

International Affairs Forum Interview:

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Ambassador Marc Ginsberg – U.S. Ambassador to Morocco (1994-1998), chair of the Alliance for American Leadership, and a Foreign Affairs Analyst for Fox News Channel. Ambassador Marc Ginsberg has several decades’ experience involving U.S. foreign, economic, and defense policy in the Middle East. He is often a guest on CNN, Fox News and MSNBC.

International Affairs Forum: The Bush administration and the Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi stated that the violence in Iraq will not delay the elections scheduled for January 2005. How realistic is their claim?

Ambassador Marc Ginsberg: There are a lot of security problems in Iraq especially in the “Sunni Triangle”. The continued violence raises serious questions. This may alter the elections. But even if the elections are not perfect, I would rather see Iraqis having elections than not having elections at all. To make blank accusations that the elections will be completely successful or unsuccessful is engaging in a lot of wishful or unwishful thinking.

IA-Forum: In your opinion, was the war in Iraq worth it?

Mr. Ginsberg: Saddam Hussein has violated sanctions and United Nations resolutions for over 12 years. The UN

did not do anything about it. Diplomacy was failing as France, China and Russia were all increasingly violating the UN imposed sections. Furthermore, the international civil servants working to ensure that the sanctions are effective were either incompetent or corrupt. I am strongly in favor of holding Saddam Hussein accountable for the gross human rights violations and for the violations of the UN resolutions.

IA-Forum: Does this mean that you support President Bush’s decision to invade Iraq?

Mr. Ginsberg: I would have gone about it a very different way. The complications that arose since the end of the invasion are huge. I was in favor of having the UN inspectors complete their process of inspection and slowly escalate punitive actions against Saddam’s army. These actions should have been conducted by air-strikes only. This would have increased the

pressure on Saddam. The Bush administration rushed into a war. I honestly feel that Secretary of State Powell appeared in front of the United Nations believing that he had solid evidence that Iraq had and was trying to develop weapons of mass destruction. Now we know that the intelligence was completely wrong. There was no “smoking gun”.

IA-Forum: Senator Kerry recently stated that the Bush administration policy in Iraq isolates the US from its allies rather than isolating the terrorists. Can Kerry improve the US relations with France and Germany?

Mr. Ginsberg: This is the testament to the failure of the Bush administration policies. These wrong policies and actions alienated many of our good friends. But even if Kerry is elected president, I don't think the French and the Germans will do anything to substantially change their attitude towards Iraq. The French President Chirac had a politically incestuous relationship with Saddam before the invasion and was opposing any actions from the start. What is more important, is our relationship with other European allies and our relationship with our allies in the Middle East. In my judgment, Kerry's election will significantly improve the US relations with our allies in the Middle East.

IA-Forum: Should the international community get involved in Iraq? Shouldn't the US and Britain be solely responsible for finishing the work they started?

Mr. Ginsberg: After the invasion, Iraq has become a jihadists magnet. It is crystal clear that Iraq must not become a failed state. It is in everyone's best

interest for Iraq to be a stable democracy. The consequences of a failed Iraqi state will be on both regional and world security. This should be the bases on which we should cooperate with our allies. We and our allies should overcome the disagreements that arouse from the Bush administration's unilateral decision to invade Iraq. The United States should also change some of its policies in order to win back some our allies. This has been a consistent failure of the Bush administration.

IA-Forum: According to Western analysts, the number of Muslims around the world espousing radical beliefs is growing rapidly. Did the global war on terror and the war in Iraq fuel the perception that Islam is under attack by the West?

Mr. Ginsberg: I do not subscribe to the view that the occupation of Iraq was the beginning of a great resurgence of radical Islam. That was well under way before the invasion of Iraq. However, the US invasion of Iraq helped to exacerbate the situation. The fact is that even before we invaded Iraq there were 30,000 to 40,000 thousand Al-Qaeda jihadists worldwide, planning and working on the destruction of the West. Even if we open a dialogue with the radical Islamists nothing is going to change their view. This war is a struggle for the “Islam soul” and we are caught up in the middle of it.

IA-Forum: Many Western political analysts and government officials call for moderate Muslims in Iraq and elsewhere to step up and support the democratization favored by the West. Why should moderate Muslims support the West?

Mr. Ginsberg: It's the Muslims who have to decide whether or not their legacy of the 21st century will be democratic reform or radical Islam. Radical Islamists will never destroy the United States or Europe. They want to resurrect Islamic radicalism in the Middle East. The moderate Muslims who do not want to see oppressive religious governments should step up. It is mainly their struggle, not ours. The

question is also whether radical Islamists will be able to intimidate moderate Muslim leaders by assassinations and internal civil unrests. That is what this struggle is about.

IA-Forum: Ambassador Ginsberg, thank you very much for the interview.

Mr. Ginsberg: Thank you.

