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Can Iraq Be Democratic?

Cato Institute Capitol Hill Briefing

18 December 2003

Outline

- The White House will be gravely disappointed with the result of its effort to establish a stable democracy in Iraq.
- Pessimism stems from study of what causes democracy to flourish in a society.
- The building blocks of a modern democratic political culture aren't institutional in nature. The building blocks aren't elections, parties, and legislatures. They are found amidst supportive cultural values.
- The cultural factors that stimulate and reinforce a stable democratic political system are: political trust; social tolerance; popular support for gender equality; and popular support for basic political liberties.
- In Iraq, the prevailing levels of these cultural factors fall far short of what's found in all established democracies.
- Political freedom is an alien concept to most Iraqis.
- The condition of a democracy is tied to the political culture. The political culture, in turn, is related to the level of economic development,
- A higher standard of living breeds values that demand greater democracy.
- Iraq won't be a stable democratic nation until it is much wealthier.
- The realization of Iraq's democratic potential will depend more on the introduction of a free market economic system than on any election.
- The White House is gambling that the formation of democratic institutions in Iraq can stimulate a democratic political culture. But a political culture shapes democracy far more than democracy shapes the political culture.
- The Shia community's numerical strength foreshadows serious problems for a democratic Iraq.
- Today, Iraq looks a lot closer to anarchy than democracy.