



Calhoun: The NPS Institutional Archive

Faculty and Researcher Publications

Faculty and Researcher Publications

2004-08-01

Iraq Now: Choosing Sovereignty or Democracy; Strategic Insights, v. 3, issue 8 August 2004)

Salmoni, Barak A.

Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School



Calhoun is a project of the Dudley Knox Library at NPS, furthering the precepts and goals of open government and government transparency. All information contained herein has been approved for release by the NPS Public Affairs Officer.

Dudley Knox Library / Naval Postgraduate School
411 Dyer Road / 1 University Circle
Monterey, California USA 93943

<http://www.nps.edu/library>



Iraq Now: Choosing Sovereignty or Democracy

Strategic Insights, Volume III, Issue 8 (August 2004)

by Barak A. Salmoni

Strategic Insights is a monthly electronic journal produced by the Center for Contemporary Conflict at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. The views expressed here are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of NPS, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

For a PDF version of this article, click [here](#).

Introduction

On 28 June 2004, Iraq was declared sovereign. The coalition did not, however, turn over functional sovereignty to Iraqis on the very matters that Arabs, conscious of a legacy of colonialism, consider to be essential to sovereignty: borders, internal security, internal political order and legal system, and economic policies. This was a wise decision. Still, "sovereignty" and "independence" have quite freighted connotations in Arab political parlance. As long as the coalition continues, in the words of Secretary of State Colin Powell, to "borrow" Iraq's sovereignty, the "true" colonialist intent of the U.S. "occupation" will appear proven to Arabs in and out of Iraq.[1]

There is another problem. Recently, U.S. leaders have spoken of a strategy "to build Iraqi capacity and transfer responsibilities from the coalition to Iraq rapidly." Issues of key concern here have been listed as "transferring authority to a sovereign Iraq... security... rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure... enlisting international support, and continuing building on Iraq's capacity for self-government." [2] Absent from this enumeration has been democratization. Those working in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom should be concerned. Casting aside WMD and al-Qa'ida-linked terror as the reasons for unseating the Ba'th regime, what remains is the altruistic goal of introducing democracy to the heart of the Middle East, so that its re-oxygenated blood can radiate outwards to the rest of the region. If we take the planners of the Iraq war at their word, such aspirations expose the liberal inspiration of an aggressively interventionist foreign policy.

Perils of Pragmatism and Expediency

This very aspiration thus implies the problem. Granting sovereignty to Iraq did not at all assist in democratizing it. It was a mere fourteen months since defeating a regime that ruled for thirty-five years. Not only did this regime strip its subjects of their humanity, but it did so by perfecting methods crystallizing since the 1930s. The socio-political and psychological assumptions commensurate with creeping effacement of humanity had seventy years to stamp Iraqis' minds as they sought to cope with realities. These assumptions include pervasive fear, distrust, sidestepping of legitimate political and legal organs, espousal of violence as political and cultural expression, and mobilization according to reified primordial categories such as language, ethnicity, or religion. Given this, turning Iraq loose on Iraqis after fourteen months is not democratization. Further compounding the problem, the sovereignty of 30 June is incomplete, reinforcing Iraqis' mistrust of the United States.

Still, the coalition granted sovereignty before democratization. Some may argue that democratization proceeds after institutions are established in a sovereign environment, when norms can then follow from procedural logic, and when those very institutions themselves will possess sovereign legitimacy. Yet, given its past, democratization in Iraq stands a better chance of success if it precedes full sovereignty. Of course, American fulfillment of its commitment to the former will require long-term infringement upon the latter, not to mention a much longer-term commitment than politically popular at home. Still, to go the other direction, and economize through a more "pragmatic" approach, will ultimately be more costly.

Then or Now?

