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What If Democracy “Fails”?

by Scott McPherson

Since the “justification” for war in Iraq noticeably shifted from ridding Saddam Hussein’s regime of its alleged cache of weapons of mass destruction, to liberating the Iraqis from an evil dictator and bringing democracy to a subjugated country, a hypothetical question arises: What if democracy “fails”?

For months U.S. government leaders spoke of Iraq as a rogue nation tyrannically ruled by a madman who most likely possessed nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons (or at least was seeking to obtain them), which posed so great a threat to the United States that preemptive war was justified.

But what if the people of Iraq, given the franchise, elect Saddam Hussein president or, if he’s not around, one of his many look-alikes, or someone even worse? Indeed, what if they decide to elect someone who doesn’t like the U.S. government to take over the reins of power in Iraq and lead their newly freed nation?

What if the new leader of Iraq, spurred on by the new wave of anti-American sentiment spreading across the Muslim world, one day decides that his democratically chosen government wishes to arm itself with a few dozen ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear, biological, or chemical warheads, to prevent his suffering the same fate as ol’ Saddam?

That would certainly pose problems for the foreign-policy hawks who for the foreseeable future will dominate the American political landscape. No doubt they’ll have some quick thinking to do in rallying the people around another foreign war, this time to save the world from a madman elected — ironically — at the barrel of a U.S. government gun.

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