

**Auszug aus dem Vortrag
von**

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**The Challenge of Building Democracy
in Previously Tyrannical or Traditional Societies like
Afghanistan and Iraq**

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Let me start by suggesting that, although the Bush administration has many things wrong in its approach to terrorism, it has one thing right: It does understand that in the end, terrorism can only be overcome and vanquished by a world that is more fair, just and democratic than the one we are living in. And that democracy is not an answer to terrorists who have agendas that go beyond politics. It can be a response to those millions and millions of people who either support terrorism or look the other way when terrorists do their business.

(...)

What I would like to do today, I think, is more useful than simply attacking the president and attacking America - for which there are many good reasons - and which is a task that has been undertaken by many friends of America in Europe. I don't think I need to add to the critique of the president, but I would like to talk with you this evening about the challenge of democratisation in Islamic societies, in non-western societies, and in parts of the world that have not had the western experience.

We need to start with the reality of a strong prejudice, which is held not just in America by people like Samuel Huntington, but which is also held by many Europeans, (...) who believe that Islamic societies are incapable of democracy by nature.

(...)

Let me address this by saying that somebody who lived in 16th century Europe surely would have concluded that Christianity was incompatible with democracy, and so it was.

(...)

Those who are sceptical that societies that have not known democracy can become democratic have only to regard our own history. Every living democracy today came from a society that in some point historically was undemocratic. Democracy has always looked from the point of view of people living under tyranny at best "unwahrscheinlich", and at worst "unmöglich" - impossible. So to some degree the very idea of democracy is a politics of hope set up against the history of realism. In every case we have to begin by excluding the proposition that there is anything inherent in religion that makes democracy impossible. But that still leaves the thesis that Islam is a special religion and has special problems with democracy that other religions don't have. Again, the empirical and historical evidence is that many religions have been through periods of fundamentalism that have interfered with democratic politics. Today in India, the Hindu Nationalist Party represents a form of nationalist fundamentalism, a Hindu fundamentalism that to some degree is compromising Indian democracy. In the United States, Protestant fundamentalism, which includes many millions of Americans, remains in tension with our own democracy. There are two million American families who do not send their children to state schools, because they fear the public, civic and commercial culture that people encounter, when their children go to those schools. So those tensions do remain. But again, I see nothing peculiar about Islam that makes it inhospitable to democracy. If we look at the history of Islam in the 18th and 19th centuries and compare it with the history of Christianity there is, in fact reason to think Islam is a more encompassing religion, more tolerant of other religions than Christianity. If you ask yourself, would you rather be a Jew between 1700 and 1945 in Europe or say in Syria or Iraq, I think many Jews would say, "I'll take my chances in the Middle East, thank you very much".

There is empirical evidence that there are already a number of Islamic Societies - some as old as Turkey and others as new as Bangladesh - that are Islamic and that are democratic. I particularly recommend to you the example of Bangladesh, if you are sceptical about Islam and democracy. Because Bangladesh is a deeply Moslem society that not only has a democratic government but also has one of the most robust civil societies of almost any country in Asia - with local civil organisations and associations like the GRAMEEN Bank which stands for the idea of micro credits that the UN now uses. So there are also empirical examples that suggest that there is nothing in Islam deeply incompatible with democracy.

(...)

I want to suggest now some of the key issues that face anybody interested in seeing non-western societies become democratic.

Let me start with the simple proposition that we abolish the term democracy when we talk about the rest of the world and start using the plural form – democracies, which suggests that there are many different forms of democracy and many roads to democracy and that democracy cannot mean Americanisation or Europeanisation. We do not create democracy in Iraq or Afghanistan or in Moscow or Budapest by faxing the *Bill of Rights* to those countries and by sending the multi-party system by parcel post - putting the American constitution in a container ship and then offloading it in Syria. Democracy cannot be exported, it has to be created from the inside out. And that is the first and most important lesson of democracy. People have to want it, find it and create it. Of course they can be influenced by other models. But the idea that an invader - even an invader who comes in the name of liberation - can give democracy to another people, particularly at the point of a gun - is contrary to everything we know about the history of democracy. Guns have been used, revolutions have been used in creating democracy, but they are guns used by a people seizing power. There are revolutions against an occupying power, not by an occupying power. The British did not create American democracy or did give Americans their freedom. Americans took it in a bloody and prolonged revolutionary war which ended not even in 1787 but only in 1812, when the British were finally pushed out of the United States as an occupying force.