To grasp the problem of "pragmatic" expediency, let us ponder a particular sequence of events: a military force conquers a country quite far from home, whose inhabitants are as culturally foreign to the conquerors as one could imagine. The previous leadership melts away, while the new force has very little knowledge of local political conditions and cultural norms, and very little training in the ways of post-war management of this particular population, so unlike others they have administered in their past. The arriving force has in its wings candidates for leadership with no local legitimacy, and fastens upon certain former political-military elites as crutches for its presence. The conquerors also locate presumably legitimate and powerful points of local social control, but find that these local leaders can exert such control only to the extent that the conquerors distort the social equilibrium by building them up, paying them off, yet allowing them the freedom to criticize and oppose the arriving forces.

Broader circumstances are also difficult: the conqueror's forces on the ground are caught between different agencies' priorities back at home, each seeking to direct affairs in the newly liberated land according to their desires. Likewise, the conquering country is extremely overextended globally, such that fielding sufficient numbers of men to preserve order is impossible, as well as against the grain of defense decision makers' thinking. At the same time, the domestic economy is weak, many at home question the adventure, and several are repelled by news of high casualties. Within a year of conquest, rather than indigenous submission to foreign rule, revolts break out in several strategic centers, inspired by both nationalist and religious symbols. With mounting casualties and international criticism, the conquerors rely on superior technology in the absence of sufficient troops, but also come to the conclusion that they need to accommodate local elements in managing the country.

The imperial overlords thus form a local government with the trappings of sovereignty, parliaments, and ministers—which are advised, paid-off, and only intermittently constrained by administrators from the conquering force. The new-old local leaders are entirely untested and thus untrustworthy in the way of such new-fangled institutions, which they choose to subvert. Still, the original conquerors, facing constant budget cuts and troop drawdowns, grant an early sovereignty so as to declare victory, economize, and preserve international legitimacy. As a result of such economies, the government, judicial, and civil society apparatuses are actively corrupted by the local leaders, while new social groups, in this case the junior-to-mid-level military officers, come to view it as their duty and right to hijack government. These new military leaders do not always share the same regional priorities of the erstwhile conquerors, even though they receive arms from them, and even though they have signed agreements regulating the ability of the conqueror's military to return. Ultimately, when global conditions darken for the conquering power, yet another military junta reneges on earlier treaties, instigates local violence, and forces the conqueror of a few decades before to invade the country, a mere decade after expediting its sovereignty.

Getting on in Iraq... and Getting Away from Democracy

This sequence of events does not arise from an imaginary country for the sake of doomsday prognostication: the conqueror was Britain, the country was Iraq, and the years were 1918 to

1941. The epilogue to this story of insufficient human, material, and moral commitment combined with premature sovereignty in British Iraq was the bloody extermination of the British installed regime in 1958, inspiring Ba'th Party ideologues and a young Saddam Hussein. More important for today, however, is that the very events and dynamics setting Iraq up for failure sixty years ago are prominent in Iraq in 2004.

One does not have to share the logic of the post-WWI mandates, which assumed that some peoples were insufficiently mature for sovereignty, in order to be quite wary about turning Iraq back over to the Iraqis. It also does not necessarily mean advocating a drawn-out occupation during which we arrogantly teach lesser peoples what it means to be democratically civilized. But, while the British did not feel it useful for Middle Easterners to have democracies, the United States has publicly and repeatedly committed itself to a democratic Iraq. Yet, democracy means much more than multi-party elections. Elections must be preceded by or at the least accompany in a phased fashion a whole series of preparatory steps, without which elections can actually undermine democratic consolidation by spurring chaos, violence, and further mobilization of primordial loyalties for exclusivist, zero-sum gain. Those inclined to think that a little bit of chaos is part and parcel of democratization—the "freedom is messy" approach—would be well-advised to consider the chaos of post-April 2003 Iraq itself.

Liberating Iraq and Inhibiting Democracy?

Circumstances to date have not permitted the United States to spur on any of the steps that lead towards democratization in Iraq, while the continuing insurgency has resulted in measures positively inhibiting democracy—most prominently, the norms, articles of political faith, rules of the game, procedures, and structures that ensure the kind of democracy rendering reinvasion unnecessary.

