pattern of political behavior, and political competition creates a richer reservoir of experienced personnel to steer the state away from autocratic extremes. For example, in the −7 autocracy of 1987, Boris Yeltsin was demoted from the Politburo for criticizing Gorbachev, but by 1989 he was back in parliament, and by 1991 he was influential in the democratization process. Under Stalin or Saddam Hussein (−9), he would have been purged.

Furthermore, because the usually violent demise of the highly personalist extreme autocracy is tantamount to the utter destruction of the state itself, any succeeding political system lacks the conditions necessary for a successful democratic transition. The absence of competing institutions and elites in extreme autocracies deprives any future regime of experienced personnel, established procedures, the rule of law, and the habits of compromise necessary to build a stable democracy.²⁹ All of these problems are readily apparent in contemporary Iraq.

The other potential avenue for political change identified in the literature is political participation, which was also unusually sharply constrained under

28. O'Donnell and Schmitter, "Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies," p. 19.

29. Geddes finds that personalist regimes hardly ever survive the death of the founder because the most able successors will have been eliminated as potential rivals—certainly the pattern formed by Saddam Hussein's many purges, which began almost immediately upon his seizure of power. The violence that usually surrounds the collapse dooms democratic prospects. She writes, "Democracies are created by negotiation. It is very rare for them to emerge directly from popular insurgency, rebellion, or civil war." See Geddes, "What Do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years?" p. 132.

Saddam Hussein. The presence of electoral competition, however flawed, provides access to one important mechanism of democratization not available to extreme autocracies—"electoral revolutions . . . which transform rigged electoral rituals into fair elections."³⁰ A history of elections, especially in Eastern Europe, "taught people to link regime legitimacy with the act of voting,"³¹ and even these limited exercises in participation provided pathways for future mobilization. Also, these regimes allowed "pockets of political autonomy."³² By contrast, popular mobilizations cannot arise under severe repression, nor will extreme autocracies permit the autonomous civil society or political society that could anchor a new democratic system.³³ For example, senior clerics were executed by the Baath government precisely to prevent a religious establishment from challenging the government.³⁴ The significance of the contrast with a -7 autocracy may be illustrated best by the role played in the democratization of Poland by the Roman Catholic Church and the independent trade union movement Solidarity and its predecessors. It is inconceivable that such elements of civil society could have survived an extreme autocracy and equally inconceivable that democratization could have come as quickly as it did to Poland without them.³⁵

Because actor-oriented theories generally attribute democratic transitions to either elite competition or popular mobilization, extreme autocracies that feature neither must have very poor democratic prospects. Nor will democratic norms and the habit of extending legitimacy to the state exist in an extreme autocracy such as Iraq's. The analysis reported in table 1 confirms the key assumption underlying my historical approach: democratic change is relatively rare and comes most slowly for the most autocratic of states. As shown in the first row, extreme autocracies are highly unlikely to transition to democracy over any short time frame. Only 1.02 percent have been able to do so within

30. Valerie J. Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik, "Favorable Conditions and Electoral Revolutions," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (October 2006), p. 6.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

33. See Barbara Geddes, "Challenging the Conventional Wisdom," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (October 1994), pp. 104-118.

34. Yitzhak Nakash, "The Shi'ites and the Future of Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (July/August 2003), pp. 17-26.

35. Islam in Iraq is an intriguing parallel as an institution of civil society, but it does not provide the same unifying nationalism in ethnically fractionalized Iraq that the Catholic Church represented in Poland. Sharp divisions between competing Islamic traditions in Iraq have been exploited by autocrats to prevent challenges going back to Ottoman times, and most studies still expect Islam to retard rather than advance democracy.

Table 1. Percentage of Nations That Achieve Coherent Democracy after Various Lags

	5 Years	10 Years	20 Years
Extreme autocracy (-9/-10)	1.02	2.88	7.21
Other coherent autocracy (-7/-8)	3.96	7.17	13.12
Incoherent polity (+6 to -6)	6.72	11.09	15.22
Coherent democracy (+7 to +10)	90.45	86.92	86.09

five years, and only 7.21 percent (about one in fourteen) are coherent democracies even twenty years later.³⁶ Table 1 also validates the distinction between extreme autocracies and other coherent autocracies by showing that their trajectory of political change has been different. At a lag of five years, for example, nations that had been scored at -7 or -8 are nearly four times as likely to become democratic as are extreme autocracies. They make the democratic transition nearly as often as incoherent polities after twenty years, whereas extreme autocracies remain only about half as likely to have effected such a change.³⁷

I postulate that democratic prospects are diminished by both the intensity and the duration of a nation’s autocracy. Established autocracies differ from more fleeting ones because preexisting proto-democratic elements gradually atrophy, and potential democratic leadership inevitably passes from the scene. As the remnants of previous political systems are slowly extinguished by established autocracies, authoritarian patterns become entrenched, and democratic norms and expectations become alien among both leaders and the public. Thus, democratic transitions face greater obstacles with fewer resources.

In assembling a roster of nations with a political history similar to Iraq’s, it is necessary to distinguish established autocracies from those that have had a briefer brush with authoritarianism. The duration of autocracy, however, has not received as much attention in the existing literature as has the persistence of democracy. Arend Lijphart uses a two-decade time period to demarcate an “established democracy,” and estimates of when a democracy should be con-

36. The sample includes only cases since the beginning of the twentieth century.

37. Similarly, Geddes finds that personalist regimes such as Iraq’s are less than half as likely to transit to stable democracy as military regimes. See Geddes, “What Do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years?” Hadenius and Teorell confirm that result and also find that military and one-party states (Iraq being a hybrid of the two) are much less likely to become democratic than other authoritarian regimes. See Hadenius and Teorell, “Pathways from Authoritarianism.”

sidered “consolidated” range from twelve years to twenty-five years.³⁸ I borrow Lijphart’s benchmark to label as “established extreme autocracies” (EEAs) nations that have maintained a score of -9 or -10 for twenty years or more.

