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By Hilary Kramer

FOX NEWS

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ADVERTISEMENT What do Russians know about democracy? Quite a bit... or so they think. Recently ITAR-TASS news agency quoted the Russian foreign minister lecturing the American government about perils of democratizing Iraq. "The attempts to export democracy" – said Minister Ivanov – "especially to countries with cultures that have survived through the centuries are doomed to failure." This attitude is common among those who oppose America's resolve to rid Iraq of Saddam Hussein. The idea, so cherished by noisy anti-globalization protesters, is that the spread of democracy, if at all possible, must blend in with local cultures, resulting in so-called socialist democracy, Asian democracy, Arab democracy, and others.

Nothing could be farther from truth. A statement that certain cultures are not ready for democracy is effectively an insult. It is particularly important to realize today – as our nation perseveres in the throes of war – that the promotion of democracy on foreign soil has been a long-standing objective of our American foreign policy, which has for more than fifty years produced a number of successful democratic transitions:

? Since World War II, the U.S. has rather consistently promoted the spread of democracy, achieving – most notably in Japan and Germany – splendid results

? Moreover, an increasing body of scholarly work indicates that certain cultural or ethnic milieu is neither necessary nor sufficient for the emergence and survival of democracy

? Finally, notwithstanding high initial costs, consolidation of a democratic regime in Iraq would result in substantial strategic and economic benefits for the U.S.

How should previous experience and academic insight shape America's foreign policy in the post-war Iraq? Let's take the closer look.

Before the U.S. became the world's leading economic and military power at the end of World War II, no one had heard of attempts by any country to actively promote democracy and human rights outside of its borders. According to Professor Bruce Bueno de Mesquita of New York University, "American rhetoric and, often American practice have devoted considerable time and energy to promoting [democratic] norms, sometimes with great success. The most noteworthy examples, of course, include the establishment after World War II of democratic governments that respect individual rights in Germany and Japan. Both of these states have evolved into democratic societies, at least in the electoral sense, despite the authoritarianism that typified their political histories before 1945."

While United States has been the first nation to engage in the crusade for democracy, it is certainly not the lonely soldier. In the course of several decades and, especially, since the end of the Cold War an ever-increasing number of countries have contributed large sums of money to programs aimed at promoting democracy abroad. Thomas Carothers, a democracy expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace recalls how, "for decades, Germany had been promoting democracy around the world through its generously funded political party



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foundations... Almost all foreign aid donors, including Canada, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, Holland, Japan, Norway and Sweden, now carry out democracy assistance programs... Even the French are jumping in with plans to create a democracy promotion foundation run by the leading French political parties. Don't hold your breath, though, for a change in France's archaic, antidemocratic policies toward Francophone Africa" – cautions Carothers – "Some things are sacred."

Contrary to gloomy predictions of cultural relativists, the international campaign for the promotion of democracy has born fruit in a variety of globally diverse environments. "It doesn't take much traveling around the world these days to recognize that the 'contagion' effects of democracy have been a major factor in the proliferation of democratic transitions all around the world. And one cannot spend much time in countries attempting to democratize without encountering a palpable desire among many persons to learn from more established democracies," says Carothers.

Clearly democracy has long been a hot "export commodity" in the marketplace of international politics. By embarking on a campaign to democratize Iraq the U.S. is merely affirming its traditional role as the leading promoter of representative institutions and respect for human rights around the world.

Will America be successful in its quest to democratize Iraq? We have already heard the skeptical opinion of the Russian foreign minister, who seems to believe that some cultures are simply incompatible with democracy. A growing body of academic research, however, points in an opposite direction. According to a leading expert on democracy, Professor Adam Przeworski of New York University, "economic and institutional factors are sufficient to generate a convincing explanation of the dynamic of democracies without any recourse to culture... At least the most obvious cultural traits, such as the dominant religion, have little relevance for emergence and durability of democracies." Islam and the Arab culture, then, should pose no insurmountable obstacles to democracy.

