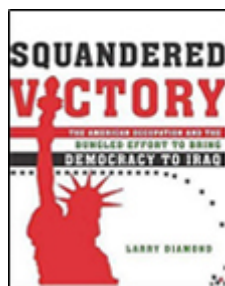


## Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq

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### Introduction

**JOANNE MYERS:** Good afternoon. I'm Joanne Myers, Director of Merrill House Programs. On behalf of the Carnegie Council, I'd like to welcome our members, guests, and fellows to our afternoon discussion with Larry Diamond.

Today he will be discussing his book, [\*Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq\*](#).

It has been over two years since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime and Iraq still remains a country awash in tragedy. At the onset, America's agenda was ambitious, and perhaps overly idealistic, in trying to bring Western-style democracy so quickly to Iraq. Yet this administration was committed to doing just that. It had the funds and the will, but, as our speaker writes, it also had overriding arrogance, ignorance, and sheer incompetence, all of which, he believes, contributed to a missed opportunity to establish a democratic Iraq.

However, after months of political bickering and frustrating delays, finally, the Iraqi people are in control of their own government, working to replace the arbitrary rule of one man with the rule of law. Yet the continuing presence of our military on their soil and the persistence of the insurgency have become extremely problematic.

This raises a few questions, some of which our speaker will address this afternoon. For example, why did it take so long for the Americans to transfer authority to the Iraqi people? Can Iraq become a democracy and embrace Western-style democratic institutions? What makes a country democratic? What can we learn from this experience, should we ever be involved in future democracy-building missions?

Professor Diamond has often argued that there are no preconditions for democracy, other than a willingness on the part of a nation's elite to attempt to govern by democratic means. Yet sustaining this approach in the context of unfavorable cultural, social, and economic conditions requires institutions which will foster effective, accountable governance, as well as robust international engagement. And all of this requires time and patience.

As a specialist on democratic development and on U.S. foreign policy affecting democracy abroad, it was an obvious choice for this administration to call upon Professor Diamond to become part of the advisory team that would assist in the political transition in Iraq. He has written extensively on the factors that facilitate and obstruct democracy in developing countries and has witnessed firsthand the transition to democracy in several countries, albeit not in countries where we were the occupiers.

Since its founding in 1990, Professor Diamond has been the coeditor of the [\*Journal of Democracy\*](#). This journal, which is published by the [National Endowment for Democracy](#), is one of the most widely read and cited publications on the problems of and prospects for democracy around the world. He has also served as co-director of the NED's International Forum for Democratic Studies, which sponsors scholarly research and publications, as well as working with an international network of research institutes on this subject.

His achievements are many. Among his published works, I would call to your attention a series on democracy in developing countries which has produced three regional volumes and six books since it was first published in 1989. Professor Diamond was the lead editor.

Currently, our speaker is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is also professor of political science and sociology at Stanford University and coordinator of the democracy program of the new Center on Democracy,

Development, and the Rule of Law at Stanford's Institute for International Studies.

Please join me in welcoming back our speaker, Larry Diamond.

## Remarks

**LARRY DIAMOND:** Thank you, Joanne.

Let me begin by saying that it is not my position that we have lost in Iraq. Rather, I believe that we have squandered an extraordinary military victory that we won in the spring of 2003, and we have thereby allowed Iraq to slip into a state of severe insecurity, stalemate, and economic disarray. Some of this would have happened in any case, but the reasons why it reached this level of intensity and difficulty are the following:

- The failure to plan effectively for the postwar era, including putting enough troops in from the start to secure Iraq's cities, facilities, and borders.
- Three fundamental strategic errors: dissolving the Iraqi army in its entirety, with the humiliating symbolic, as well as practical, implications that entailed; embarking on too sweeping a campaign of de-Baathification; and establishing, in May of 2003, a full-scale occupation of Iraq—indeed, an Anglo-American occupation, one that was bound to be deeply suspected and resented by a wide swath of the Iraqi population.
- Our entire style and demeanor in Iraq, which often, while well-intentioned, was imperial, haughty, and ill-informed about Iraqi realities.

