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In my opinion

Birth of a new republic

As I was furiously studying for finals a couple weeks ago, I looked up at the TV and saw one of those images that goes straight from the eyeballs to the heart. At the risk of sounding like a girly man, I don't mind telling you that I got a little teary-eyed. On March 16, Iraq's first democratically elected parliament was sworn in.

I got chills.

We are witnessing the birth of a new nation — a new republic to be a beacon of the light of liberty and a champion for human rights in a region that has recently been enslaved by fear and fanaticism.

The Iraqi parliament has not yet accomplished much, but that just means democracy is working. They're arguing, they're dragging their feet, they're struggling to find compromise in a sea of conflict. They're embroiled in the very essence of democracy. They're learning that things move slowly in a democracy, and that building a coalition takes time.

On this side of the world, we're learning something, too, from our brothers and sisters in the Middle East. We're learning that the will to be free is at the heart of every man and woman. The desire to forge a free future transcends any ethnic or cultural boundaries that may separate us; it is at the very core of our humanity. The racist, ignorant notion that the Arab world "isn't ready" for democracy has been exposed as a fallacy.

Is the situation in Iraq stable? Of course not. Democracy is a destabilizing influence; that doesn't mean it's not exactly what the region needs. After 30 years of sadistic totalitarianism, I think stability and preservation of the status quo is the last thing Iraq needs.

Democracy does not come without cost and struggle. Some point to



GABE BRADLEY
THE WRITING ON THE WALL

the bombings in Baghdad as a sign that democracy is not taking root in Iraq, obviously ignorant the fact that our very own White House still has scorch marks from when the British torched the place in the War of 1812 — that was 23 years after the country ratified the Constitution. We had to fight not only to get our democracy, but also to keep our democracy. We too had to defend our capital city from those who designed to re-enslave us.

In 1776, Thomas Paine, one of America's first best-selling authors, encouraged the continental army in "The American Crisis" with these words: "Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated." These famous words apply today just as they did then.

Over two decades ago, Ronald Reagan had the courage to dream of a world without the "evil empire," at a time when few could even imagine the downfall of the Soviet Union. The fall of the Soviet Union was destabilizing, but it was good and necessary. So now George Bush dares to dream of a democratized Middle East.

Just try to imagine it. The Middle

East used to be the center for art, culture and learning in the world. Out of this desert blossomed poetry and music the likes of which the world had never seen. The Middle East boasts accomplishments in math, science and philosophy. Also, the world's second largest religion originated here. This is a beautiful place with beautiful people.

Imagine the oasis it could once again be if these people are allowed to reclaim their dignity and wrest control of their lives from the tyrants and despots who have been allowed to determine the region's destiny for far too long.

This is the most exciting time to watch the Middle East since the advent of Israel in 1948. This is a great time to be alive and a great time to be a proponent of freedom and liberty.

People argue over which way the media is biased. The truth is, it's split pretty much down the middle. Liberals tend to dominate newspapers and broadcast news, while Conservatives tend to dominate radio and cable news. In time, though, the day to day news cycles will fade and history will be left to tell the story of how democracy came to the Middle East.

And while George Bush is too busy making history to give much thought to how history will remember him, as a proud citizen of Pundit-Ville, I'd like to give imagining the future a shot.

I believe our children's children will not read about a village idiot, they will read about a leader who fought for democracy. He will be compared to Reagan, Truman and JFK rather than to Johnson and Nixon. This war will be compared to World War II and the Cold War rather than to Vietnam. The history of democracy will post this one to the "W" column.

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Editorial

Two words of advice for government: Step off

Terri Schiavo — wait, don't flip that page just yet. In the event that you've been living under a rock, the case of Florida resident Terri Schiavo involves a legal and emotional battle between Schiavo's parents and her husband regarding whether to remove Terri from life-support. She has been in vegetative state for the past 15 years, and her husband says she never wanted to live like this, but her parents say she could recover. The case has been subjected to overblown national scrutiny, but the political implications pertain directly to all of us.

Oregon has repeatedly renewed its vow to keep assisted suicide legal here, but in light of the Florida government's brash decision last year to intervene on behalf of Schiavo's parents and prevent the removal of her feeding tube, Oregon citizens may have reason to fear. In Florida, the state government sided with Schiavo's family, but the decision over Terri's life is legally only her husband's to make. This fact was ignored. A government overstepping the wishes of a patient's legal guardian or next of kin, such as a husband or wife, based on emotional or religious appeal sets a scary precedent. This is especially true in the context of a highly contested act such as assisted suicide.

The Republican-dominated Congress severely overstepped their authority in allowing Schiavo's parents to move their battle out of Florida state courts and into the federal government judicial system. The old Republican creed was to keep government out of personal and state affairs; the new Republican creed appears to be to keep government out of personal or state affairs — unless Conservatives have a vested, usually religious interest in those affairs. Oregonians surely remember Ashcroft's attentive and generally unwelcome concern over our Death with Dignity Act.

This issue is weirdly relevant to Schiavo. For 11 days Schiavo's feeding and water tubes have been disconnected, and while starvation is surely not an easy way to die, most medical experts agree it is unlikely that Schiavo is aware of pain in her present state. Her parents claim that Schiavo is speaking, or asking to remain alive, a claim refuted by her doctors who noted the spastic, unconscious nature of her vocalizations. Still, many who begged for government intervention have lamented Schiavo's suffering as she dies.

If she is experiencing pain, then perhaps the Schiavo family, and the state of Florida in general should take another look at their own regulations over assisted suicide. In Oregon, Schiavo might have been granted her right to die without lingering on the brink of starvation. In the end the answer is simple. Michael Schiavo has made the legal decision that his wife would not wish to be kept alive, and now that the courts have overruled inappropriate government intervention, a swift death would surely be more dignified for everyone involved.

The choice over life and death is not an easy one to make. The government should sit this one out. As long as the patients and family involved are operating under legal pretenses, the federal government should step aside in most every case involving a choice, a life and dignity.

OREGON DAILY EMERALD LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged, and should be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com or submitted at the Oregon Daily Emerald office, EMU Suite 300. Electronic submissions are preferred. Letters are limited to 250 words, and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submissions should include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style. Guest submissions are published at the discretion of the Emerald.

INBOX

Forth Estate turned into a warehouse.

Gerry Rempel
Eugene

Board carefully considers student election schedule

As the term begins, students are blessed with a few weeks of calm when their school work load has not peaked and their freshly tanned bodies are just easing into new classes. What better time in the term to hold a student election, when students are not as pressured by scholastic demands and might actually have time to attend events that the Elections Board holds. The Elections Board understands the importance of election dates, which is why we carefully researched and archived past criticisms. These dates were not picked by "stabbing blindly at (our) desk calendars" ("Early ASUO election date leaves students uninformed," ODE, March 28) but rather with careful consideration of the Constitutional Court and the Oregon Daily Emerald's past recommendation to keep elections out of

law school dead week and finals. By considering these dates, the Elections Board is striving to hold elections in the best interest of the student body. In this circumstance, the best interest of students may not be the best interest of the press, and therefore the elections board will work extremely hard to facilitate the Oregon Daily Emerald and all other media outlets.

The Elections Board recognizes that this timeline could make it difficult for media outlets to provide the best coverage, especially when there is little time to contact and interview candidates. We apologize for any inconvenience this has provided for the Emerald staff, and we are dedicated to informing students to the best of our ability given the restrictions on date.

If any student at this university feels that they do not have the information needed to understand a political candidate, we urge you to e-mail or call the Elections Board. We are more than happy to put you in contact with any member of any campaign.

2005 ASUO Elections Board