This convenient round number is roughly a full political generation and is exceeded by Saddam Hussein’s twenty-four-year reign, which illustrates these duration effects. Because Iraq’s population has a median age of 19.7, more than half of Iraqis could have known no other regime. Nor could the officials of the new Iraqi government, which must be among the least experienced in the world. Most are newcomers to politics; many are newly arrived in Iraq after living abroad for decades; and none have experience in democratically governing Iraq.³⁹

Iraq’s Political History

Iraq has always been predominantly autocratic, and this absence of democratic history substantially diminishes its future prospects, as Yi Feng and Paul Zak show that the probability of a democratic transition is five times greater for a country that has experienced democracy in the past, however briefly.⁴⁰ Of course, a distinct Iraqi state dates only to the British occupation after World War I, but Iraq’s predecessor state, the Ottoman Empire, which incorporated the territory of modern-day Iraq in the sixteenth century, was itself a pure autocracy (-10) for all but a few years after Polity’s coverage began in 1800.⁴¹

38. Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999). The shorter estimate is found in Gasiorowski and Power, “The Structural Determinants of Democratic Consolidation”; and the longer estimate is in Scott Mainwaring, “Presidentialism, Multipartism, and Democracy: The Difficult Combination,” *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (July 1993), pp. 198–228.

39. Phebe Marr identifies ninety-seven leaders in three governments: the Iraq Governing Council and the Council of Ministers appointed by the Coalition Provisional Authority in 2003, the interim government selected after the transfer of sovereignty in 2004, and the government elected in early 2005. She finds that of Iraq’s post-Saddam leaders only 27 percent were known to be living under Saddam’s regime in 2003, whereas 38 percent were known to be abroad (another 19 percent were living in the northern Kurdish “free” zone, and 16 percent are of unknown background). Most Iraqis who have held office since the 1970s have been banned from public service. See Phebe Marr, “Who Are Iraq’s New Leaders? What Do They Want?” Special Report, No. 160 (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, March 2006), pp. 5–8.

40. Feng and Zak, “The Determinants of Democratic Transitions.”

41. Several dates might be cited for Iraq’s birth as an independent polity. The British seized military control of Basra in 1914, Baghdad in 1917, and Mosul in 1918. Iraq was entrusted to a British mandate by the League of Nations as a separate territory in 1919. After a 1920 revolt, Britain installed Faisal, a non-Iraqi, as monarch in 1921. An elected constituent assembly first met in 1924 and declared Iraqi sovereignty, but the British high commission retained *de facto* power until the British recognized Iraqi sovereignty in 1932 and Iraq was admitted to the League of Nations. Iraqi nationals usually cite 1921, but Polity uses the 1924 date.

The legitimation gap between governors and governed so characteristic of modern Iraq became firmly planted early in this era, when the former were foreign and the latter both ethnically diverse and attracted to other external actors.⁴²

Polity considers Iraq an incoherent, but predominantly autocratic, regime (−3 or −4) from its inception in 1924 until the military coup of 1958, oscillating between 4 and 5 on the autocracy scale, and maintaining a score of 1 on the democracy scale. Following the coup, the democracy score fell to zero and the overall score to −5. The few trappings of democracy gradually slipped away over the next decade as various civilian and military groups vied for control of the state in increasingly extra-legal and violent ways amid regional and ethnic revolts, brutal suppressions, and the banning or purging of political parties and military factions. The Baathists first came to power in the bloody 1963 coup, after which they assassinated leading members of the previous government and arrested, tortured, and executed an estimated 3,000 members of the Iraqi Communist Party. They were in turn removed before the end of the year. When the Baathists returned to power in a 1968 coup, they ensured one-party rule with a series of executions of rivals and dissenters in a reign of terror that cowed any opposition. The resulting government was downgraded by Polity from −5 to a code of −7, a coherent autocracy, to reflect the significantly suppressed political participation.

By the mid-1970s, Saddam Hussein had become the major force in the government through his control of the security system and the party. With Saddam's ascendance to the presidency in 1979, Iraq's Polity code was adjusted to −9 to reflect that Saddam was selected by a formalized process indicative of a fully institutionalized autocracy rather than through a seizure of power associated with anocracy. That Polity code represented the essence of an extreme autocracy: an unelected, unconstrained chief executive and a virtual absence of political participation, accentuated by the severe repression of civil liberties and political rights reflected in Freedom House's lowest scores.

According to Phebe Marr, although political conditions in Iraq had been deteriorating since the 1968 Baathist coup, this "changing of the guard marked a

42. Phebe Marr observes, however, that it was during the Islamization of this area, then under Persian control, in the early seventh century that "Iraq acquired a reputation that it retains today of a country difficult to govern." Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 2004), p. 5. Ottoman rule was only the most recent incarnation of an age-old history of control by various foreign powers, which at various times also included Greeks, Romans, Mongols, and Turkmen, as well as caliphs centered from Medina and Damascus to central Asia, frequently supported by foreign mercenaries.

decisive shift, already under way, from a one-party state to a personal, autocratic regime, dependent . . . on Saddam Hussein and his close family members and cohorts. . . . Personal loyalty became critical. The party was weakened as an institution, and what little pluralism and balance had remained at the top disappeared."⁴³ This "personal autocracy focused on one man and his whims . . . and the party was reduced to an appendage."⁴⁴ Saddam's inner circle was drawn almost exclusively from members of his family, clan, and the extended kinship network of his tribe. The state became increasingly centered on Saddam as he eliminated his rivals in brutal fashion, including the execution of five members of the governing council within days of his inauguration, imprisonment of dozens of Baathists and government officials, mass executions of Communist and Dawa Party activists, and murders of prominent political and religious leaders.

In sum, Iraq has known nothing but extreme autocracy for nearly a quarter century, during which nearly two-thirds of all living Iraqis were born. A full generation has been deprived of any experience that could foster democratic attitudes, develop democratically inclined leaders, create democratic institutions, or even permit the emergence of proto-democratic civil society. Prospective democracies that arise from such established autocracies must begin anew and virtually from scratch. As Marr writes, "If we take the age of twenty—a time when people are graduating from college or going to work and are increasingly aware of their political environment—as a threshold of adulthood, at least 57% [and perhaps as much as 82%] of the current leadership came of age after the Baath came to power in 1968. Few have much recollection of the pre-Baath era."⁴⁵ Among the populace, that number is smaller yet: about one current Iraqi in twenty reached adulthood before the 1968 Baath coup, and only about one in fifty before the 1958 coup. For the half-century before that, the Iraqi government was more foreign than indigenous and more monarchic than democratic.