As for measures potentially inhibiting democracy, we should consider our Iraqi points of contact. Since the Clinton years, they consisted of the Iraqi exile groups, as well as the political representatives of elements at off-and-on war with Saddam, such as the Kurds and Islamists. Whatever such people might be—nationalists of various colors, Marxists, Islamists, ex-Ba'thist generals, bankrollers, or technocrats—they have never acted in a democratic manner. So, with the exception of a few expatriate academician fellow travelers, the coalition went into Iraq with Iraqis who have no proven aptitude or commitment to democracy's norms and practices, but whom it then set up as the Interim Governing Council. This is not entirely unlike the British setting up the foreign Hashemite family in Baghdad, with their Arab nationalist fellow travelers. Also like the British, by focusing on our expatriate Iraqi "friends," we missed aspects of indigenous mobilization among Iraq's Shia, who could have proven more supportive had we not neglected them throughout the 1990s.

Once in Iraq, military commanders—who had been provided a dearth of cultural and political intelligence background but who needed local liaisons—had no recourse under the pressure of time but to locate likewise inherently undemocratic points of contact. Some of these were town mayors: a sensible choice, but not stealth democrats. Others were family, clan, and tribal leaders. They fit in quite well with our preconceived notions of the "orient," and appeared to be local centers of power and influence based on the consensus of Iraqis. But there are two problems here. First—the obvious reason—no democrats here. Second, by fastening on such people, coalition forces actually read a socio-political map that made sense to them, but is in fact a map of Saddam Hussein's coercive making. Not only did he artificially elevate the conception of shaykhs' social control beyond what the societal equilibrium had arrived at over centuries, but he also artificially favored certain individual clan leaders or whole clans so as to frustrate national unity or political opposition. Working with these types makes sense as a stop-gap measure in the absence of cultural intelligence, but when it becomes the standard operating procedure, it actively inhibits the spread of all those procedures and norms that come before elections in the democratic count-down.

A third group of local leaders that the coalition has alternately coaxed or cajoled comprises Muslim religious leaders. Again, it is natural to want them to support or at least passively condone the coalition's presence in Iraq. Just as naturally, particularly Shi'ite mujtahids want to reserve political power to themselves as a price for their (often begrudged) acceptance of the United States in Iraq. Representatives of high-level ayatollahs were granted positions at various times in the IGC. Likewise, in an effort to show the world that the US is not anti-Islam, and that it can accept political pluralism with Muslims and Islamists included, coalition authorities have continued to dialogue, and at times compromise with them.

Still, we need to admit that orthodox religion—of the sort that embraces socio-politics—has no place for intellectual or political pluralism beyond parameters too narrow to accommodate democracy. Quite simply, the concern of traditional monotheistic religion—Muslim, Christian, or Jewish—is not democratic expression of differing views, styles of life, rituals and beliefs, or social practices. Rather, the concern of religions faithful to scripture and canonical corpuses of tradition is orthodoxy of belief and/or ritual as well as social practice. In any geographical setting, "religious" people who play according to the rules of the democratic game in fact depart from religious principles.

The foregoing also means that the coalition has yet to set up the surrounding architecture of democracy—the institutions and guarantees that are more important than elections. It might seem non-democratic to determine from on high the text of a constitution, the shape and membership of governing bodies, and the procedures as well as body of law for a judicial system. In Iraq today, however, the only workable indigenous option is repression, now privatized on ethnic, religious, or geographic lines. Likewise, as we have seen in the past year, our Iraqi expatriate "friends" are not really our friends or those of their countrymen. We have also seen that at times we have accommodated our "friends" and those we want to be our friends too much, perhaps exposing a peculiar American weakness for wanting to be liked.

