

Albert Somit

Distinguished Professor Emeritus  
Southern Illinois University  
Carbondale, IL  
e-mail: albertsomit@gmail.com

Steven A. Peterson

School of Public Affairs  
Penn State Harrisburg  
Middletown, PA 17057  
e-mail: Sap12@psu.edu

## Evolution, Hierarchy, and Democracy: Iraq and Afghanistan

---

**Summary.** As we know, historically democracies have been very rare. Even today, in the so-called “Age of Democracy”, they constitute a shrinking minority of governments. Why? Neo-Darwinian theory provides a persuasive powerful answer. Our evolutionary history has given our species a marked tendency toward hierarchical political and social structures, an obvious and serious impediment to democracy. However, under certain “enabling” social, political, and economic conditions, viable democracies are sometimes possible. This paper explains why humans are hierarchically inclined, describes the requisite enabling conditions, and points out that the near-total absence of these conditions in both Iraq and Afghanistan vitiates any attempt at democratic “nation building” in these countries.

**Key words:** democracy, neo-Darwinism, hierarchy, dominance, evolution, Freedom House, Iraq, Afghanistan

### Introduction

Certainly, democracy is more widespread throughout the planet than it used to be; almost all data bases show that (Polity, Vanhanen, Freedom House). However, there are many parts of the world where democracy is clearly struggling (e.g. the Middle East, and the Islamic world more generally); there are other countries (in Africa, for instance) where democracy appears to be barely hanging on. In fact, and, as Table 1 shows, even in the so-called “Age of Democracy”, democra-

cies still constitute a minority of governments. We count 57 states that are “Free” (democratic) according to Freedom House; 49 are “Part Free”, and 43 “Not Free”.

Why is it so difficult to establish democracies – and why are they so fragile? In this paper, we update arguments that we have recently made<sup>1</sup>, using America’s painful failures in Iraq and Afghanistan as cases in point. The explanation, in short, is that our evolutionary history has inclined us to favor hierarchical societies characterized by dominance and submission relations – an inclination which obviously favors authoritarian regimes, as human history clearly testifies.

But democracies do exist – so what makes this possible? Here “exogenous” factors are required – the development of “enabling” social, political, and economic conditions and the acceptance of democratic values by a politically significant segment of the population. These enabling conditions cannot be established overnight; they do not often coincide; but when they do, a democracy may be born.

At this point, a brief “editorial” may be in order:

Over the past decade the intellectual climate in the social and behavioral sciences has changed markedly. As we have watched with both envy and satisfaction, an “evolutionary” approach has gained increasing acceptance in such sister disciplines as economics, psychology, and anthropology<sup>2</sup> to mention only the three in which it has made the greatest headway. Equally heartening, there is modest evidence that it is finally receiving a more receptive hearing even in political science<sup>3</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> A. Somit, S.A. Peterson, *Darwinism, Dominance, and Democracy*, Praeger, Greenwich, CT 1997; idem, *The Failure of Democratic Nation Building: Ideology Meets Evolution*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York 2010 (revised edition).

<sup>2</sup> For an analysis of the impact of evolutionary theory in the social sciences, see *Evolutionary Approaches in the Behavioral Sciences: Toward a Better Understanding of Human Nature*, eds. A. Somit, S.A. Peterson, Emerald, Bingley 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Note these recent items published in political science journals: J.R. Alford, C.L. Funk, J.R. Hibbing, *Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted?*, “American Political Science Review” 2005, no. 99; J.R. Alford, J.R. Hibbing, *The Origins of Politics: An Evolutionary Theory of Political Behavior*, “Perspectives on Politics” 2005, no. 2; R. McDermott, *The Feeling of Rationality: The Meaning of Neuroscientific Advances for Political Science*, “Perspectives on Politics” 2005, no. 2; J. Orbell, T. Morikawa, J. Hartwig, J. Hanley, N. Allen, ‘Machiavellian’ Intelligence as a Basis for the Evolution of Cooperative Dispositions, “American Political Science Review” 2004, no. 98; P.K. Hatemi, J.R. Hibbing, S.E. Medland, M.C. Keller, J.R. Alford, K.B. Smith, N.G. Martin, L.J. Eaves, *Not by Twins Alone: Using the Extended Family Design to Investigate Genetic Influence on Political Beliefs*, “American Journal of Political Science” 2010, vol. 54, 2011; P.K. Hatemi, N.A. Gillespie, L.J. Eaves, B.S. Maher, B.T. Webb, A.C. Heath, S.E. Medland, D.C. Smyth, H.N. Beeby, S.D. Gordon, G.M. Montgomery, G. Zhu, E.M. Byrne, N.G. Martin, *A Genome-wide Analysis of Liberal and Conservative Political Attitudes*, “Journal of Politics” 2011, no. 73; J.R. Hibbing, K. Smith, J.R. Alford, *Predisposed: Liberals, Conservatives, and the Biology of Political Differences*, Routledge, New York 2013; P. Corning, *The Cooperative Gene: Evolution, Human Nature, and Politics*, in: *Biopolitics: The Life Sciences and Public Policy*, ed. Albert Somit, Steven A. Peterson, Emerald Group Publishing, Bingley, UK 2012; D. Cesarini, M. Johannesson, S. Oskarsson, *Pre-birth Factors, Post-birth Factors, and Voting Evidence from Swedish Adoption Data*, “American Political Science Review” 2014, no. 108.

probably the one most stubbornly wedded to the Standard Social Science Model (SSSM). Of course, this may be only a Prague Spring – but we certainly hope not. In any event, the broader trend is the more important, since in these matters political science tends to follow rather than lead. If neo-Darwinism establishes itself as a major school in the other behavioral sciences (especially in economics), it will almost surely do so in political science.

