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SPECIAL REPORT

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ABOUT THE REPORT

The Education Program at the United States Institute of Peace has since early 2004 been involved in a project to help rehabilitate the Iraqi higher education system and to introduce courses and materials in conflict resolution and peace education into university curricula throughout the country. We have organized conferences and workshops with academics from Iraqi universities and administrators from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and helped establish the Educational Unit for Peace Studies and Human Rights at the University of Baghdad. We have also supplied USIP educational materials in English and Arabic to Iraqi universities throughout the country. Currently, we are helping Iraqi universities play a civic role in their communities by providing university-centered projects of public education on Iraq's constitution, good governance, the rule of law, and democracy. This report is part of our effort to suggest ways to involve the Iraqi higher education system in building and promoting democratic governance in Iraq.

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The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Institute of Peace, which does not advocate specific policy positions.

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Eric Davis

Strategies for Promoting Democracy in Iraq

Summary

- Social justice and economic development are essential for democracy in Iraq to succeed.
- The idea of a democratic Iraq is not one imposed by foreign powers, but rather one that Iraqis themselves vigorously support.
- Iraq has a tradition and history of democracy that can help promote the successful establishment of a democratic form of government in post-Saddam Hussein Iraq.
- Many of the foundations of democratic governance began in Iraq's ancient Mesopotamian civilizations.
- The nationalist movement in Iraq (1908–1963) had strong democratic impulses and emphasized cultural tolerance.
- Sixty percent of the Iraqi population is under the age of twenty-five. They have known nothing but authoritarian rule and need to learn about democracy. The older generation of former democratic activists can pass on to younger Iraqis their memories and experiences of pre-1963 Iraqi society.
- The establishment of an institution devoted to democracy could spread the concept of democratic government through workshops, contests, and grants to civil society organizations.
- Citizenship and service learning programs in Iraqi universities could promote democratic principles among older students. A national reading project and essay contest could introduce younger students to democracy and strengthen the literary skills that are necessary for an informed citizenry.
- The government should use the power of the Internet to involve citizens in the democratic process and improve education. Television and radio programs, coffeehouse events, national “town hall” meetings, summer camps for youth, and emphasis on common folklore could help overcome ethnic differences and promote tolerance and unity among the diverse ethnic cultures of Iraq.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

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Introduction

Since the 1989 collapse of the Soviet Union and its Eastern Bloc allies, democracy has become a political force of global proportions. The number and pace of authoritarian governments making the transition to democratic rule has been one of the most striking phenomena of the last decade and a half. Although some would argue that democracy is a uniquely Western form of government, the desire for freedom and self-expression is not limited to any one geographical region.

The overthrow of Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime in April 2003 created the opportunity for the Iraqi people to establish a democratic state. Iraqis have made dramatic progress toward achieving that goal. Not only did National Assembly elections take place on January 30, 2005, as scheduled, but nearly 60 percent of eligible voters cast their ballots—despite threats of violence from insurgents. Such a high voter turnout would be the envy of many long-standing democracies. While it took some time to organize, a functioning Iraqi government is now in place. One of the most important developments is the new government's ability to represent all sectors of Iraqi society, at the level of president, vice president, prime minister, and cabinet officials. Even if a number of important issues were left open for discussion, the Iraqi people approved a new constitution on October 15, providing themselves with a basic charter for the new state. Political parties and civil organizations are growing in number and size in anticipation of the December 2005 general elections.

All of these important steps toward democratization have taken place in the context of a violent insurgency. While some insurgents undoubtedly believe that they are fighting for an Iraq free of foreign influence, the leaders of this uprising would once again place Iraq under authoritarian rule. In numerous public opinion polls taken since the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime, Iraqis have rejected a return to a form of government that represses free speech and assembly; that rejects cultural tolerance; and that engages in arbitrary arrest, imprisonment, and even execution of those with differing political opinions. Polls show that the issues that are most important to the Iraqi people are personal security, economic security, and democracy, in that order. The idea of a democratic Iraq is not one imposed by foreign powers, but rather one that Iraqis themselves vigorously support. The current insurgency notwithstanding, there is no turning back. Now that the process of democratization has begun in earnest, what can Iraqis do to ensure the institutionalization of their fledgling democratic political system?

The Four Prerequisites of Democracy

All democratic countries share certain characteristics. Periodic and fair elections ensure political participation and representation of the interests of all sectors of society. Transparency allows citizens to monitor the processes by which their elected representatives adopt and implement public policy. For transparency to be sustained, it is essential that the flow of information be unimpeded by the state. If a nation-state is to become a true democracy, all citizens must be guaranteed certain fundamental human rights, including freedom of expression, assembly, and religion, and the right to a fair trial. The rights of minorities must be guaranteed. As many democratic theorists have noted, a democracy is only as strong as the protections it affords its weakest citizens.

A truly democratic society is characterized by a high level of political participation and an organized citizenry. It is in the organizations of civil society that citizens are able to share information and form the types of social and political solidarity that protect them from authoritarian rulers. Although often neglected, social justice must be ensured for citizens in a democracy. Time and again governments that aspired to build democratic institutions have failed because they were not sensitive to the economic needs of the

populace. Only in a society that offers meaningful economic opportunity to all its citizenry, and in which education, health care, and housing are available to all, can a strong democracy flourish.

Beyond what are traditionally thought of as the prerequisites of democracy lie deeper issues that need to be addressed. No nation-state can establish a democratic polity unless its citizens first agree on the nature of the political community that binds them. Unfortunately, the definition of political community is still contested in many fledgling democracies. To establish solid foundations for democracy, a nation-state must first establish a set of foundational myths that resonate with all segments of society. These foundational myths must explain the origins of the society and articulate the political and cultural values that hold it together. In many Arab states, these foundational myths are built on the nation-state's Arab-Islamic heritage.

In summary, there are four important prerequisites of democracy. First, all democracies need to develop strong institutions that protect the citizenry from the arbitrary exercise of political authority. Only when citizens have recourse to institutions that protect their interests can they truly be free. This means that a democratic society is one that is organized both in terms of state institutions (e.g., the court system) and through citizen-created independent public institutions and organizations that are not controlled by the state (e.g., political parties, professional associations, and the press).

Second, citizens must have access to information about the workings of the political system in their society. Without such information, they cannot develop the critical thinking skills that will allow them to make meaningful choices among competing political parties and policies. This means that citizens must have access not only to an independent press and mass communications system, but also to an educational system that promotes civic understanding and civic values.

Third, a government must ensure that all its citizens have access to social justice. A society in which a large segment of the populace is unemployed and young people see no hope for the future cannot build a strong democracy.

Finally, all democratic societies must be characterized by agreement among the citizenry on their foundational myths.