Expectations after Established Extreme Autocracy

The criterion of twenty years at a Polity score of -9 or -10 enables me to identify a manageable list of nations comparable to Iraq.⁴⁶ Since the beginning of

43. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

45. Marr, "Who Are Iraq's New Leaders?" p. 7.

46. It also reveals the radically different histories of the post-World War II cases of democratization, which are sometimes erroneously cited as precedents for Iraq. For examples of this inaccu-

Table 2. Eight Established Extreme Autocracies, Coherent Autocracies in 2007

Country	Years Continuously Autocratic as of 2007
Saudi Arabia	82
North Korea	60
Oman	51
Syria	45
Iraq	40
Bahrain	37
Qatar	37
Swaziland	35

the twentieth century, only thirty nations have endured twenty continuous years of extreme autocracy.⁴⁷ Table 2 lists the eight countries that were once EEAs and are now coherent autocracies, including Iraq and four other extreme autocracies.⁴⁸ None of the eight offers any optimism for a rapid transformation in Iraq, given that all have been autocratic for more than thirty years and three for a half century or more, including North Korea, another frequently mentioned candidate for regime change. Each has dislodged at least one autocrat without escaping autocracy, reminding us that Iraqi autocracy did not begin with Saddam Hussein’s arrival (or North Korea’s with Kim Jung-il) and may well not end with his departure.⁴⁹

Table 3 lists fifteen other former EEAs that also challenge expectations for rapid democratization in Iraq, given that they have escaped from extreme au-

racy, see Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, “Democracy in Iraq?” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Summer 2003), pp. 119–136; James Dobbins, John G. McGinn, Keith Crane, Seth G. Jones, Rollie Lal, Andrew Rathmell, Rachel M. Swanger, and Anga Timilsina, *America’s Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2003); and Conrad C. Crane and W. Andrew Terrill, *Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario* (Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2003). Germany’s extreme autocracy was brief (1933–44) and was preceded for a longer period (1919–32) by the Weimar Republic (+6). From 1890 to 1919, it was scored +1 or +2. Italy had no democratic tradition, but its extreme autocracy (–9) was also relatively brief (1928–42) and was preceded by two decades of –1. Japan’s last coherent autocracy ended in 1857, after which it was coded as more democratic than autocratic (+1) for more than seventy-five years before 1945. These nations also had far greater prospects in terms of democratic requisites, as discussed in Eva Bellin, “The Iraqi Intervention and Democracy in Comparative Historical Perspective,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 119, No. 4 (Winter 2004–05), pp. 595–608.

47. This list excludes countries that have ceased to exist as independent entities, such as East Germany. It includes nations whose established extreme autocracy began before the twentieth century, but extended into it, such as Russia.

48. Both the Polity and Freedom House data are available only through 2007.

49. Observe also that “from 1972 to 2003, 77% of transitions from authoritarian government resulted in another authoritarian regime.” Hadenius and Teorell, “Pathways from Authoritarianism,” p. 152.

Table 3. Fifteen Established Extreme Autocracies, Incoherent Polities in 2007

Country	Current Status		End of Last Established Extreme Autocracy
	Polity	Freedom House	
Russia	+5	-4	1904*
Thailand	-1	-3	1934*
Yemen	-2	-3	1945
Ethiopia	+1	-3	1973
Iran	-6	-6	1905/1978
Nepal	+6	-1	1980
Guinea	-1	-4	1983
Haiti	+5	-1	1985*
Jordan	-3	-1	1988
Algeria	+2	-4	1988
Ivory Coast		-6	1989
Gabon	-4	-3	1989
Congo (Kinshasa)	+5	-4	1991
Malawi	+6	0	1992
Bhutan	-6	-4	2004

*Once a coherent democracy

tocracy but have not emerged as democratic. Most of these fifteen appear closer to autocracy than to democracy.⁵⁰ Several have Polity scores greater than zero, but according to the ratings by Freedom House, none has a positive score that would signify it as closer to democracy than autocracy.⁵¹ Nor have these countries shown the pace of change over the last decade or so—or even the direction—that inspires confidence in a transition to a democratic future. According to Polity, only four of the fifteen former EEAs listed in table 3 were more democratic in 2007 than they were in 1995, and only five of fifteen according to Freedom House.⁵²

The last column of table 3 also may provide some hints concerning Iraq’s future by registering the year when each nation exited extreme autocracy. Yemen

50. All but Ivory Coast (coded “transitional” since 2002) are “incoherent polities” between +6 and -6. Afghanistan, which fell just a year shy of qualifying as an established extreme autocracy with its -10 from 1945 to 1963, would otherwise belong here as well. It has been assigned the “foreign interruption” code since the Taliban regime (-7) ended in 2001; Freedom House has rated it equivalent to -3 since 2005.

51. Freedom House uses two 1-7 indexes for political rights and civil liberties, in which the lower numbers are more democratic. To avoid confusion in table 3 and achieve comparability with Polity, their indexes are mapped to Polity’s -10 to +10 scale using the formula $14.32 - (1.70 \times (\text{FHpol} + \text{FHciv}))$ and rounding downward. That formula reflects a regression that accounted for 82 percent of the variance over the 4,823 cases for which data exist on both.

52. In fact, Freedom House data show that, as of 2007, twelve of the fifteen have retreated from their most democratic rating since emerging from extreme autocracy.

has failed to achieve democracy despite leaving extreme autocracy in 1945, and five others have been languishing as incoherent polities for more than twenty years. The experience of Iran, a pure autocracy from 1800 to 1905 and again from 1955 to 1978, offers a sobering assessment for both Iraq and its own future should regime change be contemplated there. The remainder are nearing the end of their second decade with little forward progress visible, a caution against the belief that democratization has become dramatically easier since the advent of the Third Wave. In fact, this group exemplifies the important point that this period is more one of declining autocracy than advancing democracy, especially among former extreme autocracies.⁵³

Russia, Thailand, and Haiti, all of which had once achieved democracy but subsequently relapsed, are cautionary tales that highlight concerns about protracted democratic consolidation. According to Polity, Russia achieved +7 in 2000 before the increasing centralization of power in Vladimir Putin's administration produced a downgrade. Freedom House rated Russia as only "partly free" from 1990 to 2003, ceased to consider it an "electoral democracy" after the December 2003 election, and has coded it as "not free" since then. Thailand was +9 for fourteen years, before a military coup drove it to -5 in 2006. Haiti reached +7 in 1990 and from 1994 to 1998, but had regressed to -2 by 2000.⁵⁴ Initial achievement of democracy by no means guarantees a democratic future, a judgment reinforced by a count of the ninety-nine countries that have had a coherent democracy at one time or another since the beginning of the twentieth century. Nearly half (forty-four) subsequently lost their democratic status, seven of them more than once. Only eighteen of those forty-four are democratic today, and six of those eighteen failed on two occasions before achieving a more lasting democracy.

