

Democratic Peace-building The Case of Post-war Iraq

Farinaz Aryanfar



Introduction

The second American Gulf War, which started in 2003, gave rise to much debate and a large amount of academic literature. Most of this literature has focused either on what led to the Iraq war and whether the war can be justified, or on the war strategies and the involvement of each country in this war (McGoldrick 2004, Copson 2003, Nikolaev and Hakanen 2006, Lewis 2006, Harvey 2012, Cordesman 2003). In this paper, however, the post-combat period of this war will be taken into consideration, while concentrating on state-building policies implemented in Iraq and their implications. To be more precise, this paper will try to answer the research question: 'to what extent has democratic peace-building been successful in the case of Iraq?'. In order to do this, this paper will be divided into two sections of analysis. First, a theoretical analysis will be made of the theories regarding state-building and democratic peace-building. Secondly, Iraq's post-combat period will be analyzed, using the previously mentioned theories, after which a conclusion will be drawn that answers this paper's research question.

Theoretical Analysis

In order to make a case analysis of the post-war state building in Iraq, the term 'state-building' needs more clarification. State-building can be described as the construction of legitimate, effective governmental institutions in post-war countries, in order to fight poverty and violence in these countries and to create an environment for a long-term peace (Paris and Sisk 2007, p.1). After the Cold War, the United Nation's (UN) peace-keeping missions changed, involving the implementation of multi-faceted peace agreements, which incorporated humanitarian, political, and economic factors, in addition to the previous monitoring of ceasefire missions (ibid., p.2). After some of these speedy peace-building missions failed in 1990s (in Rwanda and Angola, for example), there was a shift towards a greater emphasis on building 'governance capacity', which in turn developed into state-building (ibid., p.2-3).

According to Marquette and Beswick (2011, p.1703), state-building theory has interlinked security and development since the 1960s. Where development aid previously focused on diminishing poverty, since state-building emerged in international relations, the focus has shifted also to human security. Proponents of state-building believe that state-building will diminish internal conflict and insecurity of a country, which

are not only a threat to development but also a threat to international security (ibid, p.1704). On the other hand, many critics correspond state-building with the policy makers' agenda to establish neoliberalism as the organizing principle in developing economies (ibid, p.1705). Important themes in state-building are 'who' wants to build, and 'what' is being built (ibid. p.1706). This refers to the agendas of the state-builders and which specific government model they favor building. Here, the notion 'democratic peace-building' comes to the fore, where state-building happens by the hands of the liberal democratic state with the means to build a democratic state with Western values, institutions and norms. Liberal democracies favor building a democratic state because it is believed, according to democratic peace theory, that democracies rarely fight each other (Rosato 2003, p.585). The idea behind the democratic peace theory is that because democratic states have the same norms (for example, a universal declaration of human rights, freedom of speech, accepting diversity), they mutually respect and trust each other (ibid. p.585-587). Therefore, building democratic states after a war will not only lead to peace inside the post-war country, but will also lead to international peace.

The democratic peace theory also has its critics. According to Burnell (2006), democracy and peace do not necessarily coincide. He bases his criticisms on other democratic theorists' works, such as Przeworski, et al., Hegre, et al., and Mousseau, in which it is estimated that a democracy's survival will only be guaranteed when a country has at least a \$6000 income per capita (Przeworski, et al. 1996, p.), and that statistical analysis suggests that the democratization process does not occur in a linear fashion, but rather has fluxes that increase the risk of conflict in the process of change (Hegre, et al. 2001). Mousseau (2001) even concluded in his research that in ethnically heterogeneous countries, autocratization was less risky to lead to conflict than democratization. This is because it is more difficult in an emerging democratization to keep the peace between different ethnical communities. Here, the effectiveness of governing institutions take precedence over keeping the population happy: thus a(n autocratic) power that is able to hold all sides to their agreements is more favored than, for example, a newly established multi-party parliament where no coalition or cooperation can exist between the party members to reach an agreement. Wimmer & Schetter (2003) suggest more radical steps. In their view, Afghanistan is such a case where institutional reform and democratic



decentralization was a hindrance. Instead, the focus should have been on the means of physical oppression and centralizing the power over critical economic sources (which can produce the money to persuade the tribal-, ethnic community chiefs, and the Taliban to cooperate with state negotiations).

To sum up, according to the literature, while state-building is needed to decrease poverty and increase security in post-conflict areas, whether democratic peace keeping should be the state-building agenda remains the question. This essay will proceed with a case study of post-war state-building in Iraq, using the aforementioned theories, to contribute to the analysis of state-building in multi-ethnic countries with more in-depth research.