Because of these attitudes and mistakes, we bungled the effort to bring democracy to Iraq. As a specialist on democracy, who learned something about Iraq, I feel this is a justifiable conclusion.

The Iraqi people have a strong desire for a decent, free, and democratic society. This was often deeply moving to me and to many of my civilian colleagues who moved around the country. But because of the mistakes and shortcomings of the American occupation, at a minimum it will take much longer and be much more costly in lives and treasure than it otherwise might have been, and the chances for success have been greatly diminished.

Our political occupation of Iraq, which was administered by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), was constantly torn between the idealistic goal of building an Iraqi democracy and our obsession with control. The tension was painfully evident in the leadership style of the CPA head, [Ambassador L. Paul Bremer](#), an enormously talented man, who was both engaging and domineering, charming and patronizing, informal and imperial.

Let me read you a passage from my book:

Bremer failed to consult often enough, widely enough with Iraqi constituencies, or even with his own CPA staff, and when he finally made adjustments, they were too partial and too late in coming. But it was not only Bremer who wanted to be in control. The Governance Office, which is where I worked, and indeed the entire CPA, oscillated between awareness of the need to discuss and negotiate, to generate Iraqi consent, and a desire—indeed, a mandate—to steer the broad course of Iraq's future. For the senior officials at CPA, it was an awkward situation. There were Iraqi ministers, and there was in each ministry an American senior adviser. Who was really in control?

The answer in the end was the message that Bremer constantly gave to the Iraqi Governing Council, even as he implored and negotiated with it. He and the CPA were the supreme authority in Iraq so long as the CPA existed. But this reality did not sit well with Iraqis, who did not like the very idea of occupation and expected to be regaining substantial control over their own affairs much more quickly.

The problem began to hit me in stark relief three nights after I arrived, when one of our colleagues on the governance staff stormed back into the office exasperated after a late-night meeting of the Governing Council, slammed her purse down on her desk, and said to us, "We have a problem, and no one wants to deal with it. The Governing Council is issuing orders, and the ministers are starting to execute them."

Several of us were standing around in a circle at the time and burst out laughing. On the face of it, the statement was absurd and, frankly, for us, hilarious. We were fostering a transition to sovereignty and democracy. We had established the Iraqi Governing Council, but God forbid they should actually seek to start governing.

Beneath the humor was a dilemma that was never effectively resolved.

This experience was the beginning of a process of disillusionment with our occupation from the inside. It began soon after I arrived. Throughout my first several weeks in Iraq, I remained hopeful and cautiously optimistic. When you are back home in the United States, you mainly see stories about the relentless terrorist and insurgent violence in Iraq, and it seems that nothing else is happening. But when you are on the ground in Iraq, you see a much more complicated and diffused picture. Schools and hospitals are being rebuilt. Communities and commerce are struggling to revive. A new generation of Iraqi journalists is courageously struggling to report the news. New civil society organizations are forming, trying to educate for democracy, lobby for women's and human rights, to document past abuses. Many Iraqis are cooperating with the American-led effort to rebuild the country, and not only for the pay.

In fact, I met quite a number of phenomenally brave Iraqis, who were committed to rebuilding the country, despite the risks. And many of them had alternatives. They could have gone back to their homes in the United States and lived very safe and comfortable lives. These people inspired me and many of my colleagues in the CPA, and they kept us going.

Two of the Iraqis who touched me deeply were highly religious and politically active Shiites. One was among the remarkable group of women I met and worked with several times in the Iraqi Higher Women's Council. At great personal risk, these women were organizing to bring Iraqi women into the political process and to lobby—ultimately, successfully—for a minimum quota for women's representation in the interim parliament. The quota that was adopted was 25 percent. It led, in January 2005, to the election of a parliament in which more than 30 percent of the members are women. That is much better than in the United States.