Finally, table 4 lists the relevant dates for the seven established extreme autocracies that were coherent democracies in Polity terms as of 2007, only four of which are also regarded as "free" by Freedom House. This group is ostensibly the basis for optimism in Iraq, but that judgment may be premature given

53. Since the 1980s the incidence of electoral autocracies has grown substantially more rapidly than the frequency of electoral democracies, according to Hadenius and Teorell, "Pathways from Authoritarianism." The growth of these intermediate political forms, called "incoherent polities" by the Polity project, has been recognized by many others, including Thomas Carothers, who calls them "hybrid regimes," and Fareed Zakaria, who dubs them "illiberal democracies." See Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm"; and Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003).

54. Malawi, which has bounced between +4 and +6 since 2000, was also once rated (tentatively) as democratic. In earlier Polity versions, it reached +7 from 1994 to 2000, but the 2004 update revised those codes to an incoherent +6.

that only two—Portugal and Turkey—meet Lijphart’s twenty-year longevity criterion to be considered “established democracies.” Portugal has been a democracy since 1976, just three years after its established extreme autocracy ended in 1973. Turkey, rated only “partly free” by Freedom House and +7 by Polity, reached the benchmark of twenty years only in 2003, but its history of democracy is not so straightforward. As table 4 indicates, Turkey’s last established extreme autocracy ended in 1907, and its first coherent democracy appeared thirty-nine years later in 1946. It has dropped from democratic status three times since then, however, and its current democracy commenced seventy-five years after its last extreme autocracy. Odds would now favor these two democracies surviving long term given that they have achieved twenty years of continuous democracy, but it is worth noting that six established democracies of more than two decades’ duration lost their democratic status during the last century, and only one has subsequently regained it.⁵⁵

Democratic consolidation is far from secure in the remaining five countries because they have achieved democracy only in the 1990s or later. Only Bulgaria qualifies under the twelve-year durability standard invoked by Mark Gasiorowski and Timothy Power as a significant inflection point.⁵⁶ Using a different democracy measure over the post-1970 period, Adam Przeworski and his colleagues find an average age at demise of eight and a half years for democracies.⁵⁷ An analysis of the democratic status of the forty-four nations cited above reveals that the average age of the democratic polity at death was about ten years, and the median age about eight.

Thus, several nations in table 4, having not yet passed estimates of the half-life of a failed democratic polity, are too fragile and short-lived to inspire confidence that they have achieved democratic consolidation. Albania reached +7 only in 2002—a year in which it went through three prime ministers and two presidents—and Freedom House has also rated it as only “partly free.” Mexico reached +8 in 2000, but Freedom House downgraded it in 2006. In 1996 the Dominican Republic and Guatemala both reached +8. But the former, which also had a two-month democracy in 1963, became “free” only in 1999,

55. This does not include several European countries whose democracy was interrupted by World War II occupation.

56. See Gasiorowski and Power, “The Structural Determinants of Democratic Consolidation.” They note that only 37 percent of new democracies survived twelve years, but, among those that did, 69 percent survived another ten years and 62 percent another twenty.

57. Przeworski et al., *Democracy and Development*. They deny, however, that the passage of time helps a democracy “consolidate,” arguing that the likelihood of collapse does not decline with age, but only with increasing development.

Table 4. Seven Established Extreme Autocracies, Coherent Democracies in 2007

Country	Current Status		First Year of Coherent Democracy	Last Year of Established Extreme Autocracy	Years from Established Extreme Autocracy to Democracy
	Polity	Freedom House			
Albania	+9	+4	2002	1989	13
Mexico	+8	+5	2000	1912	88
Guatemala	+8	+2	1996	1920	76
Dominican Republic	+8	+7	1996	1960	36
Bulgaria	+9	+9	1990	1917	73
Portugal	+10	+10	1976	1973	3
Turkey	+7	+4	1946/1983	1907	39/75

and Guatemala, which has never escaped “partly free” status, was downgraded further in 2003. None is a sure bet to survive in a democratic form.

Only two of thirty established extreme autocracies have become established democracies. Five others have transitioned to coherent democracies with a chance to reach the twenty-year standard during this cycle. Although it is impossible to know how many of those will become “established” before collapsing, a projection of somewhere around three seems reasonable, if speculative. Slightly less than 60 percent of all twentieth-century democracies remain today, though many of those are not yet established. A slightly smaller estimate is obtained based on Gasiorowski’s findings that two-thirds of those that have reached age twelve will reach age twenty and about one-third of the younger ones will also do so. Adding these projections to the two already established democracies gives us an estimate that about five of the thirty established extreme autocracies either already have, or in the foreseeable future will become, established democracies.⁵⁸

Table 4 shows that the transit from an established extreme autocracy to the achievement of the first coherent democracy—if it occurs at all—ordinarily requires more than half a century, not counting the long consolidation process. It required more than seventy years in four of the seven and fewer than twenty-five in only two. Depending on how one treats Turkey, which failed to sustain any of its first three democracies, the average transit period was forty-seven or fifty-two years. Bulgaria and Guatemala also fell back into extreme autocracy for substantial periods after first escaping it, and required about half a century to reach democracy even after exiting for the last time (more than seventy years after emerging initially).⁵⁹

Only Portugal and perhaps Albania made the transit to a coherent democracy from an established extreme autocracy in fewer than twenty-five years. Portugal is the only unequivocal success story in that its run of extreme autocracy (–9) from 1930 to 1973 transformed quickly to coherent democracy, with a +9 in 1976 and a +10 since 1982. Still, its history is hardly comparable to Iraq’s

58. Of course, even current democracies that suffer a future relapse to autocracy or incoherence may eventually become established democracies. But if they do not complete the process before another decline occurs, they will lie beyond a horizon of twenty years, which seems a reasonable approximation of “the foreseeable future.”