(...)

Again, why can't that be a lesson for those who are thinking about democracy in Baghdad or Teheran or Kabul or Moscow. Why must we imagine that democracy in each of those places will look exactly the same, involve the same institutions? The American problem in Baghdad is that the only thing they recognise as democracy is what they see when they look in a mirror. It has to look like America and feel like America. And if it doesn't, it's not democracy. The most interesting democratic institution in Afghanistan is probably the Loya Jirga - a traditional, national council of tribes that brings together the provincial tribes, who have been at war with one another for centuries, in order to try to establish some form of rough national consensus and prevent tribalism from becoming tribal war. Rather than trying to establish an American-style multi-party system in Kabul, the elevation of the Loya Jirga to the status of a national parliament might be a much more effective way to help the Afghans find their own form of democracy. Many roads to democracy, many forms of democracies - democracies, not democracy.

The next major challenge that particularly Americans face and President Bush faces when thinking about democracy is that we have come to think that political democracy and economic markets are one and the same thing. That democratisation and marketisation are identical. That if you want to democratise politics then you have to privatise the economy. That is a formula that, one might say, to some extent has worked in the United States. But we know from three centuries of political economy that the relationship between politics and economy, "Politik und Wirtschaft", is like the relationship between two independent variables, two different sets of forces. We have seen examples of free markets associated with democratic governments, as in England and the United States, and we have seen free markets associated with totalitarian and tyrannical governments in Chile, and of course in China today. China today is the last remaining great totalitarian political power, and it is also the fastest growing capitalist economy on earth. How is that possible? Because there is no necessary relationship between the economy and politics. But the American assumption is that, if you want to create a democratic society then democratise and marketise the economy first.

(...)

That has taken a particularly dangerous form in what is happening in Baghdad today. I am not sure, how closely Europeans followed this, but one of the first things Paul Bremer did

when he became Pro-Consul in Baghdad, was to order the privatisation of the energy industry and the media and other sectors of heavy industry in Iraq - on the premise that Iraq could not develop democratic politics until it had a privatised economy.

Now let me put it very simply. We can argue about whether democracy and capitalism go together or not. We can argue whether a public or a private economy is a better idea. But one of the fundamental sovereign decisions a democratic people have a right to make is whether they have a public or a private economy. When the United States took that decision for the Iraqi people, they took away from them the most fundamental and important decision the Iraqi government could make. And when some time next year or the year after there is an Iraqi government, that government will have as a fait accompli a privatised energy industry and privatised media, and it will have simply to live with it, because the decision has already been taken. To confuse making that decision with democracy goes to the heart of the problem that the Bush administration has had in Baghdad.

In fact that relates directly to a third problem of democratisation. That has to do with the belief that democracy is something similar to what parents do for their children over a number of years. You give a little freedom, you watch them use it. If they misuse it, you take it away, you punish them, then you give a little more, you take it back. Freedom means empowerment, if it means anything. You cannot pretend to democratise and at the same time to refuse to empower... The United States has been terribly reluctant to move towards empowerment and, by the way, so has Europe.

(...)