However, many Arab states possess another heritage that is frequently overlooked. Before military regimes came to power in Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, there was a period of democratic politics, albeit under colonial rule. Although this era was often characterized by nepotism and corruption at the level of political elites, there was also considerable citizen activity in organized political parties, professional associations, labor unions, artistic groups, and women's organizations and a vibrant press. Because this democratic activity occurred during a period—following World War I and lasting until the 1950s and 1960s—in which the political elites were closely tied to Western colonial interests, and because these elites often manipulated elections to prevent them from being fully democratic, this democratic legacy has been neglected. Nevertheless, the historical memory of this era can provide an important inspiration for promoting democratic governance and expanding civil society in Iraq and other Arab countries as well.

Democracy and Iraqi History

What is the common heritage that binds Iraqis together? In approaching this question, we can begin by remembering that democracy is not new to Iraq. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Democratic politics and many of the foundations of democratic governance began in Iraq's ancient Mesopotamian civilizations. For example, we find among the ancient Sumerians the first instance of a sovereign being required to seek the consent of a legislative body before enacting laws or making political decisions. We also find the first example of written legal codes. Perhaps most important of all, we find the first recorded use of the term "freedom" in the Sumerian language during the third century BCE.

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One of the most important components of democratic governance is the concept of checks and balances. Parliaments not only give representation to the views of the citizenry at large, they create an institutional framework through which representatives of the populace can question and oversee the actions of the executive branch of government. Ancient Mesopotamia provides the first examples of representative institutions as we understand them in the modern sense of the term. *An Introduction to the History of Ancient Civilization*, by the eminent Iraqi archaeologist Dr. Taha Baqir, and *History Begins at Sumer*, by the famous student of ancient Iraq Sidney Noah Kramer, document the particular contribution of ancient Iraq to democratic theory. For example, the first known bicameral legislature met in Sumer (present-day southern Iraq) in 3000 BCE, well before most of the world's civilizations were even formed. The "upper house" consisted of an assembly of elders, and the "lower house" was made up of males permitted to carry arms. Interestingly, this legislature became involved in a debate with the ruler over whether Sumer should engage in a war with the neighboring state of Kish. Although the Sumerian state ultimately did decide to go to war, the important consideration is that the sovereign was forced to negotiate the decision with a representative body.

Another legacy of ancient Mesopotamia is its development of the world's first known legal codes. The most famous is the Code of Hammurabi, but other written legal codes, such as the Ur-Nammu, predate it by hundreds of years. Calling attention to Mesopotamia's role as the source of the modern world's legal traditions indicates that it was Iraq that gave the world the idea of the rule of law, a concept that provides the foundation for all democratic theory. Written legal codes and the many existing records of court cases indicate that the laws were, in fact, followed. These artifacts suggest a society of rules, structure, and order—one in which violence was not the normal means of resolving conflict. The Code of Hammurabi, known throughout the world, is not only one of the early examples of a written legal code, but one that takes pains to recognize the needs of the economically and politically less powerful members of society. As Donny George, the director of the Iraq Museum, noted during a spring 2005 tour of the United States to raise funds to protect Iraq's archaeological sites, Hammurabi's Code still influences legal systems and thinking today.

Iraq's contributions to the idea of a society based on the rule of law are by no means limited to its ancient Mesopotamian civilizations. The legal profession that Iraq developed after its organization as a modern nation-state in 1921 reflects the continuation of this ancient tradition. The modern legal system took shape during the last years of Ottoman rule over Iraq. The founding of the Baghdad College of Law in 1908 indicates the importance Iraqis attributed to the legal system well before the modern nation-state came into being. Even under Saddam Hussein's regime, many lawyers sought to sustain accepted norms of impartiality and legal principles for those who were brought to trial, especially in civil and criminal cases that were not political in nature.

Another legacy that provides a strong foundation for building a democratic system in Iraq is Iraqis' persistent emphasis on education. Education was a priority in Iraq's ancient Mesopotamian civilizations. Education also expanded with the spread of Islam, following the Prophet Mohammed's injunction that "it is the duty of every Muslim man and woman to seek education." Thus it is not surprising that the early Arab-Islamic empires placed great emphasis on knowledge for its own sake. It is well known that the Arabs translated and passed on much of Greek thought to Europe and the West. Under the 'Abbasid Empire, based in Baghdad, one of the first examples of a mass education system was developed as thousands of mosque schools were established that taught a wide range of subjects in the liberal arts and the natural sciences. During the tenth century, Baghdad alone counted 3,000 mosques.

Under the Caliph Ma'mun (813–833 CE), the 'Abbasid Empire witnessed a dramatic expansion of a cultural milieu in which education was already highly prized. Reflecting the empire's cultural tolerance, Ma'mun developed a wide network of learning in which Greek, Persian, and Arab culture entered into a great synthesis. Among Ma'mun's famous

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accomplishments was the creation of a prototype of the modern university, known as the Academy of Wisdom. Ma'mun's Academy was responsible for the translation of Greek works into Arabic and became an active center for the study of the natural sciences. The Academy's large library was filled with the translations that it commissioned, and scholars of all ethnicities and religions were invited to work there. The result was an intellectual synthesis that emphasized a universal heritage, rather than one that was specifically Muslim, and one that was Arabic only in language. Ma'mun invited the best minds from throughout the 'Abbasid Empire to come to Baghdad. These intellectuals eagerly set to work to discover the accomplishments of other civilizations and to study the thoughts of antiquity. Intellectual and cultural tolerance were the order of the day.

Democracy in Modern Iraq

One of the hidden treasures of modern Iraqi political history is the development of a powerful nationalist movement during the early twentieth century, when Iraq was still part of the Ottoman Empire. Characterized by strong democratic impulses and an emphasis on cultural tolerance, the nationalist movement was given impetus by the Young Turk Revolt of 1908, which emphasized republicanism and democratic reform. The nationalist movement attracted the loyalties of a large segment of the populace and included Iraqis of all ethnic backgrounds. It made significant contributions to Iraq's social and political development until it was repressed by the first Ba'athist regime of 'Ali Salih al-Sa'di and its violent National Guard militia, which seized power in February 1963.

The Iraqi nationalist movement had four characteristics. First, the movement was characterized by interethnic cooperation. Iraqi nationalists explicitly rejected sectarianism and instead argued for a unified Iraq in which ethnic background was not a political issue. Second, the movement emphasized associational behavior. This was important because a strong democracy requires that the citizenry be organized. Third, the movement demonstrated a strong desire by Iraqis to communicate beyond their own ethnic groups or geographical regions. This was reflected in the vibrant press that characterized Iraqi society after the so-called Young Turk Revolt of 1908, and also in the expansion of literary and artistic expression after World War I. Finally, the movement was characterized by significant artistic innovation that expanded the boundaries of political and cultural discourse in Iraq and challenged many aspects of tradition. Although a number of army officers and political organizations, such as the al-Muthanna Club, did not ascribe to the nationalist movement's democratic politics, they were a distinct minority among Iraqi nationalists.