59. Bulgaria took seventy-three years from its last established extreme autocracy in 1917, but also reverted to extreme autocracy from 1935 to 1942. Guatemala took seventy-six years from 1920, but also experienced extreme autocracy from 1932 to 1943. A third country, Iran (from table 3), also reentered an established extreme autocracy from 1955 to 1978 after exiting an established extreme autocracy in 1905. A fourth, Russia, missed a second period of established extreme autocracy by only a few months.

given that it had experienced coherent democracy from 1911 to 1925. Polity recognizes Albania's fledgling democracy only from July 2002, twelve years after a generational extreme autocracy ended, and it remains only "partly free." Certainly the transition from extreme autocracy to coherent democracy—for the small minority that have made it—is better measured in decades than in years. In round figures, the average is about half a century. Add another two to four decades for that democracy to become consolidated.

The central proposition is confirmed: a history of established extreme autocracy casts an enormous shadow over subsequent democratization. Among EEAs, democratic transitions are rare, precarious, frequently temporary, and inevitably protracted.

The Structural Potential for Democracy

Because history provides few instances of established extreme autocracies progressing rapidly to democracy and many that have failed to do so, optimism for Iraq must rest on evidence that Iraq's potential for democracy resembles the former group more than the latter. A combination of existing theory on democratization and social science methods that render it predictive can provide some insight by identifying the factors that have been associated with democracy elsewhere.

Since Seymour Martin Lipset's seminal effort at uncovering the "social requisites of democracy," scores of studies have achieved consensus on the structural factors associated with it.⁶⁰ Democracy is most common in wealthy nations, especially when relatively egalitarian distribution is manifested in high levels of education and health, and when strong middle and working classes emerge as political forces.⁶¹ Economies that are poor and/or dominated by the so-called curse of natural resources (especially oil wealth and primary product production) are much more likely to be autocratic.⁶² Diffusion of democratic values and institutions results in a strong regional clustering of political

60. Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy."

61. See Ross E. Burkhart and Michael S. Lewis-Beck, "Comparative Democracy: The Economic Development Thesis," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (December 1994), pp. 903–910; Edward N. Muller, "Democracy, Economic Development, and Income Inequality," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (February 1988), pp. 50–68; Larry Diamond, "Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered," *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 35, Nos. 4/5 (March/June 1992), pp. 450–499; Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*; and Doorenspleet, "The Structural Context of Recent Transitions to Democracy."

62. See Michael L. Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" *World Politics*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (April 2001), pp. 325–361.

systems, which is reinforced by the regional clustering of underlying cultural values.⁶³ Muslim countries are especially prone to autocracy.⁶⁴ A history of British colonialism inclines nations toward later democracy.⁶⁵ Studies have also found democracy to be hampered by ethnic, language, and religious divisions, by peripheral status in the world system, and by external threat.⁶⁶

Many alternative regression models culled from this literature incorporate these factors in different ways, as the studies cited above (and many others) demonstrate. The small differences between them may be consequential for theory testing, but for my predictive purposes all of them produce about equal explanatory power and very similar estimates of the democratic potential of both Iraq and other nations.⁶⁷ Table 5 illustrates a typical structural specifica-

63. See Harvey Starr and Christina Lindborg, "Democratic Dominoes Revisited: The Hazards of Governmental Transitions, 1974–1996," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (August 2003), pp. 490–519; O'Loughlin et al., "The Diffusion of Democracy"; Barbara Wejnert, "Diffusion, Development, and Democracy, 1800–1999," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (February 2005), pp. 53–81; and Christian Welzel, Ronald Inglehart, and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, "The Theory of Human Development: A Cross-Cultural Analysis," *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (May 2003), pp. 341–379.

64. Examples of this frequent finding include Bernard Lewis, "A Historical Overview," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (April 1996), pp. 52–63; and Feng and Zak, "The Determinants of Democratic Transitions." For a dissenting argument, see Alfred C. Stepan with Graeme B. Robertson, "An 'Arab' More Than a 'Muslim' Electoral Gap," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (July 2003), pp. 30–44. Of course, either formulation predicts lower democracy in Iraq. Religion is found to be not statistically significant in equations that also include an Arab dummy and an oil production variable in El Badawi and Makdisi, "Explaining the Democracy Deficit in the Arab World."

65. Seymour Martin Lipset, Kyoung-Ryung Seong, and John Charles Torres, "A Comparative Analysis of the Social Requisites of Democracy," *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (May 1993), pp. 155–176; and Bernhard, Reenock, and Nordstrom, "The Legacy of Western Overseas Colonialism on Democratic Survival."

66. See Alberto Alesina, Arnaud Devleeschauwer, William Easterly, Sergio Kurlat, and Romain Wacziarg, "Fractionalization," *Journal of Economic Growth*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (June 2003), pp. 155–194; Bollen, "World System Position, Dependency and Democracy"; Ronan Van Rossem, "The World System Paradigm as General Theory of Development: A Cross-National Test," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (June 1996), pp. 508–527; and Michael Colaresi and William R. Thompson, "The Economic Development-Democratization Relationship: Does the Outside World Matter?" *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (May 2003), pp. 381–403. More narrow factors include the tendency of presidential systems to fail more often than parliamentary ones, as shown in Diskin, Diskin, and Hazan, "Why Democracies Collapse." For the observation that both democracies and autocracies are more stable during periods of economic growth, see Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, "What Makes Democracies Endure?" *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (January 1996), pp. 39–55, and Przeworski et al., *Democracy and Development*.

67. An apt comparison can be made with Barro, "Determinants of Democracy," which projects democracy in 1995 on the basis of a regression that uses Freedom House rather than Polity data, some thirty independent variables, and a different estimation technique. Nevertheless, the correlation between his projection and one derived from the regression reported in table 6 is 0.82, which is markedly higher than the correlation between the actual and fitted values in either analysis (0.74

Table 5. Predicting Polity 2004 from "Social Requisites"

	Estimate	t
School enrollment	0.03*	2.15
Democratic neighbors	0.43***	4.68
Oil exporter	-3.54**	-2.92
Primary product exporter	-2.34*	-2.39
Muslim population	-4.74***	-3.86
Post-1989 state	-1.96	-1.74
constant	2.81*	2.26
N/r^2	154/0.54	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

tion, chosen for its fit, compactness, and the size of the sample with available data.⁶⁸

The strongest predictor of democracy is the average level of democracy among a nation's contiguous neighbors, which not only reflects diffusion processes but also picks up variance that appears as a regional effect in other studies.⁶⁹ School enrollment, which contains a distributional component faithful to the more sophisticated formulations of the modernization perspective, improves on the fit of alternative measures of economic development such as gross domestic product per capita.⁷⁰ The strongest negative impacts are a

for this specification and 0.72 for Barro's) and only slightly below the 0.92 correlation between Polity and his democracy measure. Variations in model specification are not significant for my purposes.

