

OPINION

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LETTERS to the EDITORS

Let's focus on future of Iraq, not the past

To the Editors:

This town, this state, indeed the whole country is abuzz in oversimplifications. When it comes to Iraq, so-and-so is "anti-war" or "wants to cut and run." The other so-and-so "has no regard for human life" or "has no plan for getting out." Each side tries to push the other into extreme positions that are clearly indefensible.

And why not — with an election coming up, each side needs votes and it's important to disparage the opposition. After all, voters want clear choices, so reduce the messages to 30-second sound bites, and repeat them over and over — on the air and in person as well. It's just like selling toothpaste. Right?

Wrong! Yes, the country is mightily divided on the war. But more important it's mightily confused — and discouraged as well. What we need is an airing of the pros and cons of the various unpleasant choices facing us. Who cares that 65% of the American people now think invading Iraq was a mistake and only 40% thought so a year ago?

The decision to invade Iraq is history and cannot be undone. And so, as well, are all the errors in planning and execution. Those costs are, in the terms of an economist, "sunk costs." The money has been spent, we cannot get it back. We cannot control the past, but we can control the future — or at least influence it, and that's where we should focus our analysis and discussion.

Let's think through what might happen if we pull out and Iraq falls into civil war. Many innocent Iraqi people would die, for sure. America's credibility would suffer.

Oil supplies might be endangered. Terrorism might increase, forces opposed to democracy might prevail. Let's analyze the possible negative effects and think through steps we might take to handle them.

Between now and November, we, the voting public, should quiz the politicians on these issues. We should ask them to tell us what they predict will happen if we just "get out" or how events will play out if we "fight on until we achieve vic-

tory." And how about some creative approaches? Suppose we initiate talks with the government of Iran, perhaps negotiating a compromise on their nuclear weaponry in exchange for stability in Iraq and Lebanon.

In truth, detailed discussions on these issues can be found in places on the Web and in various journals. But our politicians, and the mass media that cover them, are loathe to get into these kinds of details, fearing they will either confuse or bore us.

Well, surprise, we are not as dumb or uninterested as they think. Indeed, politicians who step forward and address the situation in Iraq intelligently and articulately will distinguish themselves and impress voters. Regardless of the conclusions they draw or positions they take, they will [get] votes for just being forthright.

We are, after all, not voting on policy referendums in November, we are electing people to represent us, and we need the best and the brightest we can find.

JOHN M. ARMSTRONG
Beaver Brook Road, Aug. 14

Americans must stand up to GOP abuses

To the Editors:

After losing the Connecticut Democratic primary, Senator Joseph Lieberman characterized his loss as a win for "the old politics of partisan polarization," and pledged that, in his words, "For the sake of... our country and my [Democratic] party, I cannot and will not let that result stand." These are quite ironic statements to say the least for

to an Executive Branch bent on exceeding the bounds of constitutional authority. It further is well established that a GOP strategy of replacing party moderates with hard-right politicians has resulted in our nation being governed substantially to the right of the political center preferred by most Americans.

Yet, instead of decrying these activities, Mr. Lieberman ironi-

to GOP abuses are now higher than ever, given the threats posed by the executive branch to our Constitution's integrity and recent revelations of that branch's plans to possibly inflict war against Iran and/or Syria despite the strained state of our military.

Considering the result of the Connecticut Democratic primary (and notwithstanding a misguid-