The Experience of Iraq's Kurds in Promoting Democracy

Despite geographical conditions, particularly a mountainous terrain that hampered their interaction with the Arabs to the south, the Kurds nevertheless were part of the Iraqi nationalist movement. Kurds migrated to the south in search of greater economic opportunities and became involved in national political and social movements. Kurds were, for example, members of some of the earliest labor unions to develop in Iraq. Many joined the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) because of its antisectarian message. After forming their own wing of the ICP, *Shursh* (Revolution), this organization evolved to first become the Ruzkari Party of Kurdish Liberation in 1945 and then became the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) in 1946. Although a party based in Iraqi Kurdistan, the KDP nevertheless retained close ties with the larger Iraqi nationalist movement. Kurds struggled against British control over Iraq; for example, they actively participated in strikes in the northern oil fields near Khanaqin and elsewhere in the 1940s and after. Kurdish officers in the Iraqi army were likewise affected throughout the twentieth century by the call of the Iraqi nationalist movement for a country independent of colonial control.

In addition to making major contributions to the broader Iraqi nationalist movement, one of the most important chapters in building democracy in Iraq has been the experience

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of Iraq's Kurdish population since breaking free from Saddam Hussein's regime following the Intifada of March–April 1991. While the Iraqi Kurdish experiment with democracy has not been without its problems, such as conflict between the two major political parties, the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the accomplishments of Iraqi Kurdistan are indeed impressive, especially at the level of civil society building.

Civil society expanded dramatically under the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) between 1991 and 2003. Professional associations, labor unions, women's organizations, and entrepreneurial organizations were established in a free and democratic environment. An ideologically diverse print media, and a television and radio network flourished, which allowed Iraq's Kurds full political and cultural expression for the first time in their history. This freedom included criticism of the Kurdish political leadership for what many considered its authoritarian tendencies. New schools and hospitals were built and women's role in Kurdish society was significantly enhanced through increased educational and other opportunities. The fact that such a large number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) was able to organize in post-Saddam Kurdistan indicates the amount of freedom enjoyed by Iraq's Kurds after 1991.

The KRG also initiated an extensive human rights campaign aimed at training prison guards in the proper treatment of inmates. Representatives of foreign organizations, such as Amnesty International, have been able to witness the results of this campaign. This type of transparency is precisely what a fledgling democracy needs. In 2001, the KRG added a Ministry of Human Rights to its ministerial cabinet.

The promotion of the idea of a federal political structure for Iraq—one followed by many other democracies, including the United States and Germany—represents another Kurdish contribution toward building a long-term and stable democracy in Iraq. By arguing for incorporating the idea of federalism into the new Iraqi constitution, Iraq's Kurds have simultaneously promoted the principle of checks and balances that is so important to preventing authoritarian rule. While the exact nature of Iraq's federal structure still has to be worked out, the notion of preventing too much power from falling into the hands of the central government constitutes an important step forward in building a democratic polity. The notion of checks and balances has also been applied to regional Kurdish politics as democratic forces have worked to balance the KDP and PUK parties, as well as to balance the power of the Kurdish regional parliament against the powers of the regional executive.

The experience of Iraq's Kurds can provide inspiration for all of Iraq in its efforts to bring about a democratic transition. The impressive accomplishments of the Kurds from 1991 to 2003, with few material resources, underscore what Iraq as a whole can achieve. The achievements in education, economic development, human rights, civil society building, political participation, and tolerance for cultural diversity provide an excellent model for the entire country. Conversely, the Kurds can benefit from the activities of their fellow Arab citizens to the south, especially the historical memory of the democratic accomplishments of the pre-1963 nationalist movement (see further details below), since many Kurds would argue that democracy is still in its infancy in the Kurdish regions of Iraq. In other words, there is a great potential for synergy between Iraq's Arab and Kurdish populations in their efforts to build a truly democratic society.

The nationalist movement offers what some political scientists have called a “usable democratic legacy.” This legacy is highly significant. First, it demonstrates that, in the modern era as in the past, democratic practices—and the values that support them—are not alien to Iraqi society and traditions. Second, it demonstrates that Iraqis were able to cooperate politically across ethnic lines in the past, so they will be able to do so again in the future. Here the nationalist movement's legacy can help promote trust among Iraq's citizenry by offsetting the arguments of those who would manipulate sectarianism in an effort to return Iraq to authoritarian rule by asserting that the nation's ethnic groups cannot cooperate because they do not share common interests. Third, the legacy can

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help instill pride among Iraq's citizens. Pride in country is another important dimension of democracy, especially if it is tied to an inclusionary political culture and is not chauvinistic in nature.

The Approach of This Report

Throughout the world, people of good will sincerely hope that Iraq will be able to make a transition to democratic rule. In that spirit, this report offers proposals for projects that the Iraqi government and democratic activists might pursue to help promote the process of democratization. The proposals presented here are suggestions and can be modified as those who seek to implement them deem best. The proposals are based on the assumption that the promotion of democracy requires an active notion of citizenship and political and social organization. Consequently, the projects suggested below require a commitment of time, the creation of an organizational framework within which to implement them, and financial support from either public or private sources. However, many of the projects do not require substantial funding. Perhaps the most important factor supporting the suggested proposals is that Iraqis have demonstrated many times throughout their rich historical past that they possess the means to create a just and prosperous society. This report should be read as an effort to support the tremendous strides that Iraqis have already made in creating a democratic society following the fall of Saddam Hussein.

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Models of Historical Memory

Because 60 percent of the Iraqi population is under the age of twenty-five, young Iraqis have known nothing other than authoritarian rule. However, many older Iraqis still remember the era prior to February 1963 and can share their memories of the Iraqi nationalist movement's efforts to create a democratic and just society. In fact, this older cohort includes many Iraqis who themselves participated in the nationalist movement. Thus, the first project seeks to mobilize historical memory in promoting democracy in Iraq. One of the means by which the Iraqi government, civil society organizations, and democratic activists can help promote democracy is by conveying the experiences and reminiscences of the older generation of Iraqis to the younger generation. Doing so would not only serve the important purpose of transmitting historical knowledge to younger Iraqis but would also help to bridge the gap between generations. Iraq has numerous traditions that bespeak respect for cultural diversity, freedom of expression, and promoting political participation and the rule of law, and one of the most important aspects of building democracy in Iraq is to educate the younger generation in these traditions. The effort would allow older Iraqis to play the role of mentors to the young, an important role in a society in which age is highly respected.