The reason why empowerment is crucial is because democracy has to come from the bottom up and not from the top down, from the inside and not from the outside. There is an odd thing here, because the United States, on the one hand, is reluctant to give the power to the Iraqis, but on the other hand, is in a big hurry to see democracy succeed. The crucial condition for the development of democracy is patience. If you look at the history of the United States, we had almost 100 years before 1776 to experience an experiment with local freedom, with municipal liberty inside the context of British Colonialism. In 1776, declaration of independence, in 1787, a new constitution. But we then took another 70 or 80 years to really make the constitution work. We Americans forget that wonderful period in the 1830ies, when President Jackson created a robust local democracy; that's when Alexis Tocqueville came to America, and wrote a book called *Democracy in America*, which celebrated the American discovery of a new form of democracy. We forget that this was a period in which the new republic coexisted with a system of plantation slavery - long after slavery had been abolished in much of Europe. The American system didn't rid itself of slavery until 1865. Women did not get the vote for another 50 or 60 years. You might say that it took America about 150 years to begin to get that right. Many would say - I would say - we still haven't got it altogether right. But we are not doing so badly after more than 200 years.

But in Iraq the pessimists think it'll take two years and the optimists say no, six months. They should solve all their problems and make it work. There is no sense of democracy as a learning process. And yet democracy - if it is anything - is the right of people to make their own mistakes. Lawrence of Arabia wrote a long time ago something we should be able to remember and think about. He said, talking about the Arabs: "Better to let them do it imperfectly than to do it perfectly yourself, for it is their country, their way, and your time is short."

(...)

The other thing we learn from our own history - the history of western Europe, the history of the United States - is that you do not create a democracy top down by creating a democratic constitution, democratic political institutions and parties, a free press, an independent judiciary. If it were that easy the whole world would be democratic. On the contrary, democracy has to be created from the bottom up. And again, the American founders, if Bush

bothered to read them, tell the lesson of a democracy that depends on the quality of its civil society, its citizens and its educational institutions. James Madison, who helped write the *Bill of Rights*, also said: "The *Bill of Rights* is a worthless piece of paper. It has no meaning, unless there are citizens capable of living up to the responsibilities of making rights work."

There is a wonderful contrast between the work of a colleague of mine - George Soros - who I worked with, and the American government. The American government in Eastern Europe thought, let's privatise the economy and we will have democracy. George Soros said, we first have to build and rebuild civil society in Eastern Europe. And his *Open Society Institute*, OSI, has now given over a billion dollars to civil society institutions in Eastern Europe, including the Central European University. Because Soros understood that a free Hungary and a free Poland and a free Czech Republic were unlikely to exist for long without an engaged, free, educated citizenry. So if you are building not top down but bottom up, you think first not about the quality of political institutions but about the quality of citizens. Not about the quality of leaders, but about the quality of citizens. The other will follow, and it does not matter which right you have, if you have a competent citizenry. That is precisely the challenge of citizenry and what that entails.

Of all the institutions that are crucial to the building of the democratic society none are more important than schools. The tyrants and the terrorists understand the power of schooling. It is sad that we democrats sometimes fail to understand the importance of schooling. The success of Wahabi fundamentalism - the most radical and fundamentalist sect of Islam - has much to do with the spread of Madrassas - of Wahabi religious schools.

President Musharraf of Pakistan recently complained to the Americans. He said: "You give me all the dollars for weapons and for soldiers that I need - more than I need - but we have nothing for schools. There is no state school system in Pakistan worthy of the name. But there are in Pakistan - the ally of the West - over 30.000 Wahabi Madrassas teaching young Moslems to read and write and also how to hate. How to hate Christianity, how to hate Jews, how to hate the West.

The terrorists and fundamentalists understand the power of education, we don't.

When the American forces entered Baghdad, I would have said they should put a humvee in front of every school and library and museum in Baghdad, because here lies the future of Iraq and of Iraqi democracy. Instead they put a tank and a humvee in front of the Energy Ministry, the Oil Ministry, the Foreign Ministry, which signalled to Iraqis and the world American priorities and made it difficult for serious Iraqis to believe that America really cared about democracy.

(...)

