

The fracturing of the Western alliance over Iraq and the huge antiwar demonstrations around the world this weekend are reminders that there may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion.

Patrick E. Tyler

“A New Power in the Streets,” February 17, 2003

February 15, 2003, the day 10 million or so people in hundreds of cities on every continent demonstrated against war in Iraq, will go down in history as the first time that the people of the world expressed their clear and concerted will in regard to a pressing global issue. Never before—not during the Vietnam War, not during the antinuclear demonstrations of the early 1980s—had they made known their will so forcefully by all the means at their disposal. On that day, history may one day record, global democracy was born.

Jonathan Schell

“The Will of the World,” March 10, 2003

The massive opposition to the war in Iraq last winter carried a paradoxical cry. It demanded “peace and democracy.”

But such a paradox is also an opportunity. In response to a war opposed on many grounds, one would do well to question the forces and claims of democracy at work. In many ways this debate is already taking place. In the year following the massive protests of 2003, one-hundred thousand people gathered at the World Social Forum in Mumbai, India. Academic and policy circles, which have always held a central position in discussions of democracy, have continued to debate the intricacies of the unprecedented expansion

sion of democracy during the 1990s. And there remains a desire for something more; many around the world continue to demand a world system that is inclusive and formally democratic.

What may be more pressing in a discussion of “global democracy,” however, is the more literal question of how, or if, the world is actually being democratized. That President Bush, having been courted by neo-conservative theorists, has framed the war in Iraq as a war of liberation is yet another line of debate. What is the position of the U.S. in proposing such a war, and how might we evaluate the results of such an action? And, perhaps more importantly, how do we understand “a war for democracy” when its episteme is exactly undemocratic?

The simultaneous debate over democratic reforms to already existing global institutions is yet another pressure on any discussion of democracy. The WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancún this past September is evidence of this. We should also remember the New York protest of February 15, which overflowed Second Avenue to the United Nations headquarters, a symbol that “the people” choose to direct their opposition to a global institution. All of this might lead one to believe that the prime arbiter of the democratic is necessarily global. In the demand for a reordering of global power, it seems that the old notion of democracy on the national scale is increasingly destabilized.

In this the globalization of democracy coincides with the related struggle for the democratization of globalization. Following these lines of debate, there are two simultaneous questions that are taken up in this particular forum. First, what are the characteristics of the globalization of democracy? And, secondly, how might we further consider, in theory and practice, the democratization of our new global order?

Our dedication to the concept of democracy in all forms, which is a dedication to a new cosmopolitanism, necessitates that we consider both of these modalities of democracy. We must continue to ask: “What is the democracy to come?”

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