There are many ways in which historical memory can be used to revitalize Iraqi democracy. More than two hundred Iraqi newspapers have begun publishing since the fall of Saddam Hussein, and many of them contain a section devoted to civil society. Examples of such newspapers are *al-Sabah* and *al-Mada*. The Iraqi government and NGOs could use these newspapers to publicize the accomplishments of the Iraqi nationalist movement through commissioning essays by Iraqi scholars, intellectuals, and political activists from the pre-1963 era. Another way to mobilize the positive historical memory of the Iraqi nationalist movement would be to utilize the web sites of Iraqi ministries and governmental organizations. The Ministries of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research, Culture, Civil Society Affairs, Human Rights, Women's Affairs, and Labor and Social Affairs all could post reports documenting the activities of the Iraqi nationalist movement. These materials could be solicited from Iraqi scholars, artists, and political

activists. Unlike during Saddam Hussein's rule, when computers and Internet access were banned for most of the population, the Internet today is used by many Iraqis, either through their own personal computers or in Internet cafes.

Mobilizing Historical Memory in Support of Democracy

A project that the Iraqi government or NGOs might consider supporting is an Iraqi Democratic Historical Memory Project, which would gather older scholars, journalists, artists, and political activists who are conversant with Iraq's modern democratic tradition. Under the auspices of the Iraqi government, which would provide the necessary resources, this three-stage historical memory project would allow those familiar with Iraq's democratic tradition to work together to spread information about it. The older democratic activists could in turn invite their counterparts from the younger generation to join in promoting the project.

In the first two stages, the group of older and younger democratic activists would develop a series of conferences. In the first conference, the group would organize panels to present information and analysis of the efforts of the Iraqi nationalist movement to promote democracy and build civil society. This conference would not only facilitate information sharing but would allow the new group of democratic activists to get to know one another and develop a sense of corporate identity. Coming together as a group would set the stage for activities beyond the conference. For example, the papers of the conference could be published, and earlier works on the Iraqi nationalist movement, now out of print, could be reissued. The new group could issue abridged versions of earlier studies. These abridged texts could be offered for sale at subsidized prices by the Iraqi government, like the *Little Encyclopedia* that appeared during the 1970s and 1980s.

A possible theme for the project could be papers on the June–October 1920 Iraqi Revolution, building on the work of Wamidh Umar al-Nazmi, who is a professor of political science at Baghdad University, which demonstrates the widespread ecumenical spirit of the uprising. Dr. al-Nazmi's focus on the cooperation among Iraqis of a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds—including Sunnis, Christians, and Jews—demonstrated the commitment of Iraqis to a national identity rather than one based on their particular ethnic community. For example, he discusses the celebration by Sunnis and Shi'ites of each other's religious festivals and the fact that they prayed in each other's mosques. Other papers could focus on the efforts of Iraqis of all ethnic backgrounds to struggle against oppressive rule, such as in the General Strike of 1931, the Wathba, or uprising, of 1948, and the Intifada of 1953, all of which contested British control over Iraqi politics and the economy.

Papers could be offered on the many democratically oriented political parties that were developed by the Iraqi nationalist movement, such as the National Party, the People's Organization, the National Democratic Party, and the Independence Party. The many electoral coalitions that were established during the 1950s to contest parliamentary elections could also be emphasized. These coalitions were particularly notable because they included political parties of different ideological persuasions, such as the National Democratic Party and the Independence Party. The studies of Jaf'ar 'Abbas Humaydi, Fadiil Husayn, Muhammad 'Awayd al-Dulaymi, and Ibrahim al-Juburi offer detailed analyses of the efforts of the many political parties that cooperated during this period to bring true democracy to Iraq. Of course, the magnificent work of modern Iraq's greatest modern historian, 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani, *The History of Iraqi Ministries*, is another testament to the Iraqi desire for a free and democratic political system.

Any review of the political and social behavior of the poorer sectors of society should include Kamal Mazhar Ahmad's study *The Iraqi Working Class: Its Formation and Early Activities*. His work demonstrates not only that Iraqi artisans and workers of modest origins were able to form labor unions, but that these unions, many of which had national memberships, included workers from literally all of Iraq's ethnic groups. Equally significant was

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the solidarity that these workers demonstrated in strikes and labor actions designed to improve their standard of living and to support Iraq's nationalist struggle—all the more impressive because most of the workers were illiterate.

The accomplishments of the Iraqi nationalist movement can also be seen in the great strides in literature and the arts that were made prior to 1963. Iraqi poets—such as Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, Nazik al-Mala'ika, Buland al-Haydari, Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri, and 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Bayati—and authors—such as Dhu al-Nun Ayub, 'Abd al-Malik Nuri, Edmund Sabri, Fu'ad al-Takarli, and Shakir Khusbak—creatively synthesized symbols drawn from Iraq's rich history with themes of modern civilization. In the plastic arts, sculptors and painters—such as Jawad Salim, Fa'iq Hasan, Nuri al-Rawi, Ismail al-Shaykhli, and Tariq Mazlum—also used tradition in creative ways to address modern problems. Jawad Salim's Freedom Monument in Baghdad's Liberation Square remains one of the most important artistic testimonies to Iraqi desires for freedom and progress.

As part of the Iraqi Historical Democratic Memory Project, oral histories could be gathered from democratic activists, intellectuals, poets, authors, labor union leaders, and artists who participated in the pre-1963 nationalist movement. Oral histories of this sort have been done in other Arab countries. For example, al-Fath University in Libya conducted an oral history project by taping resistance fighters who had fought against Italian colonialism. With the permission of the interviewees, taped interviews could be made available to all Iraqi universities and the National Library so that the public could have access to them. These taped interviews would become an important part of Iraq's political heritage.

Opposing Saddam Hussein's Regime

A second-stage conference would focus on a topic that still has not been addressed in significant detail, namely the efforts of Iraqis who opposed Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime. As is well known, Saddam used considerable sums of public funds to manipulate Iraqis' understanding of their past through the state-sponsored Project for the Rewriting of History, which he headed. Saddam was clearly afraid of Iraq's nationalist past because the values held by Iraqis prior to Ba'athist rule did not support his goal of establishing a highly authoritarian country.

In this second stage of the project, members of the Iraqi Democratic Historical Memory Project could gather examples of writings and artistic expression during Saddam Hussein's rule that supported political tolerance and respect for cultural diversity, albeit in a hidden manner. Examples include studies published during the Ba'athist era on the electoral coalitions that were created during the 1950s. This was a typical pattern of writing under the Ba'athist regime: intellectuals often wrote about political and social events that occurred before Saddam came to power and that contrasted with the regime's authoritarian rule.

Other texts that contained implicit criticism of the Ba'athist regime adopted different techniques. Dr. Riyadh Aziz Hadi's *Political Problems in the Third World*, for example, contains excellent chapters on the political systems of a variety of Western and non-Western countries. However, in his section on Iraq, he includes only the speeches of Saddam Hussein, thereby indirectly informing his students that it was not possible to write forthrightly about Iraqi politics under Ba'athist rule.

There are also studies from this era that criticized those whom Saddam's regime considered enemies, while simultaneously demonstrating that the same criticisms could be directed at the Ba'athist regime itself. Baqir Jawad al-Zujaji's *The Iraqi Novel and the Problem of the Countryside* ostensibly was a critique of leftist authors during the 1940s and 1950s who claimed to represent the interests of the peasantry but who spent little time in the countryside and had limited appreciation for rural village culture. However, a careful reading of the book indicates that all the author's criticism could be applied to the

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leadership of the Ba'ath Party as well. Other studies published under Ba'athist rule were so laudatory of Saddam that they actually amounted to parodies of him.

Historical Memory and Institutionalizing Democratic Practices in Iraq

In the third stage, Iraqi intellectuals and other democratic activists would use the results of the first two stages to develop new curricular materials for all levels of education. This stage would offer teachers and university professors the opportunity to introduce new civically oriented teaching materials into their classes, which would strengthen their students' understanding of modern Iraqi political development.

This project would also strengthen ties between university faculty and elementary and secondary school teachers. Outreach programs in which the faculties of arts and sciences of Iraq's universities provide assistance to the nation's school system could begin to be developed in earnest. Such cooperation could strengthen the overall education system and help build the confidence of schoolteachers, who often lack the opportunity to engage in professional development.

Outreach programs in which university faculty help elementary and secondary school teachers develop grade-appropriate curricular materials represent an especially important collaboration. Because the education system experienced such degradation under the former regime, Iraqi schoolteachers lack basic resources. Overworked and in short supply, few teachers have the time or ability to improve teaching materials, many of which have not kept up with changes in the world. Iraqi university faculty members have an important role to play in improving basic education. If the Iraqi Democratic Historical Memory Project can help improve the teaching of Arab history, Islamic history, and civics education, Iraqi schoolchildren will be the beneficiaries.

A concrete way for university professors to contribute to the improvement of elementary and secondary schools is to write new textbooks that take into account recent scholarship. Because university faculty themselves have limited resources and are often overworked, the Iraqi Democratic Historical Memory Project could seek government funding to commission some of Iraq's prominent scholars to produce innovative curricular material, perhaps with the assistance of graduate students. This project could include familiarizing Iraqi teachers with the use of websites from throughout the Arab world that emphasize civil society and democracy building to help them improve their teaching.

Overworked and in short supply, few teachers have the time or ability to improve teaching materials, many of which have not kept up with changes in the world.

Strategies for Promoting Democracy

The Iraqi National Institute for Democracy

Building on the examples of other Arab organizations—such as the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies in Egypt; Muwatin, the Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy; and MIFTAH, the Palestinian Initiative for Global Dialogue and Democracy—the Iraqi government should consider establishing a national institute designed to promote democracy. This institute could sponsor a number of national projects and provide training and resources, such as grants, for Iraqis who want to establish new political parties and civil society organizations or democracy “think tanks.” The Iraqi National Institute for Democracy could also provide periodic workshops and seminars to help these organizations develop new programs as they expand.

The new institute would be publicly funded but autonomous, that is, not under the control of a particular branch of the Iraqi government. Following the model of similar institutes in other countries, the Iraqi National Institute for Democracy could be administered by a board of directors whose members would be nominated by the offices of the Iraqi president, vice presidents, and prime minister, and then appointed by the president.

One project that the new institute could sponsor is an essay contest on the theme “My Hopes for the New Iraq.” This project would be modeled on a contest organized by the Women’s Alliance for a Democratic Iraq (WAFDI) titled “Why I Love Iraq.” WAFDI’s initiative was intended for primary school students. The pilot project was implemented in Baghdad for first, second, and third grade students during the 2003–2004 academic year and offered a prize of \$100 to the winning essay. The WAFDI essay contest could receive funding from the Iraqi National Institute for Democracy to expand it into a national program.

A contest on the theme “My Hopes for the New Iraq” could include not just secondary school students, but Iraqis of all ages. Allowing participants to achieve national recognition, and receive a small stipend, would certainly make such a contest attractive. In keeping with Iraq’s position as one of the cultural centers of the Arab world—and the importance of the oral tradition in Arab culture—poetry that conformed to the contest’s theme could form a separate category. Artistic works, such as documentary films, paintings, and sculpture, which could also be considered separate categories, would further enrich the project.

Winners of the contest would be invited to discuss their essays on state-run radio stations, and the essays could be posted on the website of the Ministry of State for Civil Society Affairs. When the security situation improves, successful contestants could appear on Iraqi television to discuss their projects and the ideas behind them. Copies of successful essays and poetry could be published in prominent newspapers, such as *al-Zaman*, *al-Sabah*, *al-Sabah al-Jadid*, *al-Bayan*, and *al-Ta’akhi*; distributed in schools and universities; and disseminated with the help of civil society organizations such as WAFDI. Successful artistic entries could be posted on government websites and in museums and public galleries. Making the results of the contest public would encourage Iraqis to think in greater detail about their own hopes and aspirations for the new Iraq.

Citizenship and Service Learning for University Students

The concept of citizenship and service learning is one in which students apply what they have learned in the university classroom to their community. In this educational model, learning is not just an abstraction, but experienced in a very real sense by the student. Faculty members locate community partners with which their students can work and then assign students to work with these partner organizations. For example, university students studying to become teachers help elementary school students improve their reading and writing skills, thereby assisting teachers and schools. The university students gain a better understanding of how teaching takes place in an applied setting, while the teachers and children both receive helpful assistance. In this model of learning, everyone benefits.

Students could serve in many capacities, such as working as interns in civil society organizations, tutoring high school students, helping to improve the quality of recreational programs for young people, or providing services to elderly people who have lost spouses or lack family support by bringing them daily necessities and reading materials. Students in medical school could help provide medical services to areas of Iraq where such services are lacking. Students in the arts could work to beautify public spaces, offer theater performances, or organize exhibits of paintings and sculpture. Obviously, the possibilities for citizenship and service learning are endless.

Citizenship and service learning promotes a deeper level of civic understanding on the part of university students. Not only do they improve their learning process, but they gain an appreciation of giving to the community. Citizenship and service learning also helps university students understand whether they are really suited for a career by giving them direct experience with that career. But most important of all, this form of learning helps inculcate civic values in students.