68. All nations with data for 2004 are included. To maximize the generality of the result, Polity scores for seven nations are imputed from their one- and two-year lagged values and Freedom House scores, but the estimation is virtually identical with those nations omitted.

69. The average score of neighbors was constructed with the aid of the data described in Douglas M. Stinnett, Jaroslav Tir, Philip Schafer, Paul F. Diehl, and Charles Gochman, "The Correlates of War Project Direct Contiguity Data, Version 3," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Fall 2002), pp. 58-66. Only nations separated by a land or river border are considered contiguous. Nations with no contiguous neighbors (islands) are assigned the average score of their region, as designated by the Minorities at Risk Project at the Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland, 2005, <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/>. A good example of the finding that neighbor emulation is highly significant even in the presence of elaborate regional controls is Brinks and Coppedge, "Diffusion Is No Illusion."

70. School enrollments are based on gross secondary school enrollment percentages taken from World Bank, *World Development Indicators, 2006* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2006). Missing data for 2004 was imputed from earlier years in several cases. Using gross domestic product per capita instead of enrollments allows a slightly larger N , but it produces a poorer fit. The coefficient estimates of the other variables are not significantly affected by the choice of enrollments or gross domestic product as a regressor.

Muslim population, oil and primary product exports, and a dummy variable that recognizes that nations acquiring their independence after 1989 have not yet had time to achieve the democratic level that their structural conditions should produce at equilibrium.⁷¹ Nations with predominantly Muslim populations, on average, have a Polity score nearly five points lower than would otherwise be expected, and reliance on oil exports subtracts another three and a half points from expectations.⁷²

All of these results are in line with previous studies. Variables that sometimes appear in similar models, but did not significantly improve the fit of this one, include world-system status, ethnic fractionalization, population, population density, an island dummy, and various colonialism and regional dummies.⁷³ Structural factors explain about 54 percent of the variance in actual democracy levels, with another 46 percent left to be explained by the effects of political actors that are emphasized by the process tradition, by the hysteresis elaborated above, and by other unique elements of individual cases. When that powerful hysteresis effect is represented by the Polity score lagged ten years, the composite model explains about 74 percent of the variance, and the significance of the structural factors is dramatically attenuated.⁷⁴

This “social requisites” model of the determinants of democracy is useful for several purposes. First, I can use this structural model as a control to more formally test the supposition that has been guiding my inquiry up until now—that a nation’s previous status as an established extreme autocracy impedes fu-

71. The Muslim percentage of the population and the dummy variable for oil (defined as more than one-third of exports consisting of fuels) was largely taken from the data set made available online by James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin at <http://www.stanford.edu/group/ethnic/>, and used in Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (March 2003), pp. 75–90. It was augmented by the CIA’s *World Factbook, 2005*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>; and the World Bank’s “Global Development Network Growth Database,” <http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/>. The latter was also the source for the primary product export dummy.

72. For a denial that these findings justify pessimism concerning Arab democracy, see Gary C. Gambill, “Explaining the Arab Democracy Deficit, Part 1,” *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (February/March 2003).

73. These null findings occur because the predictors, though theoretically divergent, are empirically colinear.

74. This result lends credence to an interactive formulation in which elite actions must occur in the context of supportive structural conditions, such as that found in Doorenspleet, “The Structural Context of Recent Transitions to Democracy.” Elite initiatives may highlight democratic transitions, but they cannot really hasten them. As Valerie Bunce puts it in “Comparative Democratization: Big and Bounded Generalizations,” *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 33, Nos. 6/7 (August/September 2000), p. 708, “Elites are seen as summarizers of long-term developments and as well-positioned representatives of larger social forces.”

ture democratization. Although the earlier analyses demonstrate that EEAs are significantly less likely to become democratic over any time frame, I have not definitively isolated that hysteresis effect from the (partially colinear) structural conditions that also predict democracy.

To do so, I add to the structural analysis of table 5 a binary variable that takes the value 1 if a nation was an established extreme autocracy in a given previous year. For example, the coefficient of -6.01 in the first column of table 6 indicates that, on average, nations that had been established extreme autocracies ten years earlier (in 1994) had 2004 scores about 6 points lower than other nations, even after controlling for their current “social requisites” of democracy. How long does this extreme autocratic baggage impede democratization? The remainder of the table indicates that nations that had been established extreme autocracies twenty years prior to 2004 were still more than 3 points lower than would otherwise be predicted, and those that had been EEAs thirty years earlier were nearly 3.5 points lower.⁷⁵ Beyond thirty years, the parameter estimates remain negative but are no longer statistically significant.⁷⁶ In short, it appears that established extreme autocracy significantly impedes democratization for at least thirty years, a finding consistent with the earlier historical analysis.⁷⁷

A second use of this structural analysis is that it can be employed as a control model to investigate other factors that might affect democratic prospects in particular cases. Because neither Iraq’s political history nor its social requisites point to rapid democratization, optimism that Iraq will escape its apparently autocratic fate must stem from attributes unique to it, the most frequently cited of which is the U.S. occupation. Table 7 reports an analysis in which dummy variables reflecting U.S. involvement are added to the model estimated in table 5.⁷⁸ The results mirror the Chappell Lawson and Strom Thacker finding

75. The post-1989 state dummy variable was removed because new states were omitted from the analysis by virtue of missing data on the existence of an EEA at the earlier time point. Including these states by assigning them the values of their predecessor states does not significantly affect the model estimates.

76. In analyses not shown, it was found that established extreme autocracies underperformed extreme autocracies that were not established by 2 to 6 points.

77. Of course, it is not identical to the fifty-year estimate I obtained on the different and more particular question of how long it takes to transit to coherent democracy.

