

AFTER IRAQ

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hen it comes to Iraq, Washington is still debating what Americans have already decided: that a withdrawal of troops is needed and is coming. Whether it happens under the watch of George W. Bush or the next president, we can say with near certainty that at some point in the next several months, there will be a significant drawdown of U.S. forces from Iraq. Right now, the political debate is preoccupied with issues of when those troops will be withdrawn, how they will be redeployed, and where they will be sent. But regardless of how these questions are answered, this much is sure: A large number of American troops will be coming home from Iraq.

The question is, what do we do the day after? The United States will face a Middle East that is profoundly changed. Iraq, once one of the region's major powers, is weak and divided. America, for the first time, has occupied a country at the heart of the Muslim world and odds are it will leave Iraq short of anything approximating "victory." The project to turn Iraq into a shining light of liberal democracy has failed. Iran, a nation whose enmity to the United States is virtually unrivaled, has used the removal of Saddam Hussein as an opportunity to expand

its power, prestige, and nuclear weapons program. Across the region, militias and terrorist groups have mobilized to fight American troops in Iraq and used the U.S. presence there as a tool for recruitment and expansion.

With the entire Middle East in flux, we need to look beyond the current debate and begin to formulate a strategic response to this critical part of the world. That's why *Democracy* has undertaken a first for this publication: a symposium about a single question. We asked 50 top progressive foreign policy thinkers—academics, former State Department and National Security Council officials, think tank fellows, and others—about what America should do after Iraq. Certain themes flow through their replies: the need to rebuild our alliances and work in concert with other nations, the importance of restoring American legitimacy in the eyes of those in the region and around the world, and the obligation to move aggressively to wean the country off Middle East oil and gas. To winnow the flood of responses, we chose the ten that we felt offered a unique point of view on this question: Once there is a significant drawdown of troops from Iraq, what comes next? What should American strategy be in the Middle East?

Their answers are on the following pages.

Restore Trust in America's Leadership

Ivo Daalder & James Lindsay

No foreign policy decision since America's retreat into isolationism in the 1930s has done more to harm American and global security than the Iraq war. The invasion and incompetently executed occupation have devastated Iraq and unleashed a civil war that has killed tens of thousands and displaced millions. Iraq has become a recruiting cause and training ground for a new generation of terrorists—young men bent on the suicidal destruction of Americans and Iraqis alike. The balance of power within the Middle East has shifted dramatically in favor of the most radical and extremist elements in the region—led by a newly confident Iran. But what has made the war a blunder of truly historic proportions is that it has cost America the trust of its friends and allies around the world—a trust that since 1945 has been instrumental in translating America's economic and military power into global influence and leadership.

The overarching challenge confronting the United States after Iraq, therefore,

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