We seek, then, to inform and, frankly, to persuade. Toward that end, we proceed as follows. To begin, we describe how Darwinian theory explains the evolution, in *Homo sapiens* (a social primate species), of such persistent behavioral inclinations as hierarchical social and political structures, with profound differences of status and of the benefits attendant thereon; of nepotism; of tendencies to dominance, on the one hand, and of submission, on the other; and, truly unique among all species, the capacity to create, to accept, and often to sacrifice in behalf of, religious and secular belief systems which often run counter to these tendencies.

Second, we discuss the aforementioned “enabling” economic, social, and political conditions which, as a substantial literature testifies, are the prerequisites for a viable democracy. These conditions are essential to both the emergence and continued life of a democracy. They must be the result of what we might term a “natural” process – that is, they must be a consequence of a society’s overall culture – or to put the matter in different terms, they cannot successfully be imposed by some other nation, however well intended (i.e. the so-called democratic nation-building phenomenon).

Third, we test our predictions of several years ago. We then argued – as did many other social scientists – that the attempt, via war, invasion and occupation of Iran and Afghanistan would have disastrous consequences for both of these countries – and for our own democracy as well. Unfortunately, well, let the reader decide.

Finally, and perhaps most import, we discuss the implications of a neo-Darwinian approach for public policy, for political philosophy in general – and for democratic theory in particular.

## **1. Principles Applied to Human Evolution: Hierarchy and Dominance, with Authoritarianism as the Default Option**

Thousands of years of recorded human history testify to an uncomfortable fact: the vast majority of humankind has lived – and continues to live – under some form of authoritarian rule. Democracies have been notably rare; most have been endangered from the moment of their birth; most have been depressingly short-lived. Put bluntly, in human history authoritarian government has been what technologically oriented readers would call the “default option.” Why? Neo-Darwini-

an theory, we believe, offers the single most powerful and intellectually coherent explanation.

Humans are social primates, closely akin genetically to the chimpanzees and only slightly less so to the gorillas. Working over literally millions of years, natural selection has endowed the social primates with a “predisposition” for hierarchical social structures. That is, social primate species almost invariably form groups, troops, tribes and societies characterized by marked differences of individual status in terms of dominance and submission, command and obedience, and by unequal access to many of the good things of life. Like it or not, these have been among the consistent characteristics of primate groups, troops, tribes, and societies, past and present<sup>4</sup>.

Let us illustrate the application of this perspective to social behavior, specifically with reference to dominance behavior (a striving to attain valued goods, whether food, power, sex or shelter) and the formation of social and political hierarchies<sup>5</sup>. Social primates display dominance behavior; they also live in hierarchical social (and in the case of our species, political) structures. Hierarchy is, in fact, one of the most pervasive and ubiquitous aspects of human social (as well as political) organizations.

Darwinian theory holds that when a given behavior is consistently manifested by a species, or by a number of related species, there is probably a sound evolutionary reason for that behavior<sup>6</sup>. Indeed, there is.

<sup>4</sup> Although some suggest that Bonobos, one of the chimpanzee species, cut against this hierarchical trend. See, e.g. F.B.M. De Waal, *Bonobo: The Forgotten Ape*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1998.

<sup>5</sup> See A. Somit, S.A. Peterson, *Darwinism, Dominance, and Democracy*, op. cit.

<sup>6</sup> We find substantial evidence for this among baboons (A.F. Dixon, T. Bossi, E.J. Wickings, *Male Dominance and Genetically Determined Reproductive Success in the Mandrill*, “Primates” 1993, no. 34; G. Hausfater, J. Altmann, S. Altmann, *Long-term Consistency of Dominance Relations Among Female Baboons (Papio Cynocephalus)*, “Science” 1982, no. 217), macaques (C.M. Berman, *Maternal Lineages as Tools for Understanding Infant Social Development and Social Structure*, in: *The Cayo Santiago Macaques*, ed. Richard G. Rawlins, Matt J. Kessler, State University of New York Press, Albany 1986; A. Paul, J. Kuester, *Adaptive Significance of Sex Ratio Adjustment in Semifree-ranging Barbary Macaques at Salem*, “Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology” 1990, no. 27; D.G. Smith, *A 15-year Study of the Association Between Dominance Rank and Reproductive Success of Male Rhesus Macaques*, “Primates” 1993, no. 34; K.A. Bauers, J.P. Hearn, *Patterns of Paternity in Relation to Male Social Rank in the Stumptailed Macaque*, “Behaviour” 1994, no. 129; J.R. de Ruiter, J.A.R.A.M. van Hoof, W. Scheffrahn, *Social and Genetic Aspects of Paternity in Wild Long-tailed Macaques*, “Behaviour” 1993, no. 129; and chimpanzees (J. Ely, P. Alford, R.E. Ferrell, *DNA ‘Fingerprinting’ and the Genetic Management of a Captive Chimpanzee Population*, “American Journal of Primatology” 1991, no. 24), to mention only a few of the primate species that have been studied (and see I.S. Bernstein, *Management of Aggression as a Component of Sociality*, in: *The Origins and Nature of Sociality*, ed. Robert W. Sussman, Audrey R. Chapman, Aldine de Gruyter, Hawthorne, NY 2004). While there are some exceptions (e.g. the Bonobos), there is a clear trend among the social primates toward dominance and hierarchy.

Dominance relations yield predictability. Individuals soon learn where they stand with respect to access to valued resources. As a consequence, there is no need constantly to dispute who is to get what, disputes which, at best, entail repeated and possibly substantial investments of energy and, at worst, repeated risks of injury or death. This predictability, in turn, benefits **both** the dominant **and** the subordinate. The former gains the desired resource (and resulting possible enhancement of inclusive fitness) at no greater cost than a possible threat or two; the subordinate, by yielding, escapes a clash that might otherwise reduce or literally end his/her reproductive possibilities.

There is yet another benefit. A society beset with continuing turmoil is not conducive to reproductive success. The more orderly mode of life generated by the type of predictability just described creates more felicitous conditions for passing one's genes along to the next generation. A stable, peaceful society is more conducive to individual reproductive success than one in continuing upheaval as a result of constant fighting over status and resources.