I didn't quite understand how much these women were risking until one of them, Dr. Salama Al-Khafaji, asked me a question, in a March 2004 meeting, that completely froze me.

Now I return to the book:

"What [she asked] is the relationship between our political progress and our personal security?" I didn't know how to answer. At first, I wasn't sure I had heard the translation correctly. I probably looked dumb. She continued more bluntly: A key challenge for women candidates would be that women should feel safe to run for office and to vote. There was not adequate security for women. They were still subject to retribution. Probably no one in the room was in a better position to speak to the danger than Dr. Salama, who had only been appointed to the Governing Council in December 2003, three months before, after another female member, Akila Al-Hashimi, had been assassinated in an ambush.

Dr. Salama was a study in contrasts and, in a way, a metaphor for the modern Iraq. A highly religious Shiite woman who covered herself completely in black and did not shake hands with men, she was also a professor of dentistry at Baghdad University and a strong advocate of women's rights. In fact, she was one of the most interesting and appealing people I met in Iraq, and her question deeply troubled me. None of us knew then just how personal her question would become. In May, just two months later, she herself survived an assassination attempt, when the car she was traveling in was ambushed and her son and several of her bodyguards were killed.

Another Iraqi who moved me greatly was Sayyid Farqad al-Qizwini, a huge bear of a man who looks and dresses like an oversized Iranian radical mullah, but is, in fact, a deeply committed democrat. I juxtapose this remarkable man against his anti-democratic radical Islamist nemesis, [Muqtada al-Sadr](#).

Again, I will read from my book:

With his unruly black beard, flowing clerical garb, and retinue of religious followers, Qizwini could easily be mistaken for just another radical Shiite mullah. However, he was preaching the compatibility of Islam and democracy—indeed, the necessity of democracy for Islam. In the former presidential mosque in Hilla, a majestic towering structure of stone and marble, where Saddam had never allowed the impoverished Shiite masses of this ancient area to pray, Qizwini had established a university, with American assistance. In front of it, he built a moving artistic tribute to the martyrs of the 1991 Shiite uprising. His students—men and women—study not just Islam, but all of the world's great religions, and principles of democracy as well. In a section of the sprawling mosque, a dozen Iraqi linguists translate a variety of works on democracy into Arabic. In another section, a new radio station broadcasts teachings about democracy.

On a rough woven mat under a huge tented *mudheef*—that is a traditional reed-frame guesthouse—my colleagues and I sat, on the morning of March 31, 2004, with Sayyid Qizwini atop his mosque and university while he poured out his concerns. In the days before our visit, Muqtada Sadr's organization had been widely distributing a leaflet denouncing Qizwini and ten of his leading supporters as, quote, "pigs and dogs," who had defiled Islam, and needed to be, quote, "stopped and

silenced."

Qizwini had been living under the threat of assassination for months, but now this had raised the stakes. The menace of radical Iranian-backed armed militias had been mounting rapidly through the early months of 2004, even as the leaders of their sponsoring political parties were sitting in Baghdad on the Iraqi Governing Council signing democratic declarations and professing sweet moderation and restraint to the Americans. [Indeed, we passed a training area where we could see in the courtyard Muqtada al-Sadr's agents of revolution, in black garb, training for the new Islamic uprising.]

As we sat under the *mudheef* on March 31, Qizwini implored the United States to act immediately. He said, "These militias will turn Iraq into a dark age of bloodletting if they are not stopped soon. Any decision to dissolve the militias should be implemented in the next week."

At that moment, I thought Qizwini's statement a bit hyperbolic in its urgency. For several weeks, I had been coming to a similar conclusion about the danger of the militias and the need for the coalition to act energetically, comprehensively, and soon, but I did not realize that the dam was about to burst and that this would be my last substantive day of involvement with the American occupation.