As just one example of how short-term needs of the coalition have gotten in the way of democratizing Iraq, the interim constitution includes Islam as a source of legislation, apportioning to it a juridical role. One might say in justification that since Iraq is a Muslim country, its imams and ayatollahs have tremendous esteem. But again, we need to be frank: orthodox religions are not concerned to be democratic, so therefore religion, politics, and law do not mix in democracies—at least not statutorily. Put differently, if we sunder the linkage between liberal democracy and legal-political secularism, we mortally cripple democracy. One might also retort that rather than a hegemonic democratic model, different places and times require different kinds and ways of democracy. This seems to be the intent of statements that "Jeffersonian democracy" might be inappropriate to Iraq. Granted, but if biological metaphors are permitted, there are several different blood types—yet without certain basic components, the red liquid might as well be ketchup. Likewise, a government and legal system without secularism is not the kind of political system we say we are giving to Iraqis, as it will not guarantee the democratic freedom of religion.

Again, since commanders on the ground received poor cultural intelligence and post-fighting planning; insufficient numbers of troops untrained for nation-building and constabulary operations; and inadequate funds for disbursement for time-intensive, democracy-supportive initiatives, what has been done up until now makes sense. Yet, stop-gap, interim measures can become long-term policy, even though what works first does not always work best over time. Alternately, continually changing plans and stances, as was the case with the unceremonious shift from Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Aid to the Coalition Provisional Authority, and murky schemes and discussions regarding steps to elected government from November 2003 through to March 2004, undermines our credibility in Iraq, and threatens the coherence of our civil and military operations.

It is also the case that we have yet to cultivate the most potentially supportive constituency for a democratizing, pluralist Iraq: the urban middle class white-collar professionals. Not only have

such groups been the motors for democratization in the West, but they have also provided the intellectual luminaries of the Middle East for more than a century, attracted at different times to Marxism, pan-Arabism and Islamism—though originally to pro-western liberal democracy and secular nationalism. This stratum includes teachers, lawyers, journalists, technical and scientific experts, as well as small time entrepreneurs. The freedoms implied by socio-political and economic democracy appeal most to them, and threaten them the least. The coalition has built schools, but has it cultivated and empowered teachers? There are new courts, but has the coalition encouraged and supported independent lawyers? Likewise, there are coalition-sponsored media outlets, but has coalition policy furthered the interests of independent-minded, critical journalists? Saddam worked diligently to co-opt, muzzle, anaesthetize or eliminate a societal autonomous middle class, and he was largely successful. Our active, nurturing cultivation of this social stratum thus becomes that much more important for democratization. Fighting the insurgency has likely made us delinquent in this respect, and while some might argue that we need to take social realities as they are in the middle of an insurgency rather than attempting to craft new ones, the Iraqi social reality on offer has only assisted the insurgency.

Conditions: Necessary... and Sufficient?

Granting limited sovereignty amid armed insurgency and a focus on building Iraq's coercive forces, we have not aided democracy. Additional surrounding conditions will also militate against a democratic Iraq. To enumerate a few, neighboring states will have to resist the temptation to support proxy militias and other factions. Leaders in Ankara, Damascus, Amman, Riyadh, and Tehran will also have to engage the new country's leaders diplomatically while publicly advocating for democratic political transformation, even though this will have undesired domestic consequences for each state.

For its part, after condemning the coalition's operations in Iraq, the UN will have to muster an international stabilization force large enough to put down the kind of disturbances that will prevent the UN's own reconstruction and democracy-building organs from functioning. This appears unlikely. Though several countries have indicated that absent a UN resolution or UN-managed Iraq they will not be able to contribute forces, such a resolution may still not elicit their assistance in light of the security difficulties already in evidence. Likewise, Muslim countries will be reluctant to engage in what their publics would easily call assisting a lingering U.S. occupation of Muslim lands. Alternately, certain Arab and Muslim leaders may find a perverse vindication in America failing at a mission they had opposed.

