



# Policy Choices: American Engagement, the Iraqi Experience and the Outlook for Democracy Promotion Efforts



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“Democracy in Iraq – everyone talks about it, but no one knows what it means.”

~ Anonymous Shia,  
Sadr City, Baghdad

“If we think there is a fast solution to changing the governance of Iraq, then we don’t understand history...God help us if we think this transition will occur easily.”

~ General Anthony Zini  
Fmr. Commander  
U.S. Central Command

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## ➤ PBS – Frontline: The Lost Year in Iraq

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/yeariniraq/>

In the first weeks after the statue of Saddam Hussein fell, a group of young American bureaucrats led by Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III set off to establish **democracy in Iraq**. "We had an ambitious goal," [Bremer tells FRONTLINE](#), "to try to bring better government to Iraq and help them rebuild their economy [and] their country." [One year later](#), as Bremer made a secret exit to evade insurgent attacks, the group left behind a thriving insurgency, economic collapse and much of its idealism. "Our grand initiative there [was] to bring democracy to Iraq," says [Rajiv Chandrasekaran](#), former Baghdad bureau chief for *The Washington Post*. Instead, says Chandrasekaran, "we were leaving with our tail between our legs."



# Iraq: The Road to Democracy

## **The road to democracy in Iraq will not be easy:**

- ✓ Saddam Hussein's regime did not have respect for private property rights – a prerequisite for constitutional liberalism.
- ✓ The middle class has been decimated by sanctions and misrule by the old regime, and professionalism and meritocracy have suffered greatly.
- ✓ The rule of law must be established as Saddam and his henchmen hardly set precedent for it.
- ✓ Iraq will have to develop a legal system to include government “capable of protecting property rights and human rights, press freedoms and business contracts, antitrust laws and consumer demand.”



# Iraq: The Road to Democracy

**Leszek Kolakowski argues democracy must have three components if it is to succeed in Iraq:**

- ❖ A set of institutions aimed at assuring that the power and influence of political elites correspond to the amount of popular support they enjoy.
- ❖ The system must have an independent legal system separate from the executive power and the law must act as “an autonomous mediating device between individual or corporate interest and the state and not as an instrument of the ruling elite.”
- ❖ The system must have “enforceable barriers built into the legal system that guarantee both the equality of all citizens before the law and basic personal rights which include the freedom of movement, freedom of speech, freedom of association, religious freedom and freedom to acquire property.”



# Iraq: The Road to Democracy

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## **Three Paramount Prescriptions for Short Term Success:**

- ❖ The Iraqis must increase governance of themselves.
- ❖ Refining the constitution so that Iraqis have a favorable impression of democracy – Using Islamic references will help to convince Iraqis that a new constitution is in line with Islamic values rather than an imitation of a Western form.
- ❖ Rebuilding and reconstructing Iraq's plundered economy is pivotal to any democratic reform. Bremer states "Following a disciplined, market-based approach will require difficult decisions and entail near-term sacrifices. For this program to be successful, it must be endorsed by the Iraqi people. But higher living standards – and political freedom – cannot emerge if economic freedom is denied."

## RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC GROUPS IN IRAQ





## The Future of Governance in Iraq

Several various factors continue to be examined to find the most prudent balance in establishing an Iraqi government –

- ❑ one critical issue will continue to be debated: how to ensure different groups are represented in a newly democratic country, while ensuring that sectarian conflicts are not exacerbated in the process.
- ❑ Daniel Brumberg states that it is possible, given the strong sectarian voting patterns, a Shia will always be elected as the chief executive of a democratic Iraq. Therefore, it would be easy for Sunni and Kurdish groups to feel marginalized.
- ❑ In a worst case scenario, if sufficient agreement were made between various Shia factions, democracy could eventually be used to oppress minority groups in Iraq (“tyranny of the majority”).



## Iraq: Democratization Challenges



- **Growth of “malignant nationalism”** – this is distinct from patriotism which is “the attachment to national cultural heritage and language, and the desire to make one’s nation better off and more civilized.” Nationalism is “malignant and hostile to civilizations when it asserts itself through the belief in the natural superiority of one’s own tribe and the hatred of others.”
- **Religious intolerance and theocratic aspirations** – this is evident in not only the followers of Shia cleric Moqtada Sadr and the small group of Wahhabis but also polling data that suggests that 33 percent of Iraqis would like an Islamic government.



## Iraq: Democratization Challenges



- **Terrorism and criminal violence** – actions of *fedeyeen* and religious terrorist organizations create significant obstacles to the democratic process. With porous borders and much motivation, terrorist groups made of Islamic radicals are likely to continue with the insurgency for years to come.
- **“Mentality of endless expectations”** – Although the daily sectarian violence is setting aside such expectations, there formerly was a very high expectation that an economically stable and prosperous Iraq with an effective government could be set up overnight. These expectation need to be placed in proper perspective given the circumstances so that greater resentments on the part of the Iraqi populace are not fueled further.

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“Failure in Iraq would be a monumental loss for America’s role in the world. Washington will have created instability in the heart of the oil-producing world, weakened America’s ability to push for change in the Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran and Syria, and given comfort to its foes. The old order will rejoice and the Middle East would return to its stagnant and destructive ways.”

~Fareed Zakaria

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# Who Wins in Iraq?