The dam did burst several days later, when we began, very haphazardly and with typically shoddy planning and coordination, to crack down on Muqtada Sadr's organization, in creeping fashion, and he responded with a massive uprising, at the same time that the Sunni resistance was exploding in Fallujah, where four American contractors had been murdered and hung from the bridge - on that very same day when we were in Hilla meeting with Sayyid Qizwini. This generated a second war for Iraq, indeed a two-front war, which broke out as I was leaving for what would prove to be the last time.

Since that war broke out, in April 2004, and the insurgency accelerated to a new level and scope, our efforts to build democracy in Iraq have been much more crippled, as it became impossible to travel outside of the heavily fortified Green Zone without exceeding tight military security, which was available to very few people.

The military side of our mission was severely under-resourced. We did not have nearly enough troops in Iraq, enough high-qualified armor for our vehicles and personnel—enough of virtually anything. The disgraceful shortage of armor for our Humvees and transport vehicles finally seized the American public in December of 2004, when a soldier in Kuwait challenged Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld about it before an international television audience, and he replied with his characteristic flippancy, "You go to war with the army you have, not the army you might want or wish to have at a later time."

But the shortage of everything I have described and its terrible consequences had been known for months, and by then, it was almost two years since we had gone to war with the army we had.

These were not mere shortages of equipment. They drove to the heart of our problem in Iraq, which was a problem of attitude in Washington and in the Green Zone. I return to my book:

The civilian side of the mission was persistently under-resourced. [As you noted, quite dramatically, Derek, in one of your famous late-night remarks,] we never had enough civilian staff, enough armored cars, body armor, helicopters, or other forms of secure transportation to move around the country. If we had gotten more armored cars, we would still have needed many more personal security details to guard the CPA officials in them. We never had nearly enough translators and interpreters, nor did we do even half of what we might have done to protect the lives of those brave and talented Iraqis who came forward to volunteer for this dangerous role. We never had enough expertise on the ground, people who knew the country, its culture, its history, and who could speak its language with some fluency.

I cite an exchange between a very wise, shrewd Iraqi official and a young American political appointee. After several weeks of interacting, with increasing exasperation, with this arrogant, presumptuous young man, my Iraqi friend asked him, "You must have thoroughly studied the history of the British occupation of Iraq." My young friend sat up smartly and said proudly, "Yes, I did." The Iraqi said, "I thought so, because you seem determined to repeat every one of their mistakes."

"We never listened carefully enough to the Iraqi people or to the figures within the country that they respected. We never won their trust and confidence. We failed to move with the necessary dispatch to transfer power to an Iraqi interim government chosen through some acceptable consultative process that could have been mediated by the United Nations. We did not give the UN the kind of role that could have spared us from many mistakes and from being perceived as an occupying power, until we ran into deep difficulty with our own plans, and then it was too little, too late.

Against the advice of most experts on Iraq in the region, we dissolved the entire Iraqi army, purged from public life a broad swath of the existing elite, and indeed wound up alienating and marginalizing a whole section of the country, the best organized and best armed, until a series of readjustments that were, again, too little, too late.

Against the advice of most people who knew Iraq well, including even the politicians in exile with whom we had been working, and flying in the face of a proud and defiant national history that we barely understood, we established ourselves as an occupying power in every respect, and so ensured that we would face a dedicated violent resistance, without enough troops to cope. As a result, an organized violent resistance emerged, as the UN had warned it would, frustrating and undermining postwar reconstruction at every turn."

Is it too late to repair the situation? Is it time to withdraw? If not, what can be done?

I address the question of the future, "Can Iraq become a democracy," in the final chapter of my book.

I am not prepared to give up on Iraq. We have assumed a moral and political obligation to the overwhelming majority of Iraqi people who want to live in a decent and democratic society. We have an obligation to ourselves, because if Iraq goes over the edge into state collapse and civil war, it will become what it was not before the invasion—a haven for international terrorists and a direct threat to our national security, just as Afghanistan was before September 11. Moreover, American credibility throughout the Middle East will be severely damaged, and radical anti-American Islamists will be emboldened.