Post-war State Building in Iraq

As was mentioned in the previous section, several peace-keeping missions of the UN occurred after an internal conflict or a war in numerous countries. In Iraq's case, state-building occurred during the United States' military intervention in Iraq, while using its decapitation strategy. A decapitation strike is a targeted attack on essential government installations, which separates the head (leaders) from the body (country), in order to paralyze the enemy to strike back (Goldman 2011, p.89). The attack is usually used in case the enemy has a nuclear weapon, since it renders a 'leaderless' enemy that will not be able to launch a nuclear strike (ibid.). The decapitation

strikes were performed in March 2003, with the aim to deprive Iraq of its armed forces, as well as its leadership (Cordesman 2003, p.58-60). Without Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath party supporters, American strategists thought, it would be simple to install a new government after a democratic election.

After capturing the capital, Paul Bremer was installed as Presidential Envoy to Iraq, who decreed Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number One and Two that called for the removal of all Ba'ath affiliated staff from government institutions and dismissing all Iraqi soldiers (U.S. Department of Defense 2003, The Coalition Provisional Authority 2003, Coalition Provisional Authority 2003). Because of the high affiliation of Sunni Iraqis with the Ba'athist party, de-Ba'athification led to the exclusion of thousands of Sunni Arabs from public services. Only few leaders within the Sunni Arab community were willing or capable of organizing legal parties that could participate in the political sphere (Hendrickson and Tucker 2005, p.21). While Shia dissidents, domestic and exiled, formed various political parties and dominated the government (of course they are also the majority population in Iraq), there was a lack of Sunni representation in the newly established government (ibid., p.23). The result was a gap between Shia Arab, Sunni Kurdish, and Sunni Arab organization in the political sphere, which in turn led to a complete disintegration of Iraqi society along ethnic and religious lines.

De-Ba'athization also had its effects on administrative and economic processes in Iraq. Because of the removal of all previous technocrats, who were all affiliated with the Ba'athist party, government institutions ceased to function well or at all (Ferguson 2008, p.161-162). Many ministries were understaffed, and the new staff did not have the competency or the experience to work effectively (Chandrasekaran 2006, p.82-123). As a result, government competency declined with many basic services not provided (ibid). This government incompetence reached its peak when former Ba'athist affiliated employees that had been released started protesting. Because of the lack of government organization, the disentanglement of the army, and the increase in unemployment which reached 27 percent, unrest grew and contributed to the lack of order in the country - it slowed down a peaceful process of state-building (ibid., p.213).

Linking the previously described case to the theories, it is elucidated that democracy and peace-building did not coincide in the case of post-war Iraq. While opening the government functions to other ethnic and religious groups was a democratic measure, it also broke with the traditional and historical process of governing in Iraq. Iraq had been traditionally governed by the Sunni Arabs, who had gained the skills and training to successfully fulfill public service functions. Even though they formed the minority of the population, and had violated many universal human rights laws during the years, excluding them from these services was an inept decision that threatened security and development of the country.

Conclusion

In this paper, the democratic peace theory was explained, which is a theory that assumes that democratic countries rarely go into war with each other. This theory has been the basis of turning state-building policy into democratic peace theory. While state building-used to be UN's main focus in peace missions in post-conflict or post-war countries to supervise a speedy elections or disarm different armed rebels, it shifted its focus towards multi-faceted operations that not only negotiated between different groups for human rights and economic agreements but also focused on the governance system. The democratic peace theory has thus linked the developmental part of the UN's concerns with the security concerns of the international (liberal democratic) community.

However, the democratic peace theory proves to have its errors. As critics have pointed out, democracy and peace do not always coincide, especially in multi-ethnic countries. While ethnic diversity and conflict are not necessarily related, the process of democratization does not go as smoothly as expected in many cases of ethnic diversity. The case of Iraq shows the example where the minority elite leaders and government administrators are set aside for the country's majority to rule, as in a true democracy is the case. The exclusion of the Ba'athists from the country's administration led to the formation of new clusters of society along religious and ethnical lines, instead of opinions about what political party plans are most effective for the future of the country. This resulted further in a deformation of democracy, with majority communities ruling the country, instead of voted majority ideas and political programs. Moreover, this also led to unrest and more security threats than a peace mission would want to.