78. The source of the dummy variables is Chappell Lawson and Strom C. Thacker, “Democracy? In Iraq?” *Hoover Digest*, No. 3 (2005). They identify nineteen instances in which “the United States has occupied or help to occupy countries in the last century with the goal of reshaping their political system,” fifteen of which are coded by Polity. They consider Bosnia, Cambodia, Somalia, and South Korea as instances of “truncated or incomplete intervention,” whereas Austria, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Haiti, Japan, Nicaragua, Panama, the Philippines, and South Viet-

Table 6. Predicting Polity 2004 from “Social Requisites” and Lagged Extreme Established Autocracy

	Estimate	<i>t</i>	Estimate	<i>t</i>	Estimate	<i>t</i>	Estimate	<i>t</i>
School enrollment	0.04	2.65	0.04	2.46	0.04	2.96	0.03	2.12
Democratic neighbors	0.40	4.44	0.41	4.16	0.36	3.56	0.44	3.99
Oil exporter	-2.53	-1.96	-3.34	-2.27	-3.31	-2.23	-3.49	-2.40
Primary product exporter	-2.07	-2.17	-2.08	-2.03	-1.65	-1.57	-1.38	-1.25
Muslim population	-4.04	-3.31	-3.58	-2.73	-4.04	-2.98	-4.01	-2.77
Post-1989 state	-2.28	-2.06						
Extreme established autocracy	-6.01	-2.97						
1994 (-10 years)								
1984 (-20 years)			-3.23	-2.11				
1974 (-30 years)					-3.40	-2.42		
1964 (-40 years)							-2.24	-1.43
constant	2.30	1.86	2.30	1.78	1.71	1.26	2.21	1.57
<i>N</i> / <i>r</i> ²	153/0.56		128/0.55		121/0.58		106/0.57	

Table 7. Predicting Polity 2004 from “Social Requisites” and U.S. Involvement

	Estimate	<i>t</i>	Estimate	<i>t</i>	Estimate	<i>t</i>
School enrollment	0.03	2.15	0.03	2.13	0.03	2.13
Democratic neighbors	0.43	4.68	0.43	4.67	0.45	4.73
Post-1989 state	-1.96	-1.74	-1.92	-1.68	-1.89	-1.66
Oil exporter	-3.54	-2.92	-3.50	-2.86	-3.42	-2.78
Primary product exporter	-2.34	-2.39	-2.33	-2.37	-2.23	-2.25
Muslim population	-4.74	-3.86	-4.69	-3.77	-4.52	-3.59
U.S. involvement			0.50	0.32		
short-term					3.09	0.88
long-term					-0.08	-0.04
constant	2.81	2.26	2.75	2.17	2.60	2.03
<i>N/r</i> ²	154/0.54		154/0.54		154/0.54	

that the U.S. occupation has not made a significant difference and confirms that it is robust by estimating a different equation over a different sample.⁷⁹

Finally, this social requisites model can be used as a prediction equation to estimate the level of democracy/autocracy that should be expected for any nation given its structural characteristics, including Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. That prediction might be plausibly said to represent a nation’s “structural potential for democracy,” the level that could be achieved if other barriers, such as the hysteresis from past autocracy or the influence of a single individual, could somehow be removed. One might thus interpret the gap between a nation’s predicted score and its actual performance—the regression residual—as the potential for relatively rapid improvement over, say, the next twenty years.

nam “experienced more thoroughgoing and protracted occupation.” Grenada, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau are too small to be coded by Polity.

79. Both regression results confirm the conclusion reached by examining individually each episode found in a similar list of cases compiled by Minxin Pei and Sara Kaspar, “Lessons from the Past: The American Record of Nation-Building,” Policy Brief, No. 24 (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 2003). Among the fourteen nations for which data are available, only four (Haiti, Germany, Japan, Germany, and Panama) emerged from occupation as democratic. Moreover, forty years after the departure of U.S. troops (or as of 2004 for more recent episodes), only the Dominican Republic could be added to that list and Haiti subtracted. Of the remaining nine, six had a lower level of democracy than when troops left and only one a higher level. In fact, prior to U.S. occupation, only four were coherent autocracies, but forty years after the occupation ended (or in 2004), five of them were coherent autocracies and two others were coded by Polity as in an interregnum or transition state. None of the fourteen had been an established extreme autocracy before occupation. A similar null result for the effect on democracy of 228 U.S. military operations between 1972 and 2003 is reported by John A. Tures, “Operation Exporting Freedom: The Quest for Democratization via United States Military Operations,” *Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Winter/Spring 2005), pp. 97–111.

Structural Considerations in Recent Democratic Transitions

This measure of structural potential is useful in interpreting the rapid political change of recent decades. The number of coherent democracies increased from forty-two in 1984 to seventy-six in 2004, with more than half of the new democracies (eighteen of thirty-four) having been coherent autocracies two decades earlier. At first glance, it may appear that democratization has become easier in the current era, rendering analyses over longer periods irrelevant for the future of Iraq. The impact of external support for democracy, the intellectual milieu in which nondemocracies lack legitimacy, and the momentum of the Third Wave itself have been offered as sources of this break with prior democratic experience.

Alternatively, the wave can be attributed to special historical circumstances that have already passed from the scene and, in any case, do not apply to countries with the structural characteristics and autocratic history of Iraq.⁸⁰ Because rapid democratization was largely confined to nations that had long possessed structural conditions favorable to democracy, the Third Wave represented a theoretically expected “catch up” to those conditions, not an exception to the rule that those conditions are necessary.⁸¹ To test that interpretation, the structural model first introduced in table 5 was estimated for 1984, and the regression residual for each nation was then compared to actual levels of democracy two decades later. The first row of table 8 singles out the twenty nations with the largest negative residuals—those with the highest unfulfilled potential for democratization in 1984. All had actual Polity scores at -6 or lower, even though they were projected to have scores anywhere from 5.6 to 12.2 points above that level. By 2004, all of these nations except Cuba had become more democratic, and an extraordinary fifteen of those twenty had become coherent democracies. The optimist’s scenario for democratization is best illustrated by seven polities that were under the sway of a communist party supported by the Red Army in 1984: with the disappearance of that unique impediment, but with the social requisites of democracy already largely in place, each achieved a coherent democracy by 2004.⁸²

80. See, for example, Thomas Carothers, “The ‘Sequencing’ Fallacy,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (January 2007), pp. 12–27.

81. For an elaboration of this argument, see Bunce and Wolchik, “Favorable Conditions and Electoral Revolutions.”

82. For an analysis of the post-Soviet and Eastern European states, see the earlier version of this article, Moon, “Can Iraq Democratize?”