At the same time, we have to recognize that we are mired in a costly stalemate, and we need a fairly bold adjustment of strategy.

Briefly, we need to take the following steps:

- We need to take the nationalist, anti-imperialist steam out of the Iraqi insurgency. The President should declare that we do not have long-term imperial ambitions in Iraq; we will not seek permanent military bases there. Many elements of the insurgency are fighting for a variety of tactical and political reasons. They have been signaling for a year-and-a-half that they want to talk directly to the United States. Part of what they want from the United States is a commitment to eventual full military withdrawal.

We cannot set a deadline for withdrawal, but we should define a timeframe by which we expect to be gone, provided that Iraqi security forces acquire by then the training and capacity to secure the country. Then the burden shifts, in part, to Iraqi militant nationalists to cooperate in the restoration of order, so that their goal of freeing the country of American and other international troops can be achieved.

- More broadly, we need a strategy to bring into the political process the marginalized Sunni elements. This means bringing Sunnis who matter, who have the support of critical Sunni constituencies, more fully into the government and the constitution-drafting process. The Bush Administration is starting to try to do this now.

In spring 2004, Bremer and the Bush Administration realized we had gone too far with de-Baathification and the dissolution of the army, and we began to reverse course. We established a focused effort to reach out to the Sunnis and to begin to make some midcourse corrections, but these have never been bold enough. Now, we no longer govern. We can't dictate to the Iraqi interim government. But Secretary of State Rice and her deputy secretary have both gone to Iraq and tried to persuade. We need to move energetically on this front.

- No U.S. effort to reshape Iraq's political arena and wind down the insurgency can succeed on its own. It needs the support of the Iraqi interim government, but it also needs international involvement and mediation. We overcame the political stalemate with [Ayatollah Sistani](#) early in 2004 and began to be able to implement our political transition when we brought the UN back into Iraq to work with us and to mediate with us and the Iraqis. We need to do that again, this time with the Sunnis. There is no one better able to do this than the very same envoy, [Lakhdar Brahimi](#). But there are also a number of deeply knowledgeable and talented UN officials we can work with, including one in particular for whom I have great admiration, Jamal Benomar.
- We need to continue to provide technical and reconstruction assistance, not only to revive the country's infrastructure and rebuild and retrain the security forces, but to develop Iraqi civil society organizations, political parties, think tanks, and to provide more effective support to moderate and democratic Iraqi organizations.

These efforts will help to dampen the insurgency, but we will not gain control without a more intensive political effort to get the Sunni Arab communities who are giving it sympathy and safe quarter to turn against it and side

with the new political order. To do that, they must see that they have an interest in that order. They must want to expel al-Qaeda and tell their young men to stop making war and planting bombs.

Finally, we need to change our attitude. We need to proceed in Iraq and in the region with more humility and empathy, with more understanding of their culture, language, and history, with more concern to find real political partners, and not just dictate. We need to recognize that throughout the region the process of developing democracy will be long and painful, and we cannot dictate the outcomes.

I do not know if we will succeed in Iraq, even if we take these steps, but I do believe we will fail if we do not. We do not have to keep bungling in Iraq. Greatly worried though I am, it is not yet clear that our squandered victory will mean defeat for democracy in Iraq.

## Questions and Answers

**QUESTION:** You spoke of the lack of planning for the aftermath, which is widely reported. I have read that the State Department had indeed made plans, but DOD ignored them.

Recently, *The Washington Post* ran a front-page story saying that the Iraqi armed forces are nowhere in sight of becoming capable of maintaining law and order.

**LARRY DIAMOND:** In October of 2001, and well over a year before the invasion, the State Department launched the Future of Iraq Project. It was coordinated by an exceptionally able career diplomat, Tom Warrick, and it produced over a dozen volumes of analysis of what we could look forward to and how we should proceed.