In simple, small primate societies, dominance relations usually generate "linear" hierarchies, with each animal ranked from top (alpha) to bottom (omega). In more complex societies, several animals may band together to form an alliance or coalition so that they wind up on top – even though some of them might otherwise rank much lower purely on the basis of dyadic (one to one, simple dominance) relations.

But, whether a society is characterized by a linear hierarchy or by a more complex coalition structure, in evolutionary terms the net result is essentially the same. Hierarchy furthers social stability – and stability, on balance, is conducive to more successful reproduction among the members of that society. An outgrowth of dominance relations among a social species, hierarchy functions to enhance the likelihood that the individuals who constitute that species will optimize their inclusive fitness. As with other social primates, so, too, with humans<sup>7</sup>.

Given our species' hierarchical proclivities, evolved over literally millions of years, it is not surprising that, throughout our history, democracies have been rare and that, as noted above, they are still a minority among governments<sup>8</sup>. A species

---

<sup>7</sup> The logic of this argument obviously requires that the same predisposition for hierarchical organizations be found operative not only in the political realm but in practically every aspect of our species' social life. The purpose of this section is to persuade – or remind – the reader that such is precisely the case. Donald Brown has collected a list of "human universals", many of which speak to a predisposition to hierarchy among humankind (D. Brown, *Human Universals*, McGraw-Hill, New York 1991): Males engage in coalitional violence; Males dominate the public/political realm; Dominance/submission; Leaders; Economic inequalities; Prestige inequalities; Statuses and roles; Oligarchy.

<sup>8</sup> See the enumerations in A. Somit, S.A. Peterson, *Darwinism, Dominance, and Democracy*, op. cit.; idem, *The Failure of Democratic Nation Building: Ideology Meets Evolution*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York 2005).



so behaviorally inclined is hardly promising genetic material for the nurturance of democracy. Sad to say, the primary reason for the paucity of democracies over time, and the prevalence of authoritarianism, is to be found not in our stars but in our genes

How, then, in light of these proclivities, is democracy ever possible? Many social scientists have sought to identify the conditions that make democracy sometimes viable, finding the answer in some special concatenation of social, economic, historical and political factors, as we shall discuss later.

The neo-Darwinian approach holds that *Homo sapiens* shares the social primate proclivity for hierarchical social organization; but this approach also emphasizes that humankind has evolved some behavioral attributes and capacities that are, in effect, unique in the animal kingdom. There is near-unanimity that *Homo sapiens* alone has evolved the capability required to create, in more than very rudimentary form, that vast complex of language, laws, customs and mores, art forms, material objects, technology, ideas and values subsumed by the term “culture”.

Some of the ideas and values that constitute so large a component of any people’s culture are often attributed to a divine source; other ideas and values, especially those of a more secular character, have unmistakably human origins. Whatever their putative inspiration, these ideas and values, once brought into existence, are capable of profoundly altering the behaviors of those who believe in them. This remarkable trait, manifested only by our own species, is what we refer to as “indoctrinability”. When this occurs, humanity literally becomes the servant of its own creations; in some instances, culture may even triumph, at least temporarily, over nature. True believers often willingly undertake actions and pursue goals that may be strikingly different from those to which our evolutionary history has otherwise predisposed us. Thus, indoctrinability, to some extent, can trump hierarchy and dominance.

## **2. Prerequisites for Democracy and Democratic Nation Building**

In our recent book, *The Failure of Democratic Nation Building: Ideology Meets Evolution*<sup>9</sup>, we argued that (1) humans are social primates with an innate tendency for hierarchical and authoritarian social and political structures, and that (2) democracy consequently requires very special “enabling conditions” before it can become viable. These conditions normally require decades to evolve. As a result, attempts to export democracy to states without these enabling conditions (clearly

---

<sup>9</sup> A. Somit, S.A. Peterson, *The Failure of Democratic Nation Building*, op. cit.

the situation in both Iraq and Afghanistan) are doomed to failure. Among these conditions are the following<sup>10</sup>:

1. Functioning government institutions.
2. Internal peace (e.g. no civil wars).
3. Adequate levels of economic development.
4. Adequate levels of education.
5. Existence of basic liberties.
6. Lack of previous authoritarian regime.
7. Pro-democratic “out-elite”.
8. Pro-democratic civic dispositions.
9. Religious conflict is absent.
10. Ethnic, tribal, and racial conflict is absent.

The basic argument runs as follows: viable democracies require the conjunction of a complex mix of “enabling conditions”. As the relative rarity of democracies, and the overwhelming predominance of authoritarian governments throughout human history testify, that conjunction happens infrequently. These conditions are necessary because we (*Homo sapiens*) are social primates and evolution has endowed the social primates with an innate proclivity to hierarchically structured social and political systems and an innate tendency to dominance and submission behaviors<sup>11</sup>.

Thus, the evolutionary propensities represent ultimate causal factors – but the conditions for democracy are proximate causes. Both levels of analysis are needed to explain the emergence of democracy under certain circumstances.

So, from time to time, and for reasons that differ from situation to situation, “democratic” ideas may gain acceptance among some sizable and/or influential segment of a nation’s population as a result of the human capacity for “indoctrinability”. If this occurs in conjunction with certain of the previously mentioned social, economic, etc., conditions, then and then only does a viable democracy become possible.

<sup>10</sup> See J.B. Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial*, Basic Books, New York 1995; F. Fukuyama, *State-Building*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY 2004; P.W. Galbraith, *The End of Iraq: How American Incompetence Created a War Without End*, Simon & Schuster, New York 2006; G. Casper, *Fragile Democracies*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh 1995; B. Lewis, *I’m Right, You’re Wrong, Go to Hell*, “Atlantic Monthly” May 2003; S.M. Lipset, *Political Man*, Anchor Books, Garden City, NY 1963; E.N. Muller, *Democracy, Economic Development, and Income Inequality*, “American Sociological Review” 1988, no. 53; T. Vanhanen, *Democratization: A Comparative Analysis of 170 Countries*, Routledge, London 2003; F. Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom*, W. W. Norton, New York 2004; A. Somit, S.A. Peterson, *Darwinism, Dominance, and Democracy*, op. cit.; idem, *The Failure of Democratic Nation Building*, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> See A. Somit, S.A. Peterson, *Darwinism, Dominance, and Democracy*, op. cit.; idem, *The Failure of Democratic Nation Building*, op. cit.