In fact the most encouraging vision of Iraq's future can already be seen in the northern no-fly zone inhabited mainly by Iraq's Kurdish population. The Kurds, who have enjoyed the de facto independence from Baghdad since the enforcement of the no-fly zone, have created an environment where there is a semblance of civil society far greater than in any other country in the Arab world. According to Carole O'Leary – a professor in the School of International Service at American University – democracy has taken root from within local society and included the growth of NGOs, the promotion of human rights, including women's rights, the reform of educational system, and the increasing transparency and efficiency of the Kurdistan Regional Government. The striking democratic progress, achieved by the Iraqi Kurds during a decade free of Hussein's oppression should become a model for the rest of the country.

But what if Iraqis – apt for democracy as they may be – are not willing to accept it from the hands of the hated Americans? What if Iraq becomes the second Vietnam – whereby U.S. gets entangled in a prolonged military engagement with immense human and material costs? While thoughts of Vietnam might plague the minds of policy-makers in Pentagon and the Department of State, the response to this grim analogy should bring more careful planning and precise execution of the operation – not the desertion of its mission. This is because repetition of the Vietnam scenario in Iraq is highly unlikely.

A recent report by a Brussels-based policy organization, the International Crisis Group, reveals that in secret interviews most Iraqi respondents, "with surprising candor, expressed their view that if... a change required an American-led attack, they would support it... The overwhelming sentiment among those interviewed was one of frustration and impatience with the status quo."

Since the beginning of the war, events in Iraq have not given real reason to doubt such findings. While early casualties and the capture of the American troops might have shocked some optimists who expected an instant, casualty-free campaign, the truth remains that, Iraqi military resistance is scattered and unable to withstand the onslaught of American forces. In the words of General Tommy Franks of the U.S. Central Command, Iraqi resistance has been "sporadic" and coalition forces have made "rapid – in some cases dramatic progress." Such course of events – not to mention over 3,000 Iraqi soldiers who have surrendered to the US force in the first days of the war – is in no way reminiscent of the American entrapment in the forests of Vietnam by the resolute fighters of Vietcong.

On the contrary, rapid progress of the coalition forces, high numbers of Iraqi defectors, and low support for the Hussein regime within the civilian population should assuage the fears that majority of Iraqis perceive Americans as enemies. If the war is swift, precise, and, within possibility, void of civilian casualties, it is likely that many Iraqis will regard occupying American forces as liberators, and offer reasonable cooperation in the rebuilding process.

What about ethnic fractionalization in Iraq? Iraq is one of the most diverse countries in the Arab world, with a majority population of Shiite Arabs, who predominate in the south, as well as large minorities of Sunni Arabs in the center, Kurds in the north and

smaller groups of Assyrians, Turkmen, Armenians and Jews. Perhaps multiple national and religious divides will turn that country into a hodge-podge of warlike sultanates, burying any hope for democracy?

It need not be so. In a recent article entitled *Does a Liberal Democracy Presuppose a Cultural Nation? Four Arguments* professor Arash Abizadeh of Wesleyan University provides a compelling example to show that trust in democratic institutions is free from cultural influences: "I would wager that, given the choice, informed Iranian journalists, accused of some crime would 'trust' a German judge to grant them a fair trial far more than they would trust an Iranian judge, with whom they presumably share the same culture. Certainly in debates about where to try Pinochet, there were many Chileans who 'trusted' British and Spanish judges far more than they did Chilean judges. It is difficult to see a shared culture as the key explanatory variable, much less a necessary condition for social trust in institutions."

Ethnic diversity and cultural idiosyncrasies of Iraq in no way prohibit an emergence of democracy in that country. Yet, it is important to realize that a network of democratic institutions that command respect of the multiethnic population will not emerge automatically with the ousting of the Saddam's regime. A continuous political, economic and military commitment on behalf of the U.S. is indispensable for democratization of Iraq.

On the domestic front – that is, inside the post-war Iraq – the greatest challenge for the U.S. will be the institution building. Following the war, Iraq will have to submit to an occupying military government that would guarantee security during the initial phases of the reconstruction. Subsequently, the military administration should cede its control to a friendly civilian government.

In order to build Iraq as a democratic state, creation of a constitutionally entrenched federalism is of the foremost importance. The new post-war Iraqi government must be pluralist, one that is inclusive of the three major sub-national groups in Iraq. Also, the administration should make it clear that not only the political equality, but also, a fair division of the economic wealth from Iraq's oil and tax revenues would be required in the new federal state. With such assurances, Iraq's post-Saddam leaders will be more likely to embrace a federal political system with the degree of enthusiasm that is necessary for its success.

