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SUNDAY, JANUARY 30, 2005

Democracy is Born In The Middle East

by Michael in New York on [1/30/2005 09:02:00 PM](#)

I did not support Bush's unilateral invasion of Iraq (but I thought the UN should have gone in there YEARS ago). But whatever you think of the war, anyone with a heart has to be inspired by seeing **people flocking to the polls in Iraq**, apparently at the same level as voters here in the US -- and when they are risking their lives to do so. It is inspiring to see women proudly displaying their ink-stained fingers that indicate they too were able to vote. Even some Sunni areas saw strong numbers of voters. If the dominant Shiites and Kurds can actually maintain a pluralistic, secular government -- rather than taking revenge on the Sunnis who dominated them for ages -- it will be a miracle of decency. **Arab news channels** -- according to the NYT -- were filled with images of the historic vote going out to the entire Middle East. Our "allies" -- strategic partners who share none of our values, like Egypt and Saudi Arabia -- are deeply, deeply disturbed by this. Good.

Yes, the country is still riven by violence and 1/5th of the population is deeply hostile to the new leaders and our presence. Yes, the infrastructure is a mess. Yes, Afghanistan had elections and now only a few major cities are controlled by the "good guys" while a third of the country is back under the heels of the Taliban and another third dominated by drug lords.

But people want to be free -- whether they live in China or North Korea or Iran or Egypt. People want to be free -- despite a thousand year history of sectarian hatred and religious fanaticism, Iraqis risked their lives to go to the polls. We should be happy. And God willing today may be the day they start to consider themselves Iraqis instead of Kurds or Sunni or Shiite.


I almost put a question mark at the end of the headline -- Democracy is Born in the Middle East? But I don't think there's any question.



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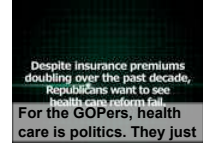
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