To summarize: there is undoubtedly considerable validity to the notion that democracy demands certain “material” preconditions. But this familiar formulation overlooks the single most important requirement of all: for a democracy to be born and to survive also necessitates that nurture, in the sense of a compelling ideological conviction, triumph over nature, i.e. our inherent primate predisposition for hierarchical social, and authoritarian political, systems. It is this second requirement, we suggest, which not only explains democracy’s occasional appearance but which accounts for its infrequency, its frailty and, so often, its brief life span.

Authoritarianism is the “default option” for human politics. A species so genetically inclined is hardly promising democratic material – which is why democracies require special conditions, why even today they are a definite minority among governments, why they are so hard to establish, why they tend to be fragile – and why the resources expended on nation building in Iraq and Afghanistan would be more productively devoted to strengthening democracy at home rather than in trying to establish it elsewhere.

And, to make matters more difficult, to nurture democracies as an outside party (that is, to engage in successful democratic nation building), a different set of conditions must be met<sup>12</sup> to produce the necessities for democratic nation building. This set of conditions includes the following:

1. Willingness by the “outside” power(s) to invest resources, human and economic, in the target country,
2. Willingness to maintain a military and civilian presence over considerable time to secure order and enhance the odds of successful transition,
3. Commitment to reducing postconflict combat-related deaths,
4. Appreciation of the culture of the target country, and avoidance of arrogance, or seeming to denigrate the institutions and values of the people,
5. Work to restore infrastructure and human capital in the target country,
6. Remove from key positions in the target country those closely associated with the previous regime (if the transition involved replacing a regime, as opposed to supporting an already existing regime),
7. An understanding that deeply divided countries, whether on ethnic, religious, or economic lines, reduce the odds of successful intervention,

---

<sup>12</sup> Works by authors such as F. Fukuyama, op. cit.; J. Dobbins, J.G. McGinn, K. Crane, S.G. Jones, R. Lal, A. Rathmell, R. Swanger, A. Timilsna, *America’s Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq*, RAND, Santa Monica 2003; R. Paris, *At War’s End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004; M. Pei, S. Kasper, *Lessons from the Past: The American Record on Nation-building*, Carnegie Endowment for International Piece, briefing paper, 24 May 2003; R.S. Jennings, *The Road Ahead: Lessons in Nation-Building from Japan, Germany, and Afghanistan for Postwar Iraq*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC 2003; A.H. Cordesman, *The War after the War: Strategic Lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D. C. 2004.



8. The interests of outside countries and internal constituencies in the target country must coincide – or must appear to coincide,
9. Rebuild social, political, and economic institutions as the base upon which liberal reforms can be constructed at a later time.

At this time, a large number of volumes have appeared that focus upon Iraq. Books such as Frank Rich's *The Greatest Story ever Sold*, Larry Diamond's *Squandered Victory*, Bob Woodward's *State of Denial*, George Packer's *The Assassin's Gate*, Thomas Ricks' *Fiasco*, Peter Galbraith's *The End of Iraq*, and Ron Suskind's *The One Percent Doctrine* collectively testify, the conditions for successful democratic nation-building are in short supply.

### 3. Checking Our Prediction out Five Years Later

As noted, in the first edition of the book, *The Failure of Democratic Nation Building: Ideology Meets Evolution*<sup>13</sup>, we warned that both Iraq and Afghanistan were very, very poor prospects for “democratic nation building”. Looking at the larger international picture, we also noted that, after a sizeable increase in the number of democratic states between 1983 and 1993, the “surge” abruptly ended during the decade 1993-2003.

In this section, we explore three questions. What has happened in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the United States has invested so heavily in its attempt at nation building? More generally, what has been the relative success of democracy around the world, since 2003? And, finally, what are the implications of these findings for both the United States and for democratic governments generally?

#### 3.1. Iraq and Afghanistan: Whither Went Democratic Nation-Building?

Perhaps the best place to start are the Freedom House 2013 ratings of these two countries, nearly a decade after the previous rating reported in Chapter 6 of our 2005 book. In doing so, however, we should keep two points in mind: first, that Freedom House tends to be quite generous (others would say “optimistic”) in these matters and, second, that “freedom” and “democracy”, however closely related, are not quite the same thing.

<sup>13</sup> A. Somit, S.A. Peterson, *The Failure of Democratic Nation Building*, op. cit.

Table 1. All countries with populations of over 1,000,000 as of 2013.

Country	1973	1983	1993	2003	2013
Afghanistan	PF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Albania	NF	NF	PF	PF	PF
Algeria	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Angola	—	NF	NF	NF	NF
Argentina	PF	PF	F	F	F
Armenia	—	—	PF	PF	PF
Australia	F	F	F	F	F
Austria	F	F	F	F	F
Azerbaijan	—	—	PF	NF	NF
Bahamas	—	F	F	F	F
Bangladesh	PF	PF	F	PF	NF
Belarus	—	—	PF	NF	NF
Belgium	F	F	F	F	F
Benin	NF	NF	F	F	F
Bolivia	PF	F	F	PF	PF
Bosnia-Herzegovina	—	—	NF	PF	PF
Botswana	PF	F	F	F	F
Brazil	PF	PF	F	F	F
Bulgaria	NF	NF	F	F	F
Burkina Faso	PF	NF	PF	PF	PF
Burma	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Cambodia	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Cameroon	PF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Canada	F	F	F	F	F
Central African Republic	NF	NF	PF	NF	NF
Chad	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Chile	F	NF	F	F	F
China	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Colombia	F	F	PF	PF	PF
Congo (Brazzaville)	NF	NF	PF	PF	NF
Congo (Kinshasa)	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Costa Rica	F	F	F	F	F
Cote d'Ivoire	NF	PF	PF	NF	PF
Croatia	—	—	PF	F	F
Cuba	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Czechoslovakia	NF	NF	F	—	—

tab. 1 cont.