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- ❑ **IRAN:** After nearly 25 years of wrestling with Saddam Hussein, Iran's Shiite rulers have the war to thank for their newfound power.
  - ❑ **MOQTADA AL-SADR:** Four years into the American occupation of Iraq, tens of thousands of people are dead and a nation is imploding. And Moqtada al-Sadr, the young, rabble-rousing cleric few people had even heard of when the invasion began, can now plausibly claim to be the most powerful man in the country.
  - ❑ **AL-QAEDA:** The terrorist network was on life support after September 11 – until a new front opened in Baghdad and revived its mission.
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# Who Wins in Iraq?

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- ❑ **SAMUEL HUNTINGTON:** The man who envisioned a clash of civilizations looks more prescient than ever. Democracy promotion now ranks last among America's surveyed foreign-policy priorities. Between 2002 and early 2006, the proportion of Americans who described Islam as promoting violence rose from 14 percent to 33 percent. 58% of Americans answered "yes" to the question of whether Islam had more violent followers than other religions.
  - ❑ **CHINA:** The United States' missteps in Iraq have given a rising superpower in the East room to grow. Commitments in Iraq mean the U.S. military now has fewer resources to build the capabilities to win a potential war with China over Taiwan.
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# Who Wins in Iraq?

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- ❑ **ARAB DICTATORS:** The Middle East's strongmen were under pressure to reform. Now, they rest easy. As the U.S. has become mired in bloody chaos in Iraq, countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt have wound up back in Washington's good graces. But it's not because they've become more democratic.
  - ❑ **THE PRICE OF OIL:** The war in Iraq triggered record oil prices, and the region's petro-states will enjoy the windfall for years to come. Think about the theory of "rentierism" here and how this will further contribute to the so-called "robustness of authoritarianism" thesis we have discussed throughout the quarter.
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# Who Wins in Iraq?

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- ❑ **THE UNITED NATIONS:** Suddenly, the global body's brand of multilateral diplomacy doesn't look so bad. The United Nations is likely to be more effective after the U.S.'s uni-polar moment in Iraq perishes.

A reformed United Nations, particularly an updated Security Council, must be the focus of efforts at finding cooperative solutions to global problems. "By working through the U.N., the U.S. can obtain greater legitimacy. By accepting the need to listen to other powers, it can make its own power more acceptable. By negotiating in good faith, it can secure the cooperation of other states and so bring more expertise and more resources to bear on the challenges it confronts."

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# Who Wins in Iraq?

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- ❑ **OLD EUROPE:** Four years on, Europe's naysayers are looking wise beyond their years. With the U.S. running on empty in the Middle East, Old Europe's ambassadors smoothly crisscross the globe suggesting – "Well, we told you so." Although Old Europe may have been correct about the war in Iraq, there is still no viable European solution for the taming of Iran's nuclear ambitions and the many other problems that plague the region.
  - ❑ **ISRAEL:** The war in Iraq eliminated several of Israel's biggest enemies – even if it made a few new ones along the way. Just as Israel has profited indirectly from the demise of the Baathis regime, so too have Iran's leaders and their brand of Shiite Islam – which now is perceived as a major threat to the stability of the weaker regimes in the region (Foreign Policy, March/April 2007).
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## An Idealistic Proposal:

### An Ethical Way to End the Iraq War

- Acknowledge that the war is wrong and our reasons for being in Iraq are misguided. Hundreds of thousands of innocent people have been killed and entire cities have been devastated. The President and congress should pass a resolution rejecting the strategy of domination and embracing the strategy of generosity.
- The Arab League should replace the U.S. and British forces with Arab soldiers. Arab soldiers would know the language, understand the culture, and especially the religion of the people better than the current forces. These forces are also perceived as occupiers and modern day imitators of the Crusaders who once devastated Muslim countries.



## An Idealistic Proposal: An Ethical Way to End the Iraq War

- ❑ **Rebuild Iraq and Launch a Global Marshall Plan.** The war in Iraq is presently costing over two (2) billion dollars a week. Rebuilding Iraq should be part of a larger Global Marshall Plan which the U.S. announces – to commit at least 1% of the GDP of the U.S. each year for the next twenty years toward the elimination of global (and domestic) poverty, homelessness, inadequate healthcare, inadequate education, and for repairing the environment. This provides a Strategy of Generosity which is the key to rebuilding respect and trust in the U.S. This kind of generosity, required by all Abrahamic religions, should be pursued not only because it helps increase American security and respect for America around the world, but because it is morally appropriate and the socially conscious/proper worldview to adopt (Tikkun, April/March 2007).

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60 MINUTES

➤ 60 Minutes Investigation: Jihad.com

[http://60minutes.yahoo.com/segment/47/jihad\\_online](http://60minutes.yahoo.com/segment/47/jihad_online)

An estimated **5,000 websites** are devoted to the spread of Islamic extremism. Afghanistan and Iraq are half a world away from the United States, but the most important front in the war on terror may just be a mouse click away. Correspondent Scott Pelly takes an in-depth look at the world of Jihad online, including how ordinary Americans are fighting back.

The bottom of the slide features a red horizontal bar with the text "60 MINUTES" in white, bold, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a close-up image of a silver stopwatch with a white face, showing the number 60 and 55 on the dial.

60 MINUTES