In Iraq itself, the various Sunni, Shi'ite, Arab and Kurdish factions have to be convinced they have much to gain by acting in-system according to the rules of reciprocal legitimacy and freedom of dissent. This includes Ba'th-affiliated Sunnis who have witnessed a socio-political demotion, as well as their coreligionists who fear drowning in a sea of Shi'ite mullahs; Shi'ites inspired by Muqtada al-Sadr's distaste for the coalition as well as those adhering to the wishes of Ayatollah Sistani; and the Kurds of Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, or Masud Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party. The latter's region has become independent of Iraq in all but name, having wrangled out of CPA a "temporary" autonomous status repellent to Arab Iraqis. Finally, we must not forget the Iraqi expatriates who now feel they are being abandoned for unreconstructed Ba'this by the United States. This overloaded basket of factions threatens to turn the emergent government as well as coalition security forces into their pawns.

Likewise, U.S. administrations for the next decade will have to continue to devote great sums of money and manpower to security forces that remain in the region. Further, civilian political reconstruction initiatives will need to be intensified, while infrastructural rebuilding will have to proceed apace, even—or especially—if security conditions remain precarious. And here, funding for physical reconstruction will have to increasingly reach its way into Iraqi hands, though the U.S. congress is likely to oppose this. Just as important, the division of power between Iraqi government and the coalition will very soon have to provide those Iraqis not yet turned against us

with enough of a sense of sovereignty so that they do not feel their country to be another veiled protectorate.

Finally, unless broader regional dynamics, in Afghanistan, Iran, southeastern Turkey, and the Israeli-Palestinian arena remain sufficiently stable, United States and regional states' attention is likely to be distracted away from the needed support of the Iraqi government and hopefully emergent civil society. Conversely, to the extent that the Arab-Israeli conflict or Afghanistan remains unsettled, Iraq will prove an even more attractive arena for anti-U.S. insurgencies. These conditions do not comprise an exhaustive list of all those things that will need to happen for Iraq to gain any stability and have any chance at evolving over the long term into a democracy. This is because Iraq received sovereignty before its political institutions were convincingly rehabilitated, before the rules of socio-political inclusion were meaningfully changed, and in the absence of convincing security for Iraqis and coalition forces. In short, too many essential pieces of the puzzle have to fit just right for an extended period of time.

In spite of sovereignty, then, an ultimately democratic Iraq will require a much longer-term, much more expensive and hands-on American investment in human and material terms than has been the case until now. Basically, having failed to provide democracy in 14 months—not as much a failure as an iron law of time—U.S. leaders, service people, and private citizens will have to work even harder, but now within the framework of a sovereign state. According to the implicit logic of Transitional Administration Law, the real bump up in Iraqi sovereignty is 31 January 2005, when elections occur for a constituent assembly and interim parliament. Never mind that Iraqis do not see it that way; in effect it means that we are providing sovereignty before elections, and then elections before democracy. Either way, six additional months is hardly enough time to communicate and ingrain democratic procedures and norms.

The Work Ahead

What are some of elements of this work on the road to democratization? Most basically, we must provide safety and security for all Iraqis equally, so that legalism and civility are better bets than clans, militias, and insurgency. Our law and order has to perform better than any other option. This is also true for legal procedures associated with coalition law enforcement. As such, due process must be accorded to as many Iraqis as safety permits. In this respect, we will have to share with Iraqis the judicial norms of democratic societies. In doing so, we should be as open as logistically possible to the participation of international legal bodies and eventually Iraqis themselves. As an adjunct to this, economic reconstruction of Iraq should be internationalized, so that U.S. companies do not monopolize contracts. This will show Iraqis that American-style democratic sovereignty amounts to more than economic imperialism. Further, by opening reconstruction even to people whose governments opposed the war, the United States can ensure that those very governments will become committed to our success in Iraq.

More fundamentally, through providing the right kinds of incentives, the coalition will have to ensure that a new Iraqi government issues legislation and laws guaranteeing freedom of expression as broadly as possible. As in many western democracies, such freedom of expression will have to be tempered only by other legislation requiring Iraqis to grant each other reciprocal legitimacy and access to social services, no matter what one's political, religious, ethnic, or lifestyle views. These are the norms that guarantee democratic consolidation, and may be further ingrained by laws proscribing the formation of political parties based on religion or ethnicity.