The Ministries of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Education, and Civil Society Affairs could play an important role in promoting citizenship and service learning.

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The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research could offer academic credits to students who participate in this program. The three ministries could develop programs to give students the necessary training before they are sent to the communities and organizations with which they want to work.

A National Reading Project

A recent poll of 10,000 Iraqi urban and rural families, commissioned by the Ministry of Planning and Cooperative Development and conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), found that 85 percent of Iraqi youth between the ages of nineteen and twenty-four rejected the idea that political disputes can be resolved through violence. The poll revealed little evidence that young members of the families surveyed were attracted to radical politics. In a less encouraging finding, however, the poll revealed that young Iraqis, like young people in many societies today, are visual learners and spend relatively little time reading books. Of course, this lack of reading among Iraqi youth stems partly from the UN sanctions of the 1990s, when few books were published and when Iraqi families could ill afford to purchase reading materials. The decline in interest in books also occurred during a time when the Iraqi education system experienced a serious decline in quality.

A democratic society requires a literate citizenry.

A democratic society requires a literate citizenry. One way to promote reading skills among Iraqi youth, as well as to promote a deeper appreciation of the values of tolerance, respect for cultural diversity, and political participation, is to organize a national reading contest around materials that emphasize these values. The contest would entail students reading from a list of publications suggested by Iraqi university faculty and secondary school teachers that promote democratic values, including works on literature, the arts, religion, history, politics, and civic values.

The Ministries of Education and Culture could organize this contest, in which students would receive prizes for reading a set number of books. The ministries could post a list of books, sections of books, or short stories on their websites. Through government and private funding, reading materials could be published as supplements to Iraqi newspapers. Teachers could be given a small salary supplement for participating.

At the beginning of the reading project, students would be given a ticket. After they read a certain number of publications from the list of materials, teachers would discuss these readings with them to ascertain whether they understood what they had read. Upon successful completion of this process, students would have their ticket punched and could then exchange it for a prize. Possible prizes could be tickets to soccer games or small items offered by local merchants. Students who read an especially large number of publications could receive a government certificate to add to their school record, a form of national recognition.

Teachers could be encouraged to discuss in their classrooms the readings that their students found especially compelling. Classroom discussion would allow the contest to move beyond the individual reader and have a broader impact on the Iraqi elementary and secondary school system. The National Reading Contest could thereby serve as a curriculum supplement as well.

Using the Internet to Promote Democracy

One of the important developments of the past decade has been the dramatic expansion of the Internet. The explosion of information now available to people living in even remote areas of the globe has significantly affected all aspects of life. Authoritarian regimes deny their people access to information. It is no surprise, then, that the use of computers and Internet access were strictly controlled by Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime. Since the fall of the Ba'ath Party, Internet use in Iraq has increased tremendously. From secondary school students who use it to find materials to complete homework assignments to women who gather before computers to learn from the experiences of women elsewhere

how to promote their own interests in Iraqi society, the Internet has opened many avenues for change.

Both the Iraqi government and the organizations of civil society can make further use of the Internet. The Iraqi government can develop curricular material to be used by elementary and secondary school teachers and make it available on the Internet. A number of government ministries could participate in this activity, including the Ministries of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research, and Culture. Creating such a website would be especially helpful, given the shortage of up-to-date textbooks in many school districts throughout Iraq. Although most Iraqi schools do not have computers, teachers could be given access codes to computers in Internet cafes where they could review new curricular materials. As more computers become available in the schools, these materials would become easier to access.

What types of materials would be especially useful in promoting a better understanding of the principles and functioning of a democratic government? As noted above, Iraq has an important democratic tradition that is largely unknown to Iraqi youth. Speeches by representatives who served in the pre-1958 parliament and those of Iraq's important democratic activists, such as Kamil al-Chadirji, leader of the National Democratic Party, could be posted. Postings could include statements made by Iraqi nationalists, both secular and religious, during some of Iraq's most important historical events—for example, clerics who issued fatwas defending Iraq during the British invasion between 1914 and 1918, or activists who participated in the 1920 Revolution, the 1931 General Strike, the 1948 Wathba, the 1953 Intifada, the United Electoral Front, which competed in the June 1954 parliamentary elections, and other important nationalist events. Postings that emphasized the unity of the Iraqi people, antisectarianism, and respect for cultural diversity—all key building blocks of democratic values—would underscore the importance of Iraq's democratic tradition.

Thus, one way to increase the quality and quantity of societal knowledge about Iraqi politics and society, and by extension a deeper understanding and appreciation of democratic values and practices, is to increase Internet access. As the *Arab Human Development Report* has indicated, Internet usage in the Arab world is still very limited compared to other regions of the world. One positive step, therefore, would be for the Iraqi government to facilitate access to the Internet. This would be especially important to poorer sectors of society. Following a model designed to promote civic involvement that was first suggested by the Italian author Umberto Eco to the municipal council of the city of Bologna, the Iraqi government could issue identification cards that would allow citizens free access to Internet terminals located in post offices or other municipal buildings in their communities. Like Bologna's residents, residents of Iraq's cities and towns could use their government-issued Internet access cards at these terminals.

Universal Internet access would allow students to study materials not available in the classroom and permit citizens to learn news from around the world. Moreover, the government could publicize on these Internet terminals how citizens could connect to the websites of government ministries and civil society organizations, laws affecting their everyday lives (e.g., laws relating to conducting business and economic investment), and suggestions for contacting the office of the municipal or provincial advocate (see below) if they are experiencing problems with government services.

Creation of a Web site Designed to Counter Insurgents' Misinterpretations of Islam

One of the main impediments to promoting democracy in Iraq is the ongoing insurgency. The insurgency is supported and funded by many elements who were part of, or had close ties to, the former regime of Saddam Hussein. Although the former regime was extremely secular in orientation, and suppressed efforts by Iraqis, both clerics and laymen, to express their religious beliefs in public, these same elements now carry on their insurgency in the name of Islam. While most adult Iraqis do not consider insurgents who engage in suicide bombings, assassinations, and murders to be true Muslims, it is criti-

Postings that emphasized the unity of the Iraqi people, antisectarianism, and respect for cultural diversity—all key building blocks of democratic values—would underscore the importance of Iraq's democratic tradition.

cal that Iraqi youth understand that violence and killing are not condoned by Islam if a strong democracy is to be built in Iraq.

