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Scholar, former Congressman advocates public debate on American democracy

As Californians watch the people of Iraq shape their future government and consider adopting democratic principles, a former Congressman turned scholar suggests that Americans must pay attention to the future of their own democracy or risk unsettling changes.

Glen Browder, a distinguished visiting professor at the Naval Postgraduate School who served as Alabama's 3rd District congressman from 1989-1997 following terms as Alabama secretary of state and a state legislator, is the author of *The Future of American Democracy: A Former Congressman's Unconventional Analysis*. He is planning a series of appearances and events in California and the Washington, D.C. area over the next few months to promote public discussion of democracy.

Leon Panetta, former White House chief of staff who is now director of the Leon & Sylvia Panetta Institute for Public Policy at the California State University at Monterey, sees Browder's book as "a wake-up call" that "challenges all of us to awake...and restore the fundamental strength of our democracy."

Browder wrote *The Future of American Democracy* because he believes that, "Growing philosophical tensions over historic ideals, cultural values and principles of governance are transforming our national democratic experiment. Our civic mix of people, politics and government no longer works the way it has in the past. Therefore, it is time for serious national dialogue about America."

Details about the book and Browder's efforts to promote a national debate are available at the web site [FutureofAmericanDemocracy.org](http://www.futureofamericandemocracy.org) ([HYPERLINK](#) "<http://www.futureofamericandemocracy.org/>" <http://www.futureofamericandemocracy.org/>) and Browder may be contacted directly at 831-656-2733.

In addition, the following seven points offer added perspective.

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SEVEN POINTS ABOUT *THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY*

1. WHO IS GLEN BROWDER AND WHAT IS *THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY*?

Glen Browder is distinguished visiting professor of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School and eminent scholar in American Democracy at Jacksonville State University in Alabama. Dr. Browder has bridged the gap between classroom civics and real-world government during a diverse career as public official, political activist, and professional educator. His extensive public service (as United States Congressman, Alabama Secretary of State, and Alabama State Legislator), political experience (as party official and campaign consultant), and academic background (as political science professor) have focused on political reform and adjustment to a changing world. In *The Future of American Democracy: A Former Congressman's Unconventional Analysis* (University Press of America, 2002), Browder questions America's democratic destiny and encourages national dialogue about the uncertain future of our "Great Experiment."

2. WHY DID GLEN BROWDER WRITE *THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY*?

The former Congressman says that when he left politics a few years ago, major publishers were interested in standard college texts and partisan kiss-and-tell books—but he wasn't. "I wanted to talk seriously and unconventionally about what I considered the most important issue of contemporary public life—the future of American democracy—but apparently nobody in the commercial publishing business shared my ideas. Over time, I would learn many realistic, sometimes discouraging, sometimes rewarding lessons about the writing and publishing world—and retrospectively, the most useful lesson I learned was pretty simple: I wrote the book that I wanted to write rather than what other people told me to write; and I'm happy with the outcome."

3. WHAT'S SO "UNCONVENTIONAL" ABOUT BROWDER'S ANALYSIS?

Browder's analysis is an unusual challenge (comprehensive in its scope, bold in its critique, yet responsible in its provocation) to conventional democratic wisdom from someone who should know (based on a unique combination of political experience and academic credentials) what he's talking about. Unfortunately, Browder says, "Current public discussion about American democracy is a stale orthodoxy of simplistically-progressive ideas buttressed by theoretically-limited and politically-cautious analysis; furthermore, those who muster sufficient civic courage to sound the alarm too often are afflicted with excessive ideological arrogance." After a lengthy career rooted in practical reform, he contradicts conventional democratic wisdom that the cure for America's ills is

more democracy; and he confronts the uncertain future of our Great Experiment with provocative but constructive recommendations for transforming America.

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Naval Postgraduate School: Browder
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4. WHAT IS THE THESIS OF *THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY*?

Browder argues that America is changing in ways that are important and unsettling for the future of American democracy. Inevitable systemic developments and growing philosophical tensions over historic ideals, cultural values, and principles of governance are transforming our national democratic experiment. Our civic mix of people, politics, and government no longer works the way it has in the past; and we seem to be tiring of the Great Experiment itself. Therefore, it is time for serious national dialogue about America—including some alternative scenarios and the possibility of a transformational “New America”—in the Twenty-First Century.

5. WHAT IS THE CENTRAL QUESTION POSED IN *THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY*?

According to Browder the central, disturbing question for Twenty-First Century America is as follows: “Can our nation—a people of growing cultural diversity with increasingly divergent ideals, values, and governance principles, in a constrained systemic environment—continue to sustain our collective pursuit of freedom, equality, and justice through the traditional framework of limited, representative government?” To put this idea into more urgent terms, “How far can America pursue the Great Experiment without succumbing to the inherent, destructive tendencies of democracy?” Or, more bluntly and rhetorically, “Is America dying?”

6. WHY IS THIS BOOK/MESSAGE OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO CALIFORNIANS?

This book and its message should be especially interesting to Californians because Browder suggests “The California Analogy” as a contemporary, perhaps ominous, vision of America’s democratic future. In a chapter on “What America Might Look Like in 2050”, Browder proposes that California is going through inevitable systemic challenges slightly ahead of the rest of the country; and Californians seem to be struggling—pretty distemperately—in that process. After assessing Golden State society, politics, government, and democracy as portentous embodiment of national democratic distemper, he concludes: “The analogous dynamics of the contemporary California political system thus raise particularly tricky questions and provide some useful points of guidance about

important developments—the delicate, difficult, dangerous interplay among diversity, divergence, dissentience, and democracy—in future America.”

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7. WHAT DOES BROWDER’S “THESIS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY” TELL US ABOUT DEMOCRATIZATION ENDEAVORS IN IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN, AND OTHER CULTURES?

Essentially, Browder’s analysis suggests that we be very careful and constrained in our attempts to export American democracy. America’s original, open, natural environment and philosophical national mindset provided very advantageous systemic conditions for a “national experiment in democratic ideals”. These advantages allowed a diverse people to develop, over time, a limited, representative process of governance whereby we might pursue—unevenly but progressively—our fuzzy notions of individualism, equality, and justice. Attempting to transfer America’s “Great Experiment” to less propitiously blessed areas and cultures of the world requires splendid but arrogant naïveté. In fact, any American efforts toward international democratization should be attempted cautiously in humble, limited, incremental fashion; and we must proceed on such ventures with extreme patience, hopefully some luck, and advance realization that we may not really like the outcome.