Externally, reconstruction of Iraq might be hindered by intervention from Turkey and Iran. Turkey would intervene in order to block the Kurds from forming their own state in the north. Iran, on the other hand would like to establish power over the territories in southern Iraq where the Shiites comprise majority of the population. In fact Turkey has already sent a significant number of troops to the Kurdish northern Iraq. The Iranian-backed Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) has also infiltrated the country with an army of approximately 1,000 Arab Shiites, and vowed to fight the U.S. forces if they refused to leave Iraq after removal of Hussein regime.

In response to such cross-border developments, the U.S. should send a strong signal to all countries in the region that Iraq will remain intact once Saddam is overthrown and that no Kurdish state will be created in the north. Also, the U.S. military presence in Iraq needs to be large enough to block any Iranian incursions south of Baghdad and capable to prevent Turkish infiltration into the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq. Finally, American government must make clear to everyone in the region that its military presence in Iraq following the war will not last for ever and will consist of peace-keeping, rebuilding, and supervision of democratic elections – not a single-handed exploitation of the Iraqi oil reserves.

Such an assurance, backed by concrete actions, is likely to convert some of America's current-day foes into allies. In 1999 Ayatollah Sayed Mohamad Baqir Al-Hakim, the leader of SCIRI, remarked that in the post Saddam Iraq all people "should be assured with justice, equality and plurality," and called on international support, "concentrated basically on preventing the [Hussein] regime from practicing repression and on creating of a situation for a regime change." Upon reading these words one might be justified to think that they came from the White House spokesman Ari Fleischer, and not a conservative Iraqi cleric – the leader of SCIRI seems to echo the goals of the Bush administration.

The U.S. government should capitalize upon such attitudes and send a clear message to SCIRI and other concerned parties that its military presence in Iraq will serve one goal above all – to assure all Iraqi citizens with justice, equality and plurality. Ability to send such a message credibly might prove crucial in determining the success of democratic transition in the post-war Iraq.

So far the administration seems to understand that democratization of Iraq depends on ability to act quickly, decisively and inclusively in the aftermath of the war.

According to the specialists from the Agency for International Development the rebuilding of Iraq should last approximately 18 months, and include repairs to the port of Umm Qasr, Basra International Airport and about 1,400 miles of roads.

Other ambitious goals over the next year include provision of dependable water supply and basic health services to the population, as well as creation of financial

infrastructure. The military government would provide sufficient security to carry out various rebuilding projects during that 18-month period.

On the political front Iraqis would get an opportunity to elect a new pluralist government, including all major ethnic factions would be elected. The top-level officials from the ruling Baath party would be barred from occupying leadership positions of any kind in the new government. Those of a lower rank would be allowed to work with the new government. Members of Iraq's exiled opposition would also participate in the rebuilding effort alongside with American-friendly Iraqis from inside the country. Substantial financial investment in reconstruction of Iraq, followed by establishment of a genuinely pluralist government is the only viable means for the United States to get enough Iraqis on board of the democratic reforms.

Even given cooperation of civilian population from the main ethnic groups, the costs of rebuilding Iraq would be substantial. Today the White House has asked the Congress to allocate \$75 billion in emergency funds to fight the war and guarantee stability in the Middle East. A recent report by Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) report predicts that maintenance of approximately 75,000 of American troops in the Gulf for next year would cost at least another \$20 billion dollars. Although some of that money could be raised from exploitation of the Iraqi oil supplies – second in size only to those of Saudi Arabia – the costs would still be daunting. According to CFR, \$5 billion to \$7 billion would have to be invested in Iraq just to boost oil production capacity beyond the current 2.8 million barrels per day in order to generate additional revenues for reconstruction.

The members of the international community also could shoulder some of the rebuilding costs. President Bush endorsed the cost-sharing scenario in a speech a few weeks ago when he said: "...rebuilding Iraq will require a sustained commitment from many nations." While some countries – most notably Japan – have unofficially expressed their agreement to participate in the post-war reconstruction, the scope of international involvement might be limited by the failure of the United Nations to pass the second resolution, explicitly authorizing the use of force against Iraq. In the absence of such a resolution, the international involvement would be limited, at least in the beginning, to the "coalition of the willing." These are the countries, willing to back the United States in the war against Iraq.

