

## **Let's Get Out of Iraq**

Here's how easy it is: it's not our country, and they don't want us there. So we should leave.

It's Iraq, the Iraqis' country, not ours. We invaded it 4 years ago, not because of WMD, or even because of 9/11 – those were rationalizations, claims the administration made to justify doing what they already planned to do, even though they knew they weren't true.

No, we invaded Iraq for the same reason that Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz wrote President Clinton in 1997, urging him to invade Iraq. Their goal, expressed in the Statement of Principles of the Project for a New American Century, was to "promote the cause of political and economic freedom abroad."

Now, I'm for promoting freedom abroad myself. I just don't believe in trying to promote freedom on the point of a bayonet. Maybe in my own country, if absolutely necessary, I would. But not elsewhere – because it's not my country.

But Cheney et. al. believed that the world was their oyster, and that the road to peace and security in the Middle East involved driving tanks through Baghdad. They thought they could just march in, announce that they had brought democracy with them, and they would be greeted like conquering heroes. In fact they were so sure, they decided they didn't even need to bring an occupying force with them.

Now, any student of history would have predicted that the Iraqi army, rather than stand and be annihilated, would melt away into a guerrilla insurgency. Any student of history would have expected ethnic strife to arise between Arabs and Kurds, and religious strife between Sunnis and Shiites. But not this administration. Because they were bringing "political and economic freedom" – but just not to their own country.

But the Iraqis' just weren't all that thrilled at our arrival, and do you blame them? How bad would our government have to be, before we welcomed an invasion from Europe to "change it for the better?" If we had a leader like Saddam, who invaded other countries against overwhelming world opinion, and spied on his own people, and rigged his own elections, and promoted corruption and cronyism, would that be so bad that we'd actually be thrilled to see a French army occupying Washington DC? Of course not. So why would we believe the Iraqi people would be any different?

Those who still support this war – and it was 4 years ago last month, in a letter on this very page, that I announced I didn't –invoke the "Pottery Barn" rule: if you break it, it's yours. "We broke Iraq," they say, "so it's ours to fix." But they still don't get it. No matter how much we've broken Iraq, and we've broken it a lot for sure, but no matter how much we've broken it, it's still not ours to fix. It'll never be ours to fix. Because it's not our country.

The only ones who can fix Iraq are the Iraqi people. And the longer we're there, the longer their politicians can pretend that they're not the problem.

The longer we're there, the longer they can continue their petty squabbles, leaving their fanatical militias to murder indiscriminately.

Yes, once we leave, things will get a lot worse, for a while. And then they'll get better. But our staying longer only delays that civil catastrophe, that mess that was as certain to occur the day we decided to invade as it is today, and will be a year from now. But that's their mess to create, and their mess to resolve, not ours.

Because it's not our country.