Table 8. Structural Potential and Subsequent Democratization

Structural Potential (regression residual), 1984	Total Number	Status, 2004	
		Not Coherent Democracy	Coherent Democracy
20 largest gaps	20	5	15
Other autocracies	53	50	3

These particular episodes of rapid transformation, however, should not be taken to refute the well-established fact that democratic change is usually a highly path-dependent process exhibiting strong hysteresis, especially among extreme autocracies. As the second row in table 8 shows, initial euphoria should give way to a more sober recognition that democracy is likely to grow only in fertile soils. Beyond the twenty nations with the greatest unfulfilled democratic potential, fifty-three other nations also had Polity scores of -6 or lower in 1984, among them Iraq. Only three of those fifty-three had become coherent democracies by 2004. Obviously, democratization does occur—even in autocracies—but overwhelmingly among those states with structural conditions that favor it. Furthermore, among those democratizers only Albania had been an extreme autocracy.

The regression of the composite model presented in table 6 allows one additional estimate of the likelihood of future democracy in Iraq. That regression, which combined current social requisites of democracy with the hysteresis of established extreme autocracy twenty years earlier (1984), projected Iraq to score -7.9 in 2004, not far from its actual level of -9 .⁸³ Table 9, which lists the ten nations that are predicted to have the lowest levels of democracy by that composite model, indicates that only three states across the globe have histories and structural conditions less favorable to democracy today than Iraq.⁸⁴

83. For a similar conclusion, see Chappell Lawson and Strom C. Thacker, "Will Iraq Become a Democracy?" July 31, 2003, unpublished paper, <http://www.bu.edu/sthacker/iraq030731.pdf>, p. 14. Using Freedom House data and a much different specification and sample, they "find an expected value for Iraq of 0.16" against an actual value of 0. Lawson and Thacker write, "In other words, Iraq under Saddam Hussein was pretty much where we might have expected it to be given its demographic and economic profile."

84. For a peculiar dissent, see Byman and Pollack, "Democracy in Iraq?" p. 124. The authors conclude that "Iraq has a reasonably good foundation to make the transition" on the basis of income, literacy rates, and urbanization, factors they cite as having been identified by the structural analy-

Table 9. Predicted Autocracies, 2004

Country	Actual	Predicted	Residual
Bahrain	-7	-8.4	1.4
Saudi Arabia	-10	-8.2	-1.8
Qatar	-10	-7.9	-2.1
Iraq	-9*	-7.9	-1.1
Oman	-8	-7.3	-0.7
United Arab Emirates	-8	-5.9	-2.1
Algeria	+2	-5.8	7.8
Afghanistan	-7*	-5.5	-1.5
Syria	-7	-5.2	-1.7
Kuwait	-7	-4.8	-2.2

* Prior to occupation

Clearly, rapid democratization in Iraq would have required a substantial “overachievement,” the magnitude and likelihood of which can be crudely estimated.

To achieve a Polity score of +7, Iraq would have required a positive residual 14.9 points above the -7.9 potential predicted by the composite analysis. How common is “overachievement” of that magnitude? Given that the largest positive residual in 2004 belonged to Senegal (8.9), coherent democracy under Iraq’s structural conditions would constitute the largest deviation from prediction in the world today—by a huge margin.⁸⁵ Indeed, based on the normal distribution, a deviation the size of Senegal’s should occur in about 2.6 percent of cases, but a residual of 14.9 should appear in only about 0.058 percent of cases, or about 1 in 1,725—a decidedly more pessimistic assessment than emerged from the earlier analysis.

sis reported in Barro, “Determinants of Democracy.” Byman and Pollack write, “Iraq’s numbers are comparable to those of many other states that have enjoyed real progress in the transition from autocracy to democracy, such as Bangladesh, Kenya, and Bolivia.” This conclusion is an inexplicable misreading of Barro, who explicitly projects democracy scores (on a 0 to 1 scale) using a much broader prediction equation than the factors cited by Byman and Pollack. Barro’s projections for Bangladesh (0.55), Bolivia (0.51), and Kenya (0.40), indicate that Iraq has nowhere near their structural requisites. In fact, Iraq’s projection of 0.04 is, by a wide margin, the lowest suitability rating for democracy of any nation in their 101-country sample. The next lowest is Zaire, four times larger at 0.16.

85. None of the successful democratic transitions identified in the earlier historical analysis bucked odds approaching that range; the largest residual, Albania’s 6.3, should occur in more than 8 percent of cases.

The other current target of a militarized democratization, Afghanistan, ranks eighth on this list, with a likelihood of achieving democracy in the range of 0.30 percent (about 1 chance in 333), just ahead of Syria (0.37 percent), another nation sometimes speculated as a candidate for regime change. Among the axis of evil, Iran ranks fifteenth (1.7 percent), and North Korea cannot be estimated because of missing data.

Conclusion

Only time will tell whether Iraq can democratize, but the historical analysis provided in this article reveals that just seven out of thirty comparable cases have achieved democracy even temporarily, and odds are that some of them will not last without at least one further relapse. More remain coherent autocracies, with no discernible move whatever toward democratization, even decades after extreme autocracies ended. This estimated likelihood of around five out of thirty is, by far, the most optimistic that can be squared with evidence from comparable cases.

A consideration of the structural conditions derived from existing theory not only leaves intact the cautionary reminder of the broader historical record, but suggests that the prior experience of others may offer an overly optimistic estimate of Iraq's prospects. The successful democratizers were marked by structural conditions that strongly presaged democratization, whereas Iraq is notable for structures that are extremely unfavorable for democracy. Remarkably, the conclusion that Iraq is among the handful of states least likely to democratize—perhaps 1 chance in 1,725—does not even require any reference to those conditions that most commentators regard as Iraq's biggest challenges—the insurgency, ethnic rivalry, and external interference. It is difficult to see how conditions on the ground in Iraq today would boost its prospects relative to success stories such as Albania and Portugal.

The most optimistic observer will find scant evidence in the historical record that a democratic transition is imminent in Iraq. About half a century seems to be the average among nations that have made it, however tentatively. But more time than that has elapsed among many that have not. Even the successes require two or more decades beyond the initial appearance to become consolidated. The burden of proof surely must shift to those who foresee democracy in the near future, and the burden they face is to show that Iraq is

better situated than most—that Iraq is more like Portugal, the only nation to transit quickly, than Saudi Arabia, which shows no signs of doing so.

The chances of democracy appearing under current structural conditions in Iraq appear extremely remote. The past experience of Middle Eastern countries suggests that when democracy finally comes to Iraq, few Iraqis alive today will be there to greet it. The experience of the Soviet Union suggests that by the time democracy reaches parts of Mesopotamia, it will no longer be Iraq. Odds do not appear much better for Afghanistan, Iran, North Korea, or Syria.