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In the past weeks, the newspaper headlines have kept us up on the progress of the war – “Bush Issues War” or “Baghdad Targeted” or “Saddam Threatens.” But recently, the big bold words have had a different slant to them. For most, “Peace Coming” and “U.S. Ousts Regime” present an entirely new situation and challenge to overcome. The attempt to establish democracy is an issue connected with the war but very separate from it at the same time. That Saddam Hussein’s vicious rule and regime in Iraq has ended is definite, but what is yet to come, in terms of a political, social, and economic future, is extremely uncertain and will depend on a large range of details and variables.

As Fareed Zakaria writes in *Newsweek*, America entered the war with Iraq from the very beginning with high aspirations and lofty goals. Granted, we wanted to halt and crush Saddam, but we also wanted to institute a real, genuine, and lasting democracy for the Iraqi people. But such an objective comes with many complications. Like the mistakes that so many previous countries have made, democracy does not simply mean having free elections, for free elections will accomplish nothing if the elected rules autocratically or dictatorially. A democracy must also bring order, liberty, choice, modernization, trust, representation, human rights, and tolerance to a country that has been bereft of such possibilities since the beginning.

At the moment, the United States is attempting to find someone to take charge of the in-transition Iraq, a task that’s proved to be incredibly difficult. Zakaria comments with great insight and truth that “we can leave fast or we can nurture democracy, but we cannot do both.” The American presence has been felt, and it has acted effectively, but if

it remains in Iraq for any longer, it will have overstayed its welcome (if there was ever a welcome to begin with). If the United States continues to stay, the “colonial power” label will quickly and permanently attach itself, something that the knowing U.S. leaders have been trying to avoid. A perfect leader would be one who can overcome the large diversity and variety of ethnicities and backgrounds that the Iraqi people represent, someone who will be able to maintain Iraq’s culture but carefully bring in modernization and economic stability to a precious oil-rich nation. Zakaria also mentions, “In a broader sense, how America handles [this situation] will have a bearing on how the world perceives the United States.” And indeed, many of the doubters continue to doubt; can America the superpower be America the community player? Will we be able to let go of the reins early enough? Will we allow other countries to participate in the renewal and re-establishment of Iraq, such countries as France, if they so wish?

A French political cartoon in *Le Monde* shows the United States trying to figure out what problem to tackle next, now that this Iraqi one is supposedly solved. With Iraqi soldiers, a torn Baghdad, and Saddam Hussein behind him, a George Bush caricature in red, white, and blue stripes sits cross-legged, head in hands, pondering his next moves. The cartoon blatantly illustrates the absurdity of the idea that “we’re done” with Iraq. The next issue to be dealt with is already at our hands, and in some ways, it is more important than the last.