The Iraqi government should consider the efforts of a Yemeni judge, Hamoud al-Hitar, who challenged jailed al Qaeda members in a Sana'a prison to a debate over whether Islam sanctions violent and terrorist acts. Judge al-Hitar offered to declare support for the al Qaeda members if they won the debate. However, if he won the debate, he demanded that these young Yemenis renounce terrorism and violence once and for all. As would be expected of a judge well educated in Islamic law, he won what became a series of debates. The admission by many al Qaeda members that the judge had won the debates resulted in many terrorists being released from jail. Once released, they not only cooperated with authorities to bring other terrorists to justice, but also joined Judge al-Hitar in his efforts to spread a true understanding of the peaceful nature of Islam. Perhaps most significant, many former terrorists argued that they did not know that Islam did not condone the killing of innocent people and had been led by terrorist leaders to accept beliefs that were not part of the Muslim religion.

This story suggests the need for the Iraqi government to be more proactive in educating Iraqi youth about the true teachings of Islam. One way to do this would be for the Iraqi government to recruit Muslim clerics, both Sunni and Shi'ite, to answer questions about politics and society posed by Iraqi youth. This could be accomplished through a weekly television and/or radio program that answered questions mailed to them or posted on a website administered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Clearly, a better understanding among Iraqi youth of Islam's strictures against terrorism and violence will contribute to a political and social environment more conducive to the growth of democracy.

Expanding the Coffeehouse Culture

One of the most venerable Iraqi institutions is the coffeehouse, which has always played an important cultural and political role in Iraqi society. Traditionally, the coffeehouse was the venue for poets and intellectuals. The al-Zahawi Coffeehouse named after Jamal Sidqi al-Zahawi, the Haydarkhana Coffeehouse associated with Maruf al-Rusafi, the Hasan Ajma Coffeehouse associated with Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri, and the Brazil Coffeehouse frequented by the famous short story writer Abd al-Malik Nuri are just some examples of Iraq's many famous coffeehouses. Coffeehouses provided the stimulus for the creation of important literary journals, such as *New Thought*, which was founded in the Swiss Coffeehouse. Coffeehouses also helped promote democracy. Badr Shakir al-Sayyab and Buland al-Haydari both wrote famous poems about the persona of the informer in which they describe the efforts of poets to deliver poetry that conveys opposition to the state, but in ways unintelligible to the government informer lurking in the coffeehouse. Prior to 1963, Iraqi nationalists would return to specific coffeehouses after engaging in political demonstrations. Thus the coffeehouse became a place where its customers could learn the nuances and subtleties of subverting the repressive state.

Iraqi coffeehouses have traditionally promoted egalitarian values by obscuring the lines of social stratification between the wealthy and the poor. Those who could not afford to purchase a newspaper could often read a copy in the coffeehouse. Those who could not read would find someone there who would read the newspaper aloud. In this manner, the coffeehouse has promoted civil society by expanding a sense of community in the cities, towns, and villages of Iraq.

A very effective way to promote civil society in Iraq, and by extension greater support for democratic institutions and practices, would be for the Iraqi government to offer long-term loans at nominal interest rates to organizations that seek to establish new coffeehouses for civic-minded purposes. In return for receiving a low-cost loan, the sponsoring organization would be required to host a certain number of events, or provide specific

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services, that would promote the expansion of civil society. A poetry society, for example, might offer poetry readings on designated nights of the week. A theater troupe might offer plays. Women's organizations might use a new coffeehouse to offer a lecture series exploring ways Iraqi women could assume a more prominent role in public life. In coffeehouses in poorer neighborhoods, university students enrolled in citizenship and service learning programs could offer reading instruction. Artists could use the coffeehouse to present new works that express civic themes. These are just some of the many ways the tradition of the coffeehouse's contribution to Iraqi society could be continued.

National "Town Hall" Meetings

In keeping with the proposition that a strong democracy depends on the availability of information and a sense of trust among the populace in the integrity and competence of its government representatives, this report suggests creation of a monthly national "town hall" meeting. Members of the Iraqi government, including at various times the president, vice president, prime minister, speaker of the parliament, and cabinet ministers, would appear on state-run television and radio on one evening each month to answer questions posed by telephone or through the Internet from Iraqis throughout the country.

First and foremost, the very existence of these town hall meetings would increase the bonds of trust between the citizenry and the government, provided Iraqis felt that government officials answered their questions honestly. Second, these meetings would provide a barometer of public opinion for government officials. Third, these meetings would strengthen bonds among different sectors of Iraqi society, as callers saw that their concerns and problems were shared. Finally, these meetings would strengthen government officials' sense of accountability.

To expand the reach of the town hall meetings beyond the television and radio audiences, their proceedings could be published on government websites. Iraqi newspapers could carry summaries of the proceedings. Of course, town hall meetings would be most effective if the government responds to the problems brought to its attention during the meetings. It could, for example, appoint government commissions or other official bodies to investigate matters of widespread concern.

Youth Programs

CREATING A YOUTH CHANNEL ON IRAQI STATE TELEVISION

Given the large percentage of Iraqis who are under the age of twenty-five, the Iraqi government should be especially concerned with the needs of Iraqi youth. One way to organize programs for Iraqi youth would be to create a television channel especially for them. In the morning, this channel could offer children's programs that incorporate learning materials for preschoolers, especially reading and mathematics. If done in a creative way, such programming, which has been very successful in other countries, could help prepare children for elementary school.

Programs offered later in the day could be directed toward older students, combining entertainment with learning. For example, a program on folk poetry could both delight and educate viewers, as could a program on music that focused on the lute or the qanun (Egyptian lap harp). Programs could also discuss the problems of teenagers in all societies, as well as preview possible careers for students nearing graduation from secondary schools.

Other programs could interview young Egyptians, Syrians, Palestinians, Turks, Iranians, or students from the Gulf area, just to give some possible examples. Organizations such as UNESCO, the Arab League, the United States Agency for International Development, and the European Union might be approached to help fund such a television channel. Iraqi university students interested in a career in the visual media could serve as interns at

The very existence of these town hall meetings would increase the bonds of trust between the citizenry and the government.

One way to organize programs for Iraqi youth would be to create a television channel especially for them.

the channel, where they could help generate ideas for new and innovative programming. If Iraqi youth were involved in the development of this channel through public opinion surveys conducted in secondary schools and universities, and their opinions were taken seriously, the channel could be very successful and serve as a vehicle for promoting a more positive outlook among young people.

SUMMER CAMPS FOR IRAQI YOUTH

Although Iraq is not a sectarian society, those who would return it to authoritarian rule have tried to create conflict among Iraq's ethnic groups. To offset this destructive effort, it is important to inculcate in the next generation of Iraqis a respect for cultural diversity and a tolerance for difference. One way to promote appreciation for cultural difference is to encourage interaction among young people from different ethnic groups.