Country	1973	1983	1993	2003	2013
Czech Republic	—	—	F	F	F
Denmark	F	F	F	F	F
Dominican Republic	F	F	F	F	F
Ecuador	PF	F	F	PF	PF
Egypt	NF	PF	PF	NF	NF
El Salvador	F	PF	PF	F	F
Eritrea	—	—	—	NF	NF
Estonia	—	—	PF	F	F
Ethiopia	NF	NF	PF	PF	NF
Finland	F	F	F	F	F
France	F	F	F	F	F
Gabon	NF	NF	PF	PF	NF
Gambia	F	PF	F	PF	NF
Georgia	—	—	PF	PF	PF
Germany, E	NF	NF	—	—	—
Germany, W	F	F	—	—	—
Germany	—	—	F	F	F
Ghana	NF	NF	PF	F	F
Greece	NF	F	F	F	F
Guatemala	F	NF	PF	PF	PF
Guinea	NF	NF	PF	F	PF
Guinea-Bissau	—	NF	PF	PF	NF
Haiti	NF	NF	NF	NF	PF
Honduras	PF	F	F	PF	PF
Hungary	NF	NF	F	F	F
India	F	F	PF	F	F
Indonesia	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Iran	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Iraq	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Ireland	F	F	F	F	F
Israel	F	F	F	F	F
Italy	F	F	F	F	F
Jamaica	F	F	F	F	F
Japan	F	F	F	F	F
Jordan	NF	NF	PF	PF	NF

tab. 1 cont.

Country	1973	1983	1993	2003	2013
Kazakhstan	—	—	PF	NF	NF
Kenya	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Korea, N	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Korea, S	NF	PF	F	F	F
Kuwait	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Kyrgyz Rep.	—	—	PF	NF	PF
Laos	PF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Latvia	—	—	PF	F	F
Lebanon	F	PF	PF	NF	PF
Lesotho	NF	PF	PF	F	F
Liberia	NF	NF	NF	NF	PF
Libya	NF	NF	NF	NF	PF
Lithuania	—	—	F	F	F
Macedonia	—	—	PF	PF	PF
Madagascar	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Malawi	NF	NF	NF	PF	PF
Malaysia	F	PF	PF	PF	PF
Mali	NF	NF	F	F	PF
Mauritania	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Mauritius	F	F	F	F	F
Mexico	PF	PF	PF	F	PF
Moldova	—	—	PF	PF	PF
Mongolia	NF	NF	F	F	F
Morocco	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Mozambique	—	NF	PF	PF	PF
Namibia	—	—	F	F	F
Nepal	NF	PF	F	PF	PF
Netherlands	F	F	F	F	F
New Zealand	F	F	F	F	F
Nicaragua	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Niger	NF	NF	PF	PF	PF
Nigeria	PF	F	PF	PF	PF
Norway	F	F	F	F	F
Oman	NF	NF	PF	NF	NF
Pakistan	PF	NF	PF	NF	PF

tab. 1 cont.

Country	1973	1983	1993	2003	2013
Panama	NF	PF	PF	F	F
Papua New Guinea	–	F	F	PF	PF
Paraguay	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Peru	NF	F	PF	F	F
Philippines	PF	PF	PF	F	PF
Poland	NF	NF	F	F	F
Portugal	NF	F	F	F	F
Romania	NF	NF	PF	F	F
Russia	–	–	PF	PF	NF
Rwanda	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Saudi Arabia	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Senegal	NF	PF	PF	F	F
Serbia	–	–	–	–	F
Serbia-Montenegro	–	–	–	F	–
Sierra Leone	PF	PF	NF	PF	PF
Singapore	PF	PF	PF		PF
Slovakia	–	–	–		F
Slovenia	–	–	F		F
Somalia	NF	NF	NF		NF
South Africa	PF	PF	PF		F
Spain	NF	F	F		F
Sri Lanka	F	F	PF		PF
Sudan	NF	PF	NF		NF
Swaziland	PF	PF	PF		NF
Sweden	F	F	F		F
Switzerland	F	F	F		F
Syria	NF	NF	NF		NF
Taiwan	NF	PF	PF		F
Tajikistan	–	–	NF		NF
Tanzania	NF	NF	PF		PF
Thailand	NF	PF	PF		PF
Togo	NF	NF	NF		PF
Tunisia	NF	PF	PF		PF
Turkey	PF	PF	PF		PF
Turkmenistan	–	–	NF		NF



tab. 1 cont.

Country	1973	1983	1993	2003	2013
Uganda	NF	PF	NF		PF
Ukraine	–	–	PF		PF
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	NF	NF	–		–
United Arab Emirates	NF	PF	PF		NF
United Kingdom	F	F	F		F
United States	F	F	F		F
Uruguay	PF	PF	F		F
Uzbekistan	–	–	NF		NF
Venezuela	F	F	PF		PF
Vietnam, N	NF	–	–		–
Vietnam, S	PF	–	–		–
Vietnam	–	NF	NF		NF
Yemen, N	PF	NF	–		–
Yemen, S	NF	NF	–		–
Yemen	–	–	PF		NF
Yugoslavia	NF	NF	PF		–
Zambia	PF	PF	F		PF
Zimbabwe	NF	PF	PF		NF

Source: A. Puddington, *Freedom in the World 2014*, [freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FIW2014%20Booklet.pdf](http://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FIW2014%20Booklet.pdf) [15.03.2014].

*Afghanistan.* Given the staggering problems facing Afghanistan (a resurgent Taliban, and a weak [and corrupt] central government), it is not surprising that the rating remains “Not Free” in 2013 – continuing a poor record of non-democracy. Indeed, the downward arrow associated with this country’s 2013 score<sup>14</sup> suggests that the situation is worsening in terms of freedom.