Furthermore, however imperfect a government system might be, each society has its own rich history and constructions. Drastic changes into a country's government system can lead to instability and chaos. While the liberal democratic values of governmental accountability, representativeness of population, good governance, and the social responsibility of economic management all make a democracy appealing irrespective of the peace theory, democracy should not be injected into a country, rather for its long-term legitimacy, its people need to own it. Going back to the research question of this essay, the democratic peace theory did not prove applicable for Iraq, because of the drastic measures that were taken to democratize the country. As in the case of Afghanistan, as researched by Wimmer & Schetter, the priority in Iraq had to be centralizing and securing its economic sources and a much slower process of democratization where the Ba'athist members were not dismissed from government services. Therefore, it can be concluded that the democratic peace theory should be applied with more caution, using critics' researches and studying the histories and constructions of the country that needs state-building.

Bibliography

Burnell, Peter. "The Coherence of Democratic Peace-Building" United Nations University: UNU-Wider. 2006 /147. http://www.wider.unu.edu/publications/working-papers/research-papers/2006/en_GB/rp2006-147/ (accessed February 1, 2015).

Chandrasekaran, Rajiv. *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone*. New York: Vintage Books, 2006.

Coalition Provisional Authority. "Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 2." Coalition Provisional Authority. May 23, 2003. http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030823_CPAORD_2_Dissolution_of_Entities_with_Annex_A.pdf (accessed February 10, 2015).

Copson, Raymond W. *The Iraq War: Background and Issues*. New York: Novinka books, 2003.

Cordesman, Anthony H. *The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics, and Military Lessons*. Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2003.

Ferguson, Charles. *No End in Sight: Iraq's Descent into Chaos*. New York: Public Affairs, 2008.

Goldman, Jan. *Words of Intelligence: an Intelligence Professional's Lexicon for Domestic and Foreign Threats*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2011.

Harvey, Frank P. *Explaining the Iraq War: Counterfactual Theory, Logic and Evidence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Hegre, Håvard, Tanja Ellingsen, Scott Gates, and Nils Petter Gleditsch. "Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816-1992." *American Political Science Review* 95:1, 2001: 33-48.

Hendrickson, David C., and Robert W. Tucker. "Revisions in Need of Revising: What Went Wrong in the Iraq War." Strategic Studies Institute. December 1, 2005. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?PubID=637> (accessed February 10, 2015).

Lewis, Justin. *Shoot First and Ask Questions Later: Media Coverage of the 2003 Iraq War*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2006.

Marquette, Heather, and Danielle Beswick. "State Building, Security and Development: State Building as a New Development Paradigm?" *Third World Quarterly*, 32:10, 2011: 1703-1714.

McGoldrick, Dominic. *From '9-11' to the 'Iraq War 2003': International Law in an Age of Complexity*. Oxford and Portland: Hart Publishing, 2004.

Mousseau, Demet Yalcin. "Democratizing with Ethnic Divisions: a Source of Conflict?" *Journal of Peace Research*, 38:5, 2001: 547-567.

Nikolaev, Alexander G., and Ernest A. Hakanen. *Leading to the 2003 Iraq War: The Global Media Debate*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.

Paris, Roland, and Timothy D. Sisk. "Managing Contradictions: The Inherent Dilemmas of Postwar Statebuilding." *International Peace Academy*. 2007. <http://www.ipinst.org/media/pdf/publications/iparpps.pdf> (accessed February 7, 2015).

Przeworski, Adam, Michael Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi. "What Makes Democracies Endure?" *Journal of Democracy* 7:1, 1996: 39-55.

Rosato, Sebastian. "The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory." *The American Political Science Review*, 97:4, 2003: 585-602.

The Coalition Provisional Authority. "Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 1." The Coalition Provisional Authority. May 16, 2003. http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030516_CPAORD_1_De-Ba_athification_of_Iraqi_Society_.pdf (accessed February 10, 2015).

U.S. Department of Defense. "Coalition Provisional Authority CFLCC-ORHA APOAE09304 ." U.S. Department of Defense. May 22, 2003. http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/operation_and_plans/CPA_ORHA/Doc_128_CPA_Legal_Instruments.pdf (accessed February 10, 2015).

Wimmer, Andreas, and Conrad Schetter. "Putting State-Formation First: Some Recommendations for Reconstruction and Peacemaking in Afghanistan." *Journal of International Development*, 15:5, 2003: 525-539.



By Farinaz Aryanfar

Farinaz Aryanfar is a Dutch-Iranian researcher focusing on conflict analysis in the Middle East. She has a Bachelor's degree in Middle Eastern studies from Leiden University, and a Master's degree in Global Affairs from Gothenburg University. As an active analyst in media, she received the 'Most in the News Women' prize in the Netherlands in 2009. Ms. Farinaz has presented her papers at several conferences including World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies (2014). Currently, she is studying the polarization threat of European societies as an effect of Islamic extremism (2015-2016).