One of those volumes, written by a number of experts and Iraqi exiles, was on the democratic transition by the Democratic Principles Working Group. It predicted that there would be looting, disorder, a rise of criminal violence; that we would need to stabilize the situation with a massive presence very quickly; that we should move expeditiously to form a broad-based interim government. It had very creative ideas on how to do so.

The Pentagon tossed this out the window and told General [Jay Garner](#), who was our first civilian administrator going into Iraq. When he heard about this project, he told an aide, "Get me Warrick and get me this project." He went to hire Warrick, but was specifically instructed by Rumsfeld not to bring him to Iraq.

The question is, why? We had five career ambassadors sitting in the palace in Iraq with experience in the region. They should have been negotiating with the Iraqis on the constitution, not a twenty-four-year-old recent college graduate, and not me. They should have taken more leadership in making policy. Bremer didn't trust them. Bush didn't trust them. Rumsfeld didn't trust them. They were viewed by the neoconservatives as not tough enough to remake Iraq as a true democracy and market economy, and maybe not trustworthy because they knew too much. This was a catastrophic mistake that shaped much of our whole orientation.

On the training of the Iraqi armed forces, I don't understand why it's taking so long. But I am told by many people that we can't do better than General David Petraeus for someone to be in charge of this training. If there is a savvy, well-organized, take-charge guy to get this done, it is he.

So if it isn't moving faster than it is right now, with the resources we have and the situation we're in, it probably won't, and we are looking at many years of American involvement to stabilize the situation and steady it, until an Iraqi army can be built from the ground up. This is part of the price we pay for the decisions we made and for the insecurity that the country has fallen into as a result of lack of planning, lack of resources, and lack of troops, which requires us now to build up an Iraqi army from scratch with a raging insurgency.

**QUESTION:** It's hard to believe that had we consulted more and used the five ambassadors, the Sunnis would not be rebelling against Shiite rule.

**LARRY DIAMOND:** Had we used more expertise on Iraq, including some of those ambassadors, we would not have made the mistake of thinking that we could marginalize the Sunni communities that mattered. We had numbers. We had slots filled. But they were not people who had roots in their communities, so they were not able to bring them along. If we had had more expertise, we would not have had such a sweeping campaign of de-Baathification. We would not have completely dissolved the Iraqi army. We would have started the Sunni outreach program, maybe nine or ten months earlier, and found a better balance early on.

We're moving toward that balance now. The Bush Administration does not have its head completely buried in the sand. It is making adjustments. It is looking at the situation. But it's always racing to catch up, and it's always a little bit short and late. When you fall this far behind, it is very hard to catch up.

More knowledge, more humility, and an effort to craft a broad-based interim government from the start would have helped a great deal.

It's true; the Sunnis were bound to swallow hard at the prospect of a government led by Shia, and the Shia would

swallow hard at the prospect of having something less than total dissolution of the army and the scope of de-Baathification that we had. But if you find a reasonable balance early on, people can learn to live with it. If things get grossly out of balance, then expectations get consolidated around that situation. It is much harder now to roll back de-Baathification and to reconstruct the Iraqi army, because the Shia have come to expect the situation of radical purging that was embarked upon, and now anything less than that will seem like a gross concession to the other forces.

**QUESTION:** You sound surprised that the victory was squandered. But the aim of the American invasion of Iraq and the victory itself was never to bring democracy to Iraq. The explicit justified reasons were fabricated rationales, as we now know. So when you answer your own question about why the victory was squandered and you say, "Arrogance, ignorance, isolation, and incompetence, and the lack of planning, resources, and troops," don't you have to ask a further question—namely, wasn't the war itself a lie and democratization never a primary interest of the Bush Administration? So whatever skills in understanding democratization might be yours, isn't it the case that they will never be listened to seriously by the current administration?

**LARRY DIAMOND:** I thought the war was a mistake. I wrote that at the time. I do not think the case had been made, by March of 2003, that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction or that, if he did, they represented an imminent threat to the security of the U.S. that required a preventive war.