Freedom House has earlier noted that the political framework has not operated well; there is a lack of transparency; cronyism, nepotism, and corruption are widespread. Although Kabul and the surrounding region have higher levels of freedom, the outlying regions are often quite hostile to democratic rights; the free exercise of religion is denied in many areas; freedom of the press is under attack; women’s rights, to complete the listing, remain yet to be achieved in vast parts of the land.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem.

*Iraq.* Table 1 reveals a continuing “Not Free” rating – after hundreds of billions of dollars being spent and thousands of American lives lost. We concede that the Iraqis may be freer than they were under Saddam Hussein. But, the bottom line from Freedom House remains the same – “Not Free”.

Freedom House also calls attention to continuing sectarian and insurgent violence, pervasive corruption, and a lack of free expression. As to the latter, Freedom House’s narrative on Iraq in 2008 says<sup>15</sup>: “[Freedom of expression] has been seriously impeded by sectarian tensions and fear of violent reprisals” with journalists being subjected to violent retribution. There has also been government censorship of media (e.g. in 2006, the Iraqi legislature criminalized the ridiculing of public officials).

Many of the factors noted in Section II will remain barriers to any, let alone swift, democratization in Iraq. Puddington observes that Iraq has experienced a modest increase in freedom, noting that: “Iraq’s political rights rating improved from 6 to 5 due to free and competitive regional elections in early 2009 and an increase in Iraqi government’s autonomy as U.S. troops began their phased withdrawal”<sup>16</sup>. However, the 2009 ratings for Iraq are 5 (for political rights) and 6 (for civil liberties), a pretty dismal grade. The ratings are the same for 2013 – indicating no discernible movement toward democracy. For Freedom House, if the two scores total eleven or higher, the country is Not Free. And, of course, the increasing sectarian conflict in 2014 suggests that a stable democracy is not likely to occur in the near-term future.

One of the unhappy consequences of the American effort to create democracies in both countries, as we observed in the original version of the book, was to reduce America’s stature in the eyes of many countries and people throughout the world. Evidence from 2006 and later shows this to remain the case. Among Eastern European countries (such as Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, and others), the favorable image of the United States dipped between 2002 and 2007<sup>17</sup>. And the same is true of “Old Europe”. A Pew Research Center study showed favorable views of the United States declining dramatically between 2000 and 2008 – in Britain, Spain, France and Germany<sup>18</sup>, with similar findings reported from the Muslim world<sup>19</sup>.

In short, not only has the United States failed at democratic nation-building in Iraq and Afghanistan but, in the process, has seriously lessened its stature as a democratic model.

<sup>15</sup> [www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&country=7414&year=2008](http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&country=7414&year=2008) [15.03.2014].

<sup>16</sup> [www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=70&release=1169](http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=70&release=1169) [15.03.2014].

<sup>17</sup> R. Texeira, *Public Opinion Snapshot: The United States Needs a New Image*, [www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/03/new\\_images.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/03/new_images.html) [15.03.2014].

<sup>18</sup> Global Public Opinion, *Global Public Opinion in the Bush Years*, Pew Research Center, Washington, D. C. 2008.

<sup>19</sup> C. Conetta, *Losing Hearts and Minds: World Public Opinion and Post-9/11 US Security Policy*, [www.comw.org/pda/0609bm37.html](http://www.comw.org/pda/0609bm37.html) [15.03.2014].

### 3.2. Change in Freedom House Ratings between from 1973-2013

Table 1 updates Table 6.4 in chapter 6 of our book<sup>20</sup>, which shows the course of freedom in states with over 1,000,000 people. Another table in that chapter (6.5) depicts trends toward or away from democracy, looking at 10-year time slices. Table 2 updates that to 2013 (and see Somit and Peterson, 2010).

Table 2. Movement in Democracy versus Nondemocracy

Type of Movement	1973-1983	1983-1993	1993-2003	2003-2013	Total Change over Time
Less free to more free	8	26	21	7	
More free to less free	12	11	21	6	
Net change	-4 (Less free)	+11 (More free)	0 (No change)	+1 (More free)	+8 (+11-4+1)

The democratic surge from 1983-1993 (a change in the number of democratic nations of 15) clearly came to an end in the two decades from 1993 to 2013. 28 countries became more free and 27 became less free, a net gain of just 1. Overall, the world may be a bit more democratic than in 1973 (the starting point for our data), but surely not very much so. Indeed, Puddington, writing for Freedom House, states that in 2009 (Page 1): “Freedom House found a continued erosion of freedom worldwide [...] For the fourth consecutive year, declines have trumped gains. This represents the largest continuous period of deterioration in the nearly 40-year history of *Freedom in the World* [...]”.

This is painfully evident if we look at what happened after the breakup of the former U.S.S.R. Table 3 summarizes trends in freedom, using Freedom House figures, in the states emerging from the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In 1990-1991, the old Soviet Union was rated “Part Free”, as Gorbachev’s reforms began to take effect. That provides the baseline for considering matters in 2001-2002 – and now in the 2013 rankings. Please note that the first score in each pair of scores is an evaluation of political rights and the second number an assessment of the extent to which civil liberties exist. One is most free and seven is least free. In 2001-2002, the average scores (mean) among the states of the old U.S.S.R. were 5,0 and 4,7 (Part Free). If one excluded the three democratic Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), that average score fell to 5,2 and 5,2 (still Part Free). What about 2013? Here we find that including the Baltic states leads to a score

<sup>20</sup> A. Somit, S.A. Peterson, *The Failure of Democratic Nation Building*, op. cit.

of 5,0 and 4,7 – marginally less free than in 2001-2002. Without the Baltic states included, the corresponding scores are 6,0 and 5,5 – Not Free. In short, no movement toward democracy. If anything, there is a modest retrograde movement away from freedom and democracy.