Norms emerge partially out of practices, and as such the coalition forces will have to be very careful as regards the messages their own practices send—as just one example, the closing of the Sadrist newspaper in March 2004 sent the wrong message, no matter how libelous the paper indeed was. Beyond teaching through example, however, norms are communicated through explicit teaching. National education, therefore, on the primary and secondary level, is probably

the most important tool in communicating democracy and mutual tolerance. It is not enough to build schools and issue texts. We will need to create a new teaching corps through great expenditures of money. And, a major curricular message will have to be not so much the national homogeneity of all Iraqis that denies difference, but conscious multiculturalism celebrating difference as a sign of national strength. Unlike in the United States, this will require state education, though with a much larger space for private schooling than any time since 1958. Real democratization will also need to account for curricular messages beyond the state sector, in Islamic madrasas. This will be exceedingly difficult, but necessary.

Like post-WWII Germany, democracy education will also need to include Iraqi teachers' extended tours of American and European schools, pursuit of teachers' training and education degrees in the United States and elsewhere, and American, European, and Middle Eastern teachers volunteering to serve in Iraq—all on the U.S. tab. Not only will such activities permit Iraqis their own agency in translating liberating ideas for themselves and their fellow citizens, but Iraqi educators will also become a key indigenous support group to the coalition, based on their professional interests as well as evolving ideological convictions.

To the extent that legislation and laws can mold norms, the basic laws of political parties and division of governmental powers will have to ensure that a party-government-state identity no longer emerge. A U.S.-style separation of powers is not essential here. Rather, the coalition needs to prevent a situation where leaders come to view state organs as tools of their political parties. Just as important, structurally and legislatively, the government—as majority parliamentary faction and cabinet—must be inhibited from seeing itself and acting as the monopolistic embodiment of state and nation. Again, this is quite difficult to effect. These problems however, have been the defining symptoms of diseased political orders throughout the Middle East for the last half-century.

According to many, civilian control of the military is a key component of democratic governance. When we consider that Saddam Hussein was a civilian and controlled the military quite well, this issue does not seem as important in the near-to-mid-term. What will have to be insisted upon, however, both in law and coalition practice, is that the military not have any domestic coercive or political role. Not only will coalition forces have to resist each and every temptation to use the Iraqi army domestically, but also a gradual shift in the face and function of the Iraqi National Guard (previously called the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps) away from a military-like force will need to be a priority. This is not the current direction of Iraqi and coalition thinking. Further, promotion and operational command need to be determined not by political popularity or assumed loyalty, but by verified military professionalism.

Beyond all this, much discussion of democratization during the 1990s revolved around the need for civil society-citizen groups not government-established or dependent, but acting in the social sphere with an amount of autonomy not preventing them from making citizens' views known to the government. In Iraq's current situation, this is tricky—the last thing the coalition needs is the proliferation of unmonitored sectoral-interest based groupings that could easily take the Lebanon route to militias and civil war. In this context, the coalition forces and administrators themselves, at first in place of the Iraqi government, will have to facilitate, nurture, and monitor citizens' groups through legal provisions, funding and policing. Over time, as the Iraqi government begins to undertake such functions, civil society groups themselves should be encouraged to establish connections with counterparts in Europe and the United States, as well as groups in selected Middle Eastern countries that have made strides in this area. In the mid-term a form of civil society will emerge that is more dependent on state-like bodies than is the case in the West. Still, what will have been gained in terms of associational spirit and free intellectual mingling will be more important.