At any rate, rebuilding Iraq is a Herculean commitment and, without a doubt, it will raise many voices of discontent. Yet, notwithstanding the opposition, a quick retreat from the Gulf, following the war is inconceivable under the current circumstances. More importantly, a successful campaign of development and democratic consolidation of Iraq has promising long-term payoffs.

First and foremost, removing of its troops from the post-war Iraq would deny the U.S. an opportunity to influence events and protect its national interests in the region. In the absence of a large standing U.S. military, the post-war Iraq may well turn into a chaotic, stateless mess. Fighting among different ethnic groups, infiltration of Al Qaeda into Iraq and occupation of Iraqi lands by the neighboring states would likely take place, undermining any American long-term interests in the region. Therefore, the U.S. military, should remain in Iraq in order to protect the territorial unity and democratic consolidation of the country until a viable exit strategy appears.

In addition to being the sole viable option of the U.S. foreign policy, involvement in the post-war Iraq is likely to bring about positive strategic and economic payoffs for the United States. Let's take a closer look at some benefits resulting from a democratic transition in Iraq.

Peace and democracy. First, Iraq would be rid of any nuclear and biological weapons it now possesses, and, more importantly, of the government, which for the past three decades has demonstrated a consistent resolve to acquire such weapons. Second, destroying of Iraq's military power would neutralize Israel's most important rival in the region, possibly providing an impetus for the Israel-Palestinian negotiations. Finally, while it is difficult to say whether post-war restructuring would kick off a "domino effect" of democratization, the "new Iraq" would certainly provide an alternative vision for Arabs, contrary to the fanatical rhetoric of the religious extremists.

Regional influence. Iraq is a country rich in natural resources. In addition to its huge oil reserves Iraq is endowed with large amounts of fresh water, on which other Arab nations are at least somewhat dependent. Through its control of Iraqi oil and water the U.S. would acquire an effective and relatively costless way to exert real influence over the Middle East, and further America's political and economic interests by non-military means.

Economic recovery and oil. Quite obviously, the end of uncertainty regarding the war in Iraq would be a very welcome change for the beleaguered stock market. Also, the post-war reconstruction would provide opportunities for American companies to bid for more than \$1 billion worth of government contracts.

Some companies, such as Boots and Coots International Well Control, already work in Iraq on a government contract to restore the oil fields that were destroyed by retreating Saddam's forces. Others plan to come in shortly after the fighting is done

– that's when the total value of government contracts is expected to rise even more. In words of Jack Herrmann, a spokesman for Washington Group, the fourth-largest U.S. construction company, "there'll be a lot more detailed planning once the dust settles, and we'd likely be positioned to benefit from that." In a nutshell, a great number of American firms, including Washington Group, Fluor, Bechtel, Perini, Chicago Bridge and Iron, Parsons Infrastructure and Technology Group, Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas Inc., Black and Veatch, Tyco International Ltd., Brown & Root and others would greatly benefit from helping the government to reconstruct post-war Iraq.

Certainly, direct U.S. control over Iraqi oil will not only generate the profits of selling the oil and servicing the oil fields for American companies, but will also put the U.S. government in a position to effect the price of oil by determining how much of it is sold at every time. This would mean long-term stability of fuel prices, which would contribute to further economic recovery.

In short, America's pledge to democratize and rebuild the post-war Iraq is a consistent part of a long-standing foreign policy aimed at promotion of democratic regimes around the world. While ethnic fractionalization, and cultural peculiarities of the Iraqi population might complicate American involvement following the war, they are by no means insurmountable obstacles to political and economic development of that country. Although the campaign to rebuild Iraq will most certainly require substantial political and economic contributions on the behalf of the U.S., it also promises substantial payoffs in the form of peace, security and economic recovery both in Iraq, the Middle East and in the United States.

Hilary Kramer serves as a business news contributor at FOX News Channel. She joined the network as a regular guest on **Cashin' In** in May 2001.

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