Table 3. Status of the Countries of the Former USSR

Country	1990-1991	2001-2002	2013
U.S.S.R.	5,4 Part Free		
Armenia		4,4 Part Free	5,4 Part Free
Azerbaijan		6,5 Not Free	6,6 Not Free
Belarus		6,6 Not Free	7,6 Not Free
Estonia		1,2 Free	1,1 Free
Georgia		4,4 Part Free	3,3 Part Free
Kazakhstan		6,5 Not Free	6,5 Not Free
Kyrgyzstan		6,5 Not Free	5,5 Part Free
Latvia		1,2 Free	2,2 Free
Lithuania		1,1 Free	1,1 Free
Moldova		2,4 Part Free	3,3 Part Free
Russia		5,5 Part Free	6,5 Not Free
Tajikistan		6,6 Not Free	6,6 Not Free
Turkmenistan		7,7 Not Free	7,7 Not Free
Ukraine		4,4 Part Free	4,3 Not Free
Uzbekistan		7,6 Not Free	7,7 Not Free

Summary Score	Including Baltic States	Excluding Baltic States
2001-2002	4.4, 4.4 Part Free	5.2, 5.2 Part free
2013	5.0, 4.7 Part Free	6, 5.5 Not Free

#### 4. Implications for Public Policy and Political Philosophy

This essay has argued that human nature, in significant measure a product of our evolutionary history, makes it difficult for democracy to emerge. We are social primates, with a strong proclivity for living in hierarchical social and political societies. But – given a happy if unusual combination of “requisite enabling conditions” – democracy can come into existence and maintain itself. Absent these conditions, however, it is unlikely to emerge – or to survive.

We contended, in 2005, that it was quite unrealistic to expect to change either Iraq or Afghanistan into democracies. Both lack many of the requisite preconditions (although Iraq is somewhat better off in this respect). Even Freedom House, traditionally generous in its ratings, agrees that democracy has not yet evidenced itself in either country.

More generally, there has been no forward movement, to put it charitably, in the number of democracies throughout the world over the past twenty years. For depressing evidence, we have the results of a “natural” experiment – the dissolution of the “old” U.S.S.R. The Baltic states aside, democracy has certainly not blossomed in the dozen-plus constituent countries of the former empire. If some of them have become marginally more democratic, others have become less so.

In the final analysis, we think that the case we made in 2005 against even well-intentioned efforts at democratic nation-building was valid then – and now. Social primates are genetically predisposed toward hierarchical political and social structures. We are social primates, with the behavioral inclinations that characterize social primates. As history testifies, absent the rare combination of enabling conditions, authoritarian polities have been, and unfortunately continue to be, our species’ “default” mode of governance.

## Literature

- Alford J.R., Funk C.L., Hibbing J.R., *Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted?*, “American Political Science Review” 2005, no. 99.
- Alford J.R., Hibbing J.R., *The Origins of Politics: An Evolutionary Theory of Political Behavior*, “Perspectives on Politics” 2005, no. 2.
- Anderson L., Stansfield G., *The Future of Iraq: Dictatorship, Democracy, Or Division*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York 2004.
- Bauers K.A., Hearn J.P., *Patterns of Paternity in Relation to Male Social Rank in the Stumptailed Macaque*, “Behaviour” 1994, no. 129.
- Berman C.M., *Maternal Lineages as Tools for Understanding Infant Social Development and Social Structure*, in: *The Cayo Santiago Macaques*, ed. Richard G. Rawlins, Matt J. Kessler, State University of New York Press, Albany 1986.
- Bernstein I.S., *Management of Aggression as a Component of Sociality*, in: *The Origins and Nature of Sociality*, ed. R.W. Sussman, A.R. Chapman, A. de Gruyter, Hawthorne, NY 2004.
- Brown D., *Human Universals*, McGraw-Hill, New York 1991.
- Casper G., *Fragile Democracies*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh 1995.
- Cesarini D., Johannesson M., Oskarsson S., *Pre-birth Factors, Post-birth Factors, and Voting Evidence from Swedish Adoption Data*, “American Political Science Review” 2014, no. 108.
- Conetta C., *Losing Hearts and Minds: World Public Opinion and Post-9/11 US Security Policy*, [www.comw.org/pda/0609bm37.html](http://www.comw.org/pda/0609bm37.html) [15.03.2014].
- Cordesman A.H., *The War after the War: Strategic Lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D. C. 2004.
- Corning P., *The Cooperative Gene: Evolution, Human Nature, and Politics*, in: *Biopolitics: The Life Sciences and Public Policy*, ed. Albert Somit, Steven A. Peterson, Emerald Group Publishing, Bingley, UK 2012.