Responsibilities and Ironies

This initial agenda for post-sovereignty democratization is already incredibly weighty, requiring great amounts of handholding as well as letting go. Some might rightfully argue that it is not reflective of regional realities. Indeed, the initiatives here are unlikely to be accomplished by the 30 January 2005 election date. Rather, they will probably require at least a decade to take firm root, and none of it can be done on autopilot or through remote control. Yet, a decade is not an overly long commitment when compared to the more than half-century of mounting repression preceding it. Further, without securing these very conditions through close monitoring and involvement, Iraq will not only be undemocratic, but it will go on to be a source of instability, violence, and trouble for the United States.

There remains a painful irony in this agenda for Iraqi democratization. The only way to make the sacrifices of American service people and families worth it is for the United States to remain intensively engaged with Iraq for a long time—i.e., we will have to do it right. Doing it right however, will certainly mean more loss of American lives, accompanied by an ever decreasing American willingness to stay the course.

Still, to be worthy of the lives Americans have lost in Iraq, we cannot do minimalist democracy. We must be maximalist in our definition of democracy, as well as in our efforts to achieve it. In a place like Iraq, minimalist democratization, or a lackadaisical timetable, will result in no democracy. This is not like post-war Germany, where there had been a tradition of some political pluralism and parliamentary government before the aberration of 1933-1945. Iraq possesses no such heritage. To the extent that democratic headway has been made at all in the Middle East, it has been when leaders swept the decks clear and brooked no opposition. The substance and methods of Turkey's post WWI reform process are instructive here. Notwithstanding some of their illiberal tendencies, Turkey's new leaders eschewed minimalism, and as a result, Turkey is today an at least partially consolidated democracy in terms of procedures, structures, and most importantly, norms.

A further reason American actions in Iraq cannot be minimalist on democratization relates to this region's strategic importance to the US. At the risk of oversimplification, the United States cannot afford Iraq a decade on to be like Haiti today. The Middle East, given its positioning next to the Caucasus, Central Asia, and South Asia, as well as its resources, demographic changes, and persisting conflicts, is not the Caribbean. Compared to Haiti, Iraq is a shopping mall of weapons and ideologies, and a re-intervention, as in Haiti this year and the British in Iraq in 1941, is unlikely to overcome congressional, popular, and regional opposition. Ultimately, as the Middle East is so important to us and we have inserted ourselves so deeply into Iraq, long-term success there is a prerequisite for our status in the region.

After the installation of an Iraqi president, prime minister, and cabinet, the United States must reinvigorate its commitment to succeed where Ottomans, British, and Iraqis themselves have failed, as each failure has prepared future disasters. No matter who the occupant of the White House after January 2005, that person needs to recognize the necessity of fully reforming Iraq, for the sake of regional stability, our own strategic interests, and the dignity of those who have fallen in its pursuit. No particular date should be considered an opportune time to declare victory and leave Iraq. As one Marine said to me, "we broke Iraq, so now we have to fix it. I just hope we have the right tools in the toolbox, and stick around to finish the repair job."^[3]

For more insights into contemporary international security issues, see our [Strategic Insights](#) home page.

To have new issues of *Strategic Insights* delivered to your Inbox at the beginning of each month, email ccc@nps.edu with subject line "Subscribe". There is no charge, and your

address will be used for no other purpose.

References

This essay is dedicated to the memories of Cpl Jason L. Dunham, 3rd Battalion, 7th Regiment, 1st Marine Division; SSgt Jorge Molina-Bautista, 1st LAR Bn, 1st MarDiv; and LCpl Bryan P. Kelly, 2nd Bn, 2nd Rgt, 2nd MarDiv.

1. Two recent studies of Arab nationalism touching upon these ideas are Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Youssef Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism: A History* (London: Blackwell, 2001).

2. "Written Statement of Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz Prepared for the House Armed Services Committee," 22 June 2004, pp. 2-3.

3. Conversation with campaign commander from 3rd battalion, 4th regiment, 1st Marine Division, during Spring 2004.

About the Author

Barak Salmoni is an Assistant Professor in National Security Affairs. Dr. Salmoni earned a Ph.D. in Middle Eastern History at Harvard University. He has been a Fulbright Fellow and a National Security Education Program Fellow.