Once the war had happened, I felt that it was worth trying, and indeed important to our national security and standing in the world to try to build peace in Iraq, and indeed a democratic peace.

My reading of their motives is different from yours. Yes, I think they lied to us. I think they manipulated intelligence information in a grossly irresponsible way. They did so because they made a decision not long after September 11 that Saddam had to go. One way or another, we were not going to get to the 2004 election in the United States with Saddam still in power.

Why did they make that decision? Number one, they believed that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction; it's the only way that one could explain his duplicitous behavior. The thought that this duplicity would be driven by the motivation to disguise his lack of weapons of mass destruction, and thus to hide the fact that the emperor wore no clothes, didn't cross their minds.

Secondly, they wanted to build democracy in Iraq. This was the neoconservative project, and it was sincere. It was moral, but it was also ideological. They thought that they would remake the Middle East; they would drain the swamp. They were quite serious about it, and it was a motive not much lower on the scale than the weapons motive for going to war, but not one that was much advanced, for fear that the American people would not stand for going to war to promote democracy.

But the problem is, they have always had a very shallow and conflicted understanding of what democracy is. They were so limited in their understanding of the country and its culture, so overconfident of their moral rightness and momentum, geopolitically, in the world, and so enraptured by the Iraqi exiles, like [Ahmed Chalabi](#)—who kept whispering in their ear that we would be greeted on the streets of Iraq with roses and sweets, that we would be the great liberators—that they didn't think any of this would be necessary.

**JOANNE MYERS:** What are they thinking now?

**LARRY DIAMOND:** They're thinking that we're in deep trouble. This is why Condi Rice went to Iraq, and Deputy Secretary Zoellick not long after her. It is the reason why President Bush called President Talabani and said, "You've got to bring in the Sunnis here." It's why we are pushing hard and continuing to look for more allies and international legitimacy.

But they are still not willing to make a bold enough adjustment. There is still an element of national, political, personal pride that leads them not to want to confess that we have made mistakes and we need help.

**QUESTION:** Has the administration accepted the idea of not being a permanent presence in Iraq long term, not keeping bases, not having influence?

**LARRY DIAMOND:** I am told that Ambassador Khalilzad said that we will not seek permanent military bases in Iraq. If he did, he's the first would-be U.S. official or U.S. official to say so. It needs to come from the President quite unambiguously. The reason that it hasn't is that we still want permanent military bases in Iraq. This is a totally illusory goal. The Iraqi people will never agree to give it to us. The only way it could happen is if the Kurds declare independence, and then they would not only welcome, but seek, a permanent U.S. military presence to protect them. But it would be in a situation of their being besieged by enemies on all sides.

So we should say that we will not seek permanent military bases. If someday the Iraqis want to come back to us in pursuit of them, that is up to them. But we need to project a more selfless and disinterested posture here, so that we take the nationalist steam and suspicion out of the insurgency. That is a prerequisite to significant political

winding down of the insurgency.

**QUESTION:** It takes twenty-five to fifty years to reconstruct a country. That's a major entitlement system. Given that our government will not be committed to that, we should probably get out earlier.

Secondly, we are building China and India. They have no oil. Can we afford to get out of that Middle East area?

**LARRY DIAMOND:** On the latter question, oil is fungible. The notion that we need to control Middle East oil through political and military means in order to keep our cars and industries running is a bit wild. The criticism or suspicion on the left of the Bush Administration as being mainly driven by this obsession is simplistic.

At the same time, we will not solve the problems of tyranny, misrule, instability in the Middle East, and the hair-trigger nature of the regional situation, the constant threat of America becoming militarily involved in the region in extremely unfortunate ways, unless we do something about our dependence on international oil and the rising global demand for oil. Look at the growing scientific consensus about global warming as well. We have to overcome our dependence on fossil fuels. I can't think of a single more diffuse and overriding public policy imperative for the United States, domestic or international.

That said, it's a long-term challenge that we haven't even begun to address, in terms of our tax policy, our investment policy—every aspect of our public policy.

It may well take twenty-five to fifty years to get fully reconstructed. But Iraq does have oil. If you could turn the corner on political reconstruction and security stabilization, so the oil could flow, there would be so much money coming in that the physical reconstruction of the country could happen rather rapidly. The key is political, negotiating a significant winding down of the insurgency so that further political and economic and civic reconstruction of the country can happen.

We will need to be engaged there for a long time, but in terms of troops on the ground, I hope not ten years, not to mention twenty-five or fifty. But in terms of political support and engagement, international involvement, yes, a very long time.

**QUESTION:** What is your assessment of [Negroponte](#)? Did he correct some of Bremer's mistakes, or did he compound them? What was his record?

Second, it took four years in the long march to freedom for Nelson Mandela. From the day he got out of prison to the day of the first election in South Africa was four years. We are very impatient people.

**LARRY DIAMOND:** That's true, and that's why I say all is not lost. The Iraqi transitional government was only elected in January. There are many opportunities still, but the opportunity cannot be taken advantage of without reducing the violence. The reason that South Africa could move on its march toward freedom and a new political order as well as it did was because the ANC was willing and able to end the violent insurgency. The Iraqi insurgency is much more fragmented.

Both the insurgents and the Sunnis as a political factor in Iraq are fragmented into so many pieces that we will not turn the corner unless we can induce some further reason, moderation, and aggregation on the part of the various Sunni political forces. That is why a high-level United Nations mission is needed in Iraq now, ideally led by Ambassador Brahimi, to shuttle among the different Sunni constituencies and say, "You're not going to come back to rule through this. You have to get your act together, come to the bargaining table with reasonable demands, and wind down this insurgency. Then you'll get a piece of power, you'll get a piece of resources, and you'll be better off. Everybody will be better off. There's plenty of oil to go around."

I know people who know the country very well, who think that might work. No one has a better strategy for dealing with the insurgency now.

Negroponte made some important contributions and some important mistakes. One important mistake was that he didn't want the UN there in a significant role at all. He marginalized it and shut it out.

Negroponte's record is not fully known and has yet to be sufficiently established and revealed. I'm suspending judgment.

**QUESTION:** If you're the President of the United States and you see the Middle East as something that has become a serious problem, what do you do?

**LARRY DIAMOND:** I would have continued the international sanctions regime under Saddam, fraying though it was, and I would have tried to rally an international alliance for promoting real democratic change in the region. Indeed, I still believe that can be done.

There might have been thirty countries with us in a "coalition," but their peoples weren't with us. Ask the



Australian people, ask the Polish people, ask the Salvadoran people, ask the British people if they supported their government having joined us militarily in this war. It would be hard to find a single other democratic public in the world that supported their government. We stood alone in the court of international public opinion, whatever they want to say about building a coalition.

When you do this in defiance of international public opinion, in defiance of international norms and institutions, you pay a very heavy price, in terms of your stock of soft power to rally international public opinion, and international civic forces for a cause of peaceful change. You had better have a compelling and overwhelming hard security reason for doing it, which we didn't have in Iraq.

We should have worked to rally the UN and rally our transatlantic alliance for a comprehensive effort to transform Middle Eastern regimes toward better governance and human development. That strategy is still possible. The architecture for it is laid out in a task force report, which was released by the German Marshall Fund of the United States in June 2004. It is on their Web site as "[Istanbul Paper #1](#)," a transatlantic strategy for building democracy and promoting human development in the Middle East.

In addition, the Council on Foreign Relations has released [a task force report on promoting democracy in the Middle East](#) with a lot of good ideas. The task force, of which I was a member, was chaired by Madeleine Albright and Vin Weber.

It still falls to institution building, democracy promoting, alliance building through peaceful means, to promote more responsible and democratic governance in the region.

**JOANNE MYERS:** Thank you for being with us this afternoon.

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