- de Ruiter, J. R., van Hooff J. A.R.A.M., Scheffrahn W., *Social and Genetic Aspects of Paternity in Wild Long-tailed Macaques*, "Behaviour" 1993, no. 129.
- De Waal F.B.M., *Bonobo: The Forgotten Ape*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1998.
- Diamond L., *Squandered Victory*, New York Times Books, New York 2005.
- Dixon A.F., Bossi T., Wicklings E.J., *Male Dominance and Genetically Determined Reproductive Success in the Mandrill*, "Primates" 1993, no. 34.
- Dobbins J., McGinn J.G., Crane K., Jones S.G., Lal R., Rathmell A., Swanger R., Timilsna A., *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq*, RAND, Santa Monica 2003.
- Dodge T., *Inventing Iraq*, Columbia University Press, New York 2003.
- Elshtain J.B., *Democracy on Trial*, Basic Books, New York 1995.
- Ely J., Alford P., Ferrell R.E., *DNA 'Fingerprinting' and the Genetic Management of a Captive Chimpanzee Population*, "American Journal of Primatology" 1991, no. 24.
- Fukuyama F., *State-Building*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY 2004.
- Galbraith P.W., *The End of Iraq: How American Incompetence Created a War Without End*, Simon & Schuster, New York 2006.
- Gall C., Sanger D.E., *Civilian Deaths Undermine Allies' War on Taliban*, 13 May 2007, [www.nytimes.com/2007/05/13/world/asia/13AFGHAN.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/13/world/asia/13AFGHAN.html) [15.03.2014].
- Gall C., Shah T., *Afghan Villagers Describe Chaos of U.S. Strikes*, 15 May 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/05/15/world/asia/15farah.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/15/world/asia/15farah.html) [15.03.2014].
- Global Public Opinion, *Global Public Opinion in the Bush Years*, Pew Research Center, Washington, D. C. 2008.
- Hatemi P.K., Gillespie N.A., Eaves L.J., Maher B.S., Webb B.T., Heath A.C., Medland S.E., Smyth D.C., Beeby H.N., Gordon S.D., Montgomery G.M., Zhu G., Byrne E.M., Martin N.G., *A Genome-wide Analysis of Liberal and Conservative Political Attitudes*, "Journal of Politics" 2011, no. 73.
- Hatemi P.K., Hibbing J.R., Medland S.E., Keller M.C., Alford J.R., Smith K.B., Martin N.G., Eaves L.J., *Not by Twins Alone: Using the Extended Family Design to Investigate Genetic Influence on Political Beliefs*, "American Journal of Political Science" 2010, vol. 54.
- Hausfater G., Altmann J., Altmann S., *Long-term Consistency of Dominance Relations Among Female Baboons (Papio Cynocephalus)*, "Science" 1982, no. 217.
- Hibbing J.R., Alford J.R., *Accepting Authoritative Decisions: Humans as Wary Cooperators*, "American Journal of Political Science" 2004, no. 48.
- Hibbing J.R., Smith K., Alford J.R., *Predisposed: Liberals, Conservatives, and the Biology of Political Differences*, Routledge, New York 2013.
- Jennings R.S., *The Road Ahead: Lessons in Nation-Building from Japan, Germany, and Afghanistan for Postwar Iraq*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC 2003.
- Lewis B., *I'm Right, You're Wrong, Go to Hell*, "Atlantic Monthly" May 2003.
- Lipset S.M., *Political Man*, Anchor Books, Garden City, NY 1963.
- McDermott R., *The Feeling of Rationality: The Meaning of Neuroscientific Advances for Political Science*, "Perspectives on Politics" 2005, no. 2.
- Muller E.N., *Democracy, Economic Development, and Income Inequality*, "American Sociological Review" 1988, no. 53.
- Muller E.N., Seligson M.A., *Civic Culture and Democracy*, "American Political Science Review" 1994, no. 88.
- Orbell J., Morikawa T., Hartwig J., Hanley J., Allen N., *'Machiavellian' Intelligence as a Basis for the Evolution of Cooperative Dispositions*, "American Political Science Review" 2004, no. 98.
- Paris R., *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004.
- Paul A., Kuester J., *Adaptive Significance of Sex Ratio Adjustment in Semifree-ranging Barbary Macaques at Salem*, "Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology" 1990, no. 27.

- Pei M., Kasper S., *Lessons from the Past: The American Record on Nation-building*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, briefing paper, 24 May 2003.
- Puddington A., *Freedom in the World 2014*, [freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FIW2014%20Booklet.pdf](http://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FIW2014%20Booklet.pdf).
- Ricks T.E., *Fiasco*, The Penguin Press, New York 2006.
- Smith D.G., *A 15-year Study of the Association Between Dominance Rank and Reproductive Success of Male Rhesus Macaques*, "Primates" 1993, no. 34.
- Somit A., Peterson S.A., *Darwinism, Dominance, and Democracy*, Praeger, Greenwich, CT 1997.
- Somit A., Peterson S.A., *The Failure of Democratic Nation Building: Ideology Meets Evolution*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York 2005.
- Somit A., Peterson S.A., *The Failure of Democratic Nation Building: Ideology Meets Evolution*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York 2010 (revised edition).
- Suskind R., *The One Percent Doctrine*, Simon & Schuster, New York 2006.
- Texeira R., *Public Opinion Snapshot: The United States Needs a New Image*, [www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/03/new\\_images.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/03/new_images.html) [15.03.2014].
- The Sociobiology of Ethnocentrism*, ed. V. Reynolds, V. Falger, I. Vine, University of Georgia Press, Athens, GA 1987.
- Thierry B., *Covariation of Conflict Management Patterns Across Macaque Species*, in: *Natural Conflict Resolution*, ed. F. Aureli, Frans B.M. de Waal, University of California Press, Berkeley 2000.
- Vanhanen T., *Democratization: A Comparative Analysis of 170 Countries*, Routledge, London 2003.
- Zakaria F., *The Future of Freedom*, W. W. Norton, New York 2004.

## Ewolucja, hierarchia i demokracja: Irak i Afganistan

**Streszczenie.** Jeśli spojrzeć na demokracje z historycznego punktu widzenia, to widać, że są one zjawiskiem rzadkim. Nawet obecnie, w tzw. wieku demokracji, rządy demokratyczne stanowią zdecydowaną mniejszość. Dlaczego tak się dzieje? Przekonywującą odpowiedź na to pytanie daje teoria neodarwinistyczna. W trakcie ewolucji rodzaj ludzki został wyposażony w zauważalną cechę, która pcha nas w kierunku tworzenia hierarchicznych struktur politycznych i społecznych, co jest niewątpliwie przeszkodą na drodze do demokracji. Jednak w sprzyjających okolicznościach politycznych, społecznych i gospodarczych możliwe jest stworzenie prawdziwej demokracji. Autorzy wyjaśniają, dlaczego człowiek ma tendencję do tworzenia struktur hierarchicznych, opisują warunki kształtujące owe sprzyjające okoliczności i w końcu pokazują, jak brak lub niemal brak takich warunków skazuje na niepowodzenie każdą próbę tworzenia społeczeństwa demokratycznego w Iraku i Afganistanie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** demokracja, neodarwinizm, hierarchia, dominacja, ewolucja, Irak, Afganistan, Freedom House