Obviously, there are many means to accomplish this end. One way would be to organize a summer camp program for Iraqi youth. Because the summer is quite hot, the best venue for these camps might be the cooler climate of Iraqi Kurdistan. While Iraqi students enjoyed themselves at camp, they could also be learning. Unlike the summer camps organized by Saddam Hussein's regime, which were intended to indoctrinate Iraqi youth into an authoritarian political culture, these camps would stress the inherent worth of all cultures, as well as the cultural commonalities of all Iraq's ethnic groups. Their programs would be designed to educate campers in the history and heritage of Iraq's major ethnic groups. Performances by folklore troupes, photographic and artistic exhibits, ethnic foods, storytelling, movies, and the celebration of ethnic and regional holidays could all be incorporated to support the camps' goal.

Unlike the summer camps organized by Saddam Hussein's regime, which were intended to indoctrinate Iraqi youth into an authoritarian political culture, these camps would stress the inherent worth of all cultures, as well as the cultural commonalities of all Iraq's ethnic groups.

Using Folklore to Enhance Respect for Cultural Differences

During the rule of 'Abd al-Karim Qasim (1958–1963), the Iraqi government placed considerable emphasis on Iraq's folkloric heritage in government-sponsored television programs and publications. Prime Minister Qasim's focus on folklore was extremely popular among Iraqis at the time. Many urban Iraqis still maintained close ties to rural areas from which they had only recently migrated. They found folklore, or what is referred to in Arabic as "popular culture," highly attractive because it reflected both a concern with their cultural origins and a set of values and practices that were egalitarian in nature. Instead of emphasizing difference, as was often the case in "high" culture, folklore stressed what all Iraqis, Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, and others shared. Much of the Iraqi population saw folklore as contributing to the building of a national culture and, by extension, promoting a common definition of political community.

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Saddam Hussein's regime allowed the continuation of this emphasis on folklore. However, Saddam tried to use folklore to promote his own cult of personality. The concepts of heroism and toughness were used to promote Saddam's image as Iraq's father figure and military leader. Despite Saddam's efforts to manipulate folklore for his own political ends, the *Journal of Popular Culture (Majallat al-Turath al-Sha'bi)* was extremely popular under his rule, as were television programs that emphasized folklore themes, such as *Aspects of Baghdad (Baghdadiyat)*, and historical works that emphasized folklore, such as the writings of al-Jahiz, including his famous book on misers, *al-Bukhala*.

One way for the Iraqi government to counter efforts to create sectarian feelings among the Iraqi populace would be to fund television and radio programs and films that emphasize folkloric themes. The current television program *City Diaries (Yawmiyat al-Madina)* is one such example. Programs that discussed music, sports, marriage rituals, artisan production, and proverbs, jokes, and riddles—both contemporary and historical—would foster greater national solidarity, especially if they dealt with the folklore of all Iraq's ethnic groups.

The creation of new museums throughout Iraq containing exhibits highlighting all of Iraq's ethnic groups would likewise contribute to a sense of national unity. The promotion of folklore would also serve to create a greater respect for tradition in the good sense of the word.

The Office of Public Advocate

To ensure that all citizens have equal and effective access to government services, the Iraqi parliament could create an Office of the Public Advocate in all of Iraq's major cities and provinces. The public advocate would act as the guardian of the public's interests, apart from any particular government or political party. The Office of the Public Advocate could report to Iraq's Court of Cassation, the highest court in the land. Public advocates should be appointed for a lengthy period (e.g., six years) and should be individuals of high moral stature and reputation. They could be drawn from the legal profession, the court system, or the education system. As a respected member of the community, immune from political pressure and serving for an extended period of time, the public advocate would add to the sense of confidence that Iraqis have in their government.

Promoting Democracy through Social Justice

History records many instances where democracies failed because citizens did not enjoy a decent standard of living and social security. Weimar Germany during the 1920s and early 1930s is a good example of economic malaise ultimately leading to the rise of authoritarianism. Iraq's unemployment rate is estimated to be in excess of 60 percent. Young Iraqis have limited career opportunities and many are very pessimistic about their futures. Economic discontent has helped to fuel the ongoing insurgency in Iraq.

Because democratic values cannot flourish in a stagnant economic environment, this report urges the Iraqi government to publicize its vision of economic development more aggressively over the next five years. Proposed projects, such as the efforts to develop the port of Basra as a regional "mega port" in cooperation with Kuwait and Iran, need higher visibility. This project, which will link Iraq, Kuwait, and Iran via rail lines and highways, will make Basra the major port in the Arab Mashriq and create thousands of new jobs in southern Iraq. Through facilitating the import and export of goods needed for Iraq's economic reconstruction, the project will ultimately contribute to all regions of Iraqi society, not just the south.

Beyond long-term projects such as the modernization and expansion of the port of Basra, the Iraqi government should find international donors to support development of a national employment program. Although this program would be temporary, it would provide jobs for large numbers of Iraqis until the economy begins to reestablish momentum, especially with the revival of the oil industry. Painting and improving schools, cleaning up and beautifying neighborhoods, improving recreational facilities for young people, offering tutoring services for elementary and secondary school students, serving as interns for civil society organizations—these are just some types of work that those employed by the state could perform during the short term.

For the long-term economic health of the country, the Iraqi government needs to dramatically increase job training facilities throughout the country. The process of opening job training centers has already begun, but it needs more financial assistance and help from the international community if it is to have a meaningful impact. Because Iraq has been cut off from technological developments in the world by the United Nations sanctions regime, it also needs more skilled professionals who will train Iraqis, either in the country or in neighboring nations, to acquire new skills, such as those linked to information technology. Providing a wide range of job training will offer Iraqis more hope about their economic future, which will undoubtedly translate into hope about the political future as well.

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Conclusion

The insurgency currently plaguing Iraq has made many Iraqis pessimistic about their country's future. However, Iraq has the resources to create one of the most vibrant democracies in the Arab world—one that can become the envy of countries around the globe. Not only does Iraq possess tremendous oil wealth, agricultural resources, and historical treasures with which to develop a flourishing tourist industry, but, more important, it is home to a set of rich traditions that its highly educated citizenry can use as foundations for building the new Iraq. Indeed, as indicated by the popular wisdom in the well-known Arabic saying “The Egyptians write, the Lebanese publish, and the Iraqis read,” Iraq is inherently an open and tolerant society.

One of the main strategies of authoritarian regimes is to undermine a society's confidence in itself and, by extension, the hopes and aspirations of its citizenry. One of the most important defenses against the reassertion of authoritarian rule is to sustain the momentum of the ongoing transition to democracy. Iraqis can best accomplish this by remaining focused on the tasks at hand—namely, expanding the number of projects that promote democratization—and not allowing violence to deter them from their goals of building a democratic and just society. If the initiatives suggested in this report can help Iraqis, even in some small way, sustain the energy and enthusiasm that they have already demonstrated in building democracy, then it will have achieved its goal.

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