Those who care about democracy have to understand that education is, where citizenship begins. "We are born free", says Rousseau, says Jefferson, says the *American Declaration of Independence*. But I would add, we are not born citizens. We are born free, but we have to become citizens, and only as citizens will we become capable of preserving the natural right to freedom with which we are born. And the natural right to be free has no meaning in the absence of educated citizens. Democracy is not government by the people for the people and of the people. It is government by citizens for citizens and of citizens and there is a fundamental difference between people and citizens. It's the distance between private and public, the distance between expressing your own interests and conceiving and imagining the interests of others. It is the distance between a society organised around a conflict, and a society organised around liberation and consensus. It is only citizens who have those competences.

Jean Jacques Rousseau says so in *The Social Contract* and also in his little book on the

government of Poland - in fact the first book written about how to bring democracy to countries that are not democratic in western Europe was Rousseau's book on Poland... "If you want to create freedom in a free society, then create citizens. With citizens you will solve the riddle of patriotism and competence and democracy. Without it you will have slaves from the rulers of the state on downwards." Rousseau understood the formula. It starts with citizenship, it starts with education. That is why the great books in the western tradition of political theory have not been books on politics but books on education. Plato's *Republic* is a book about education. Rousseau's *Social Contract* and his *Emile* are books about education.

If you visit America, please go down to Monticello, South of Washington, and find Jefferson's estate, where he lived at the end of his life. There you will see his grave. Jefferson - you may know - was two times president of the United States. He was the founder of the Democratic Party, he purchased Louisiana and doubled the size of the United States. He was perhaps the greatest president America had. He was also - as you know - a minister of France, before independence. He wrote his own epitaph for his gravestone, you can read it there today. It says nothing about the presidency of the United States, it says nothing about the Louisiana purchase. It says three things: "Here lies the author of the *Declaration of Independence*, here lies the man who wrote the *Virginia Declaration of Religious Freedom* - that was the prelude of the *Bill of Rights* - and here lies the father of the University of Virginia." Jefferson spent the last 15 years of his life designing, building, developing a curriculum for the University of Virginia. Monticello is on a hill above the University of Virginia. Jefferson used to look with his telescope at the students and faculty going about their business, to be sure that people were getting educated. Jefferson linked the logic of rights in the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Bill of Rights* to education for all citizens. Because he understood that rights without citizens were impossible and citizens were made through educational institutions.

That is also why it takes time. You don't educate somebody overnight. You know that here, emerging from World War II, it took generations to acquire the civic capacities, the sense of civic responsibility. And we know even now in Austria, Switzerland, France and in the United States that there are those who are impatient with the responsibilities of citizenship, who look for leaders to lead them out of their problems. In America, every four years, we look for new a man on the white horse to replace the man on the white horse we elected four years ago, who turns out to be one more fool. The recall election in California of a great Austrian citizen - and I welcome you to take him back if you like him - was actually a sad comment on the citizens of California questioning not Gray Davis but their own judgement eight months earlier when they voted for Gray Davis. Let's make Gray Davis our governor, he will save us, they said eight months ago. Whoops, no, let's recall him, let's make Arnold Schwarzenegger governor. Eight months later ... whoops, no. Who is next?

Democracy cannot depend on men on white horses, on leaders. It has to depend on the quality of citizens. And when you have citizens capable of self-government you will have decent leaders and if, occasionally, a mistake is made it won't matter so much.

(...)

In the 19th century, a great American populist leader said to a room full of people who were angry, who were resentful, who hated the governor of the United States and were saying, please, lead us out of the darkness - he said to them: "I cannot lead you out of the darkness, and if I could I would not lead you out of the darkness. Because if I could lead you out of the darkness, I could lead you back in again."

Democracy is about self-government. It is not different in Baghdad and in Kabul from what it is here: It starts with education, it starts with citizenship, it takes time, it requires that people are allowed to make mistakes. It means, they must be empowered before they are sufficiently competent to use their power wisely, but they will learn wisdom through the misuse of their power. That is what democracy means. And only when America or the West

are willing to treat democracy in that way, only when they read their own history well, they will become capable of supporting and nurturing democracy in Baghdad and Kabul. As always, to teach history to others we first have to learn our own.

Thank you very much.

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort.