PRECEDENTS, VARIABLES, AND OPTIONS IN PLANNING A U.S. MILITARY DISENGAGEMENT STRATEGY FROM IRAQ

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Comments pertaining to this report are invited and should be forwarded to: Director, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Ave, Carlisle, PA 17013-5244.

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FOREWORD

The United States is engaged in a massive effort to rehabilitate the government and political culture of Iraq, following the destruction of the Saddam Hussein regime in spring 2003. The U.S. goal and ideal for Iraq is the establishment and maintenance of a strong, self-sufficient, and forward-looking government. Currently, Iraq is in transition, as that country's political leaders seek to establish a new, more representative form of government, while at the same time attempting to cope with a vicious ongoing insurgency. To accomplish these tasks, the government needs significant U.S. military support which will be reduced and then eliminated over time as the Iraqis hopefully become more self-sufficient. According to President George W. Bush in his June 25, 2005, address to the nation, "We will stay in Iraq as long as we are needed—and not a day longer."

The questions of how to empower the Iraqis most effectively and then progressively withdraw non-Iraqi forces from that country is a complex issue that often has been oversimplified in many of the current media debates. Often, political commentators of various stripes reduce complex arguments and multidimensional planning problems to simple slogans suggesting that victory is either inevitable or impossible. Under these circumstances, there are too few serious discussions of problems, opportunities, and meaningful precedents that might be useful in developing guidelines and considerations for U.S. policy in Iraq. In this monograph, Drs. W. Andrew Terrill and Conrad C. Crane seek to present the U.S. situation in Iraq in all of its complexity and ambiguity, with policy recommendations for how that withdrawal strategy might be most effectively implemented.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to offer this monograph as a contribution to the national security debate on this important subject as our nation continues to grapple with a variety of problems associated with the U.S. presence in Iraq and the new strategic reality created by the decision to seek to rehabilitate the Iraqi polity. This analysis should be especially useful to U.S. military strategic leaders as they address the complicated interplay of issues related to exiting Iraq in a politically acceptable and constructive manner.



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W. ANDREW TERRILL joined the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) in October 2001, and is SSI's Middle East specialist. Prior to his appointment, he served as a Middle East nonproliferation analyst for the International Assessments Division of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL). In 1998-99, Dr. Terrill also served as a Visiting Professor at the U.S. Air War College on assignment from LLNL. He is a former faculty member at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, and has taught adjunct at a variety of other colleges and universities. He is a retired U.S. Army Reserve lieutenant colonel and a Foreign Area Officer (Middle East). Dr. Terrill has published in numerous academic journals on topics including nuclear proliferation, the Iran-Iraq War, Operation DESERT STORM, Middle Eastern chemical weapons, and ballistic missile proliferation, terrorism, and commando operations. Since 1994, at U.S. State Department invitation, Dr. Terrill has participated in the Middle Eastern Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) Track 2 talks, which are part of the Middle East Peace Process. He holds a B.A. from California State Polytechnic University and an M.A. from the University of California, Riverside, both in Political Science. Dr Terrill also holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California.

SUMMARY

The U.S. and coalition invasion of Iraq in spring 2003 has led to the most ambitious U.S. effort at nation-building since the end of World War II. Unlike the aftermath of World War II, however, the United States is faced with a ferocious insurgency that is threatening the emerging government of Iraq and its developing security forces. Moreover, this program of Iraqi political rehabilitation must be carried out in a part of the world that is well-known for its strong sensitivities about Western influence over that region. It must also be carried out without significant, in-country military support from the majority of U.S. allies, with the most important exception being the United Kingdom. Additionally, this transition must not only sweep aside an old society but build a new one based on the cooperation of Shi'ite Arabs, Sunni Arabs, Kurds, and other groups.

Previous U.S. experience in coping with postwar problems has demonstrated that a military occupation resembles the major combat phase of a war in that both require maximum flexibility and adaptability on the part of military forces to meet consistently changing conditions. Moreover, past U.S. experience further illustrates that the population of a democratic country engaged in occupation duties can sometimes become first wary and then disillusioned as the enterprise continues into the indefinite future without clear and rapid progress. In the past, the United States has sometimes had to distinguish between optimal and acceptable end states in the countries being occupied, because the optimal end state is not always attainable, but worst case developments must still be prevented. These experiences are worthy of remembering as the United States struggles with the situation in Iraq.

This report views the empowerment of a viable Iraqi central government and a security force to defend its authority as vital to the future of that country. Thus, to be successful in Iraq, the United States must help empower a functioning and unified Iraqi government, support the effort to build an indigenous security force to protect that government and the Iraqi public, and help prevent a breakdown in those intercommunal relations necessary to foster power-sharing and avoid civil war. The U.S. Government must also do this in a time frame that is acceptable to both Iraqis and U.S. public opinion.

Furthermore, these tasks must be accomplished while coping with an ongoing and highly adaptive insurgency. The deeply challenging and multidimensional nature of this effort leaves little latitude for mistakes by the Iraqi government or in future U.S. dealings with Iraq. The United States must therefore decide how much it is prepared to sacrifice to help create and support a Western-style democratic government in Iraq. Since this is a finite commitment, the question arises as to when and how the United States is prepared to adjust its goals should it be faced with the prospect of less than full democracy in Iraq. A partially democratic system that can be encouraged to become more open even following a U.S. withdrawal would clearly be better than a variety of other plausible alternative regimes.

In Iraq, it may be especially difficult for the United States to discern the optimal time to begin withdrawing the majority of its troops. Balancing the goals of supporting stable Iraqi self-government and leaving Iraq in a timely manner has emerged as a major requirement for U.S. regional policy. It is particularly important that the United States does not insist on remaining in Iraq to support maximalist goals and then find itself unable to sustain an ongoing presence there. The danger of a serious decline in U.S. Army, Army Reserve, and National Guard recruiting and, perhaps at some point, retention is of concern, although the latter is not currently a serious problem. The potential for decreasing U.S. public support of the war also exists. While important indications of progress are coming from Iraqi state-building efforts, the public may ultimately judge the success of U.S. activities in Iraq based on whether these efforts allow U.S. troops to begin withdrawing in what to the public is an acceptable time frame. Finally, any prolonged presence of U.S. forces there will require the United States to cope with traditional Iraqi concerns about Western intentions in the region, especially regarding Iraq's oil.

The danger of a hasty, politically-motivated departure from Iraq is also a problem. Police and military forces with incomplete training will likely crumble in the face of the insurgent challenge, and all the effort to create these forces will be rendered meaningless. Likewise, a new and more democratic Iraqi government will need to be protected as various groups attempt to resolve their differences without being overpowered by their sectarian and ethnic grievances and drifting toward civil war. Empowering a legitimate government

to which both Iraqi security forces and citizens can give more than conditional legitimacy will be key to this process. This challenge is mostly an Iraqi one, although the United States will seek to protect emerging Iraqi institutions as a transitional step, while Iraqis prepare to protect themselves.

Without minimizing the problems associated with the current situation, this report recommends strongly against the establishment of a fixed timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops, unless Iraq's government fails and the situation becomes hopeless. Establishing the point at which Iraq can fend for itself with a declining U.S. troop presence will be a difficult challenge for U.S. intelligence analysts as they seek to remove a sometimes unpopular U.S./coalition presence, while not setting into motion the prospect of Iraqi government collapse, anarchy, and civil war. Potentially successful dates for beginning a withdrawal must be teased out by analysts weighting a miasma of complex political, military, and economic factors and cannot be established in a manner that bypasses intelligence judgments, destroys the option for flexibility, and risks a premature, haphazard withdrawal that may lead to the collapse of all efforts associated with the U.S. presence in Iraq.

The information cut off date for this study was August 8, 2005.

PRECEDENTS, VARIABLES, AND OPINIONS IN PLANNING A U.S. MILITARY DISENGAGEMENT STRATEGY FROM IRAQ

> Hussein is now deposed and no banned weapons were present. So why don't we leave?
>
> Gregg Easterbrook[1]
> *The New Republic*

> It's only complete nonsense to ask the troops to leave in this chaos and this vacuum of power.
>
> Ghazi al-Yawer[2]
> Iraqi Vice President

> As in Palestine, the occupation is the main cause of the current troubles.
>
> Stanley Hoffman
> Harvard University[3]

Introduction.

Having invaded Iraq and deposed a tyrannical dictator in early 2003, the United States assumed some important commitments to the Iraqi population, who were left without a government or viable security forces following the destruction of Saddam Hussein's regime. The U.S. administration has defined a central part of its approach to the situation as "leaving Iraq better than we found it."[4] In its maximalist form, this statement calls for empowering a decent and accountable government and providing strong indigenous security forces to defend the country and maintain internal security. At a minimum, leaving Iraq better than we found it requires a stable government and the continued national unity of Iraq (rather than its separation into smaller warring territories), as well as the avoidance of civil war.[5]

So long as Iraq remains unified with an acceptable degree of domestic stability, security, and harmony, it would be difficult to find a government worse than that of Saddam Hussein. A government

that takes the interests of various tribes and religious and ethnic communities into account and shows respect for human rights would be dramatically better even if it does not immediately emerge as a fully functioning constitutional democracy. A withdrawal of most or all U.S. and coalition troops from Iraq under these circumstances would have achieved some important victories, although it would not immediately create a Western-style democracy or directly support the program of greater Middle East democratization.[6]

Yet, if the United States has a responsibility to support Iraqi efforts to establish a tolerant and pluralistic government, it also has a responsibility to return Iraqi decisionmaking to Iraqis as quickly as this can be responsibly done. Indeed, many Iraqis have shown strong interest in the rapid departure of U.S. forces from their country, although others are at least ambivalent about the timing of such a withdrawal.[7] A number of major Iraqi politicians have attempted to address this divide by noting the practical problems of immediate U.S. withdrawal, while stating that they would like to see the number of U.S. troops reduced within what is usually a relatively short time period.[8] Still, the Iraqi population (with the almost certain exception of the Kurds) is likely to become more impatient with the U.S. presence over time, and it may not be possible for either the United States or the Iraqi government to ignore these sentiments indefinitely.[9]

The U.S. obligation to depart Iraq in a timely and organized manner also is complicated by the practical problems of an ongoing and evolving insurgency, which includes a variety of diverse elements ranging from foreign Islamic extremists and terrorists to Iraqi Islamists and secular anti-American Iraqi nationalists.[10] The departure from Iraq of substantial numbers of non-Iraqi troops may help to both legitimize the emerging Iraqi government and demotivate the nationalist component of these hostile coalitions. Such a weakening of insurgent motivation can be exploited by an Iraqi government shrewd enough to do so, provided that government also reaches out to all of Iraq's major ethnic and sectarian communities. In the aftermath of a significant withdrawal of U.S. forces, the Iraqi government will face new conditions under which to address the twin challenges of co-opting and rehabilitating redeemable insurgents and waging war against largely irredeemable terrorist

groups. Former Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi has referred to this process of reaching out to insurgent nationalists as rehabilitating "the fringes of the insurgents."[11] It remains to be seen if Allawi's successors (and especially Islamist Shi'ites) will maintain his strong commitment to reaching out to Iraq's Sunni Arabs, while waging unrelenting war against hard-core terrorists.[12] Mixed signals exist here since the Ja'afari government has included a number of Sunnis in the Constitutional Convention but has also continued to favor sweeping de-Ba'athification measures, which have alienated large numbers of Sunni Arabs.[13]

Later in this work, the authors will show that exit strategies following a military intervention often are notoriously difficult to implement.[14] Having shattered the previous government, a responsible occupying power must seriously attempt to create a new political system acceptable to the citizens of that defeated power after the occupier departs. In Iraq, it may be especially difficult to discern the optimal time to leave. Balancing the goals of supporting stable Iraqi self-government and leaving Iraq in a timely manner has emerged as a central challenge of U.S. regional policy. The U.S. and Iraqi leaderships must decide when the government is capable of surviving and moving to consolidate its authority without the presence of large numbers of foreign troops.

The United States must also take special care to avoid leaving Iraq with a government and security system that will crumble in the aftermath, even if the disintegration process is not immediate. Such an eventuality is nothing more than a delayed failure. U.S. leaders do not have the option of departing Iraq by leaving a failed state in place, which in turn would become a haven for terrorists and almost certainly lapse into civil war.[15] The only incontestable reason to accelerate a U.S. departure to a point that would otherwise seem imprudent would be in response to an official request by the Iraqi government for the coalition to do so. Such a request could only reasonably occur if the Iraqi government decides that it can survive without a substantial U.S. presence or at least that its chances are better without such a presence.

Additionally, U.S. policy for remaining in Iraq or departing will not be decided solely on the basis of geopolitical factors and the dynamics of Middle Eastern politics. There are also

important questions of American and coalition domestic political support for a continued major troop presence in Iraq, including public acceptance of the casualties and economic expenditures associated with these policies.[16] Should continuing the Iraq War become deeply unpopular with the American public, pressure may develop for a hastily planned scramble from the country, leaving Iraq with a highly uncertain and frightening future. Thus, to be successful in Iraq, the United States must help empower a functioning and unified government, support the effort to build a security force to protect that government, and help prevent a breakdown in those intercommunal relations necessary to foster power-sharing and avoid civil war. The U.S. Government must also do this in a time frame acceptable both to Iraqis and to U.S. and coalition allies' public opinion. Moreover, these tasks must be accomplished while coping with an ongoing and highly adaptive insurgency. The deeply challenging and multidimensional nature of this effort leaves little latitude for mistakes in future U.S. dealings with Iraq.

The long-term dilemma of the U.S. position in Iraq can perhaps best be summarized as "We can't stay, we can't leave, and we can't fail." The longer that significant numbers of U.S. forces remain in Iraq, the more nationalist resentment builds and the more the United States appears to be an occupier. Additionally, the Army is strained more and the American public may become more uncertain about the wisdom of continuing to wage counterinsurgency war in Iraq. On the other hand, the United States cannot withdraw prematurely and risk a civil war or a return to unrestrained repression. Such a failed result would reinforce perceptions of American foreign policy ineptitude and lack of national will, and compromise the ability of the world's remaining superpower to wield corresponding international influence.

Prior U.S. Efforts at Postwar Stabilization and Political Rehabilitation: The Historical Record.

Historical examples reveal many of the problems that Americans have with postwar stabilization operations and how quickly they can become disillusioned with the process of rebuilding foreign societies. One of the continuing problems with the conduct of

operations to stabilize and rebuild states after decisive combat operations is that civilian agencies lack the capabilities and resources to assume required missions from deployed military forces in a timely or effective manner, even in cases where security is not a major problem.[17] As part of the effort to create a more robust American interagency capacity for such operations, the U.S. State Department recently has created the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (OCRS). The stated mission for this organization is to "Lead, coordinate, and institutionalize U.S. Government civilian capacity to prevent or prepare for postconflict situations, and to help stabilize and reconstruct societies in transition from conflict or civil strife so they can reach a sustainable path toward peace, democracy and a market economy."[18] That closing vision is a laudable one, but the history of past American experiences with such operations suggests that proclaimed goals for endstates are best kept vague or modest. Rarely can the course of reconstruction be predicted, and the ultimate success or failure of such efforts is often predicated on the management of public expectations for their result.

Many sobering insights can be gained from our own national experience with Reconstruction after the American Civil War. Radical Republicans in Congress, supported by Army leaders like General Ulysses S. Grant, championed a vision of a South transformed socially, politically, and economically, but local resistance frustrated their lofty objectives. Despite early advances in expanding civil and political rights, by 1870 papers like the *New York Tribune* were proclaiming that the nation was "tired and sick" of Reconstruction, and pleaded for its end. James McPherson's writings on the ensuing decade have titles like "The Retreat from Reconstruction" and "Reconstruction Unravels," reflecting the disappointing course of reform efforts.[19] A true two-party system did not reemerge in the South until the last third of the 20th century, and it took 100 years for African-Americans there to gain the civil rights and status promised them in the 1860s.

The nation's next experience with rebuilding states came as a result of the Spanish-American War. America was not prepared for its first excursion into Empire, and President McKinley's initial stated vision for endstates of conquered territories remained understandably vague. Goals for the Philippines evolved over time,

and an independent democracy, of sorts, was only established after almost 50 years, and a real democracy did not emerge until the 1980s. The experience with Cuba is particularly revealing as to how flexible strategic goals can facilitate perceived success in occupation. The President's first instructions to his occupation forces emphasized security for the populace along with protection of their personal rights, and, though implying a future "new order of things," was overall very cautious about major changes. In his annual message to Congress in December 1898, McKinley stated that military occupation would continue until "complete tranquility and a stable government" had been achieved in Cuba. He added, "It should be our duty to assist in every proper way to form a government which shall be free and independent." Military governors, most notably General Leonard Wood, used this leeway in an attempt to match their Progressive impulses with local realities and establish "good government" in Cuba. Though contemporary critics pointed out that Wood's efforts brought into "sharp relief the danger involved in [attempting] to transplant institutions which are out of harmony with traditions of a people," he was successful in transferring formal political control back to Cuban authorities in May 1902. The occupation was touted as a great success. It apparently had achieved public security and a stable indigenous government, demonstrated American beneficence, and ended fairly quickly. Since avowed occupation goals had been kept relatively modest, the public did not take much notice when American troops had to return to the island for brief periods to help quell insurrections in 1906, 1912, and 1917, and Wood's electoral and humanitarian reforms were short-lived. Though little real progress had been made, and coups and revolutions continued until the advent of Fidel Castro, generally Cuba attracted little public or international attention for many decades.[20]

A major reason that the continuing troubles in Cuba attracted so little notice was because the world was distracted by the series of crises in Europe that led to World War I. Though President Woodrow Wilson initially tried to keep the United States out of the war, after the nation became an active belligerent, he developed an ambitious postwar agenda that was known as the Fourteen Points. It emphasized liberal democratic values like free trade and self-determination for minorities, was generally a nonpunitive settlement, and relied upon

the creation of a League of Nations to maintain international comity and ensure political independence of all states. The difficulties that Wilson faced in getting Allied approval for his idealistic agenda at the Versailles Conference in 1919 are well-known. One observer called his failure "one of the major tragedies of modern history," as Wilson sacrificed most of his Fourteen Points to get Allied approval for his League of Nations, which failed to be ratified by the U.S. Senate due to Republican intransigence and his own stubbornness.[21] Wilson, and other Allied leaders, also failed to appreciate the strength of anti-democratic forces in Germany and other European states that would produce civil strife and fuel another war.

Allied considerations also influenced the American vision for endstates after World War II. However, while President Franklin D. Roosevelt appeared to echo Wilson's desire for an international body that became the United Nations (UN), FDR's public pronouncements of his vision for the postwar world were much less specific than Wilson's, and behind the scenes he remained much more realistic about what he could achieve. The United States and its allies had an avowed goal of unconditional surrender in order to assure that German and Japanese militarism would never again threaten the world. This vision allowed a lot of postwar leeway as to how it would be accomplished. Interallied and interdepartmental disputes over how Germany should be treated during occupation continued right up to the actual surrender, and the actual occupation directive avoided hard issues or delayed their resolution. A really constructive policy direction for German occupation was not completed until 1947, and the beginnings of the Cold War adjusted it even more. The desire to rearm Germany as a buffer against communism overwhelmed any vestiges of the Morgenthau Plan to make the former Nazi state an agrarian backwater, and by then the Nuremburg trials and a thorough personnel vetting process appeared to have excised the cancer of Nazism from Germany.[22] American occupation policies in the rest of Europe at the end of the war were usually just as incoherent. A recent conference in Vienna on the postwar recovery of Austria concluded that the emergence of a free democracy there occurred despite Allied occupation policies, not because of them.[23]

The reconstruction of Japan did not face the same disputes between allies, but the vision for a specific endstate underwent the

same sort of evolution. The crucial decision to keep the emperor was made only in August 1945 as the surrender was being finalized. By September, General Douglas MacArthur had received a directive which expanded upon the 1945 Potsdam Declaration and made clear that he was to micromanage an accelerated program of demilitarization and democratization throughout all aspects of Japanese life. Historian John Dower has called the agenda of almost 7 years of American occupation "a remarkable display of arrogant idealism." In the end, the Cold War again led to compromises with more conservative elements of Japanese society in order to establish another partner against Communism in the Pacific, but the ideals of peace and democracy did indeed take root in Japan. Even there, however, it would take many years for them to come to full flower.[24]

Occupations in the rest of Japan's lost empire were not as successful. In Korea, for example, Americans again displayed a lack of cultural awareness and attention to detail that contributed to the conditions that led to the outbreak of war there in 1950.[25] Desires for Cold War security trumped any motivation to support democratic reform, and the United States bolstered authoritarian regimes of Syngman Rhee and Park Chung Hee. Only in the 1980s did real democracy begin to appear in South Korea. Lest we judge American reconstruction efforts there too harshly, it must be noted that its northern counterpart is today as far away from "demilitarization and democracy" as any state on earth.

In part to gain French support for the postwar rearming of Germany, the United States had to commit to supporting French efforts to retain its empire in Indochina, eventually drawing this nation into another war in Asia after the French withdrew. National Security Memorandum 288 in March 1964 established the American aim of "an independent, noncommunist South Vietnam" that could stand on its own, and this essential goal was emphasized continually throughout Lyndon Johnson's presidency.[26] That endstate vision appears to be an ideal model, being clear without imposing too many conditions or demonstrating "arrogant idealism," but that is not always a guarantee of success, and it proved unachievable in this case.

The Vietnam case is particularly interesting and an important example of a U.S. attempt to stabilize an allied country and create a

viable nation while waging war against a powerful enemy engaging in both conventional and irregular operations. Vietnam is also important because it represents a Herculean effort for the United States that failed to achieve the U.S. goal of maintaining a stable noncommunist regime in South Vietnam.[27] Comparisons between Iraq and Vietnam have been increasingly cited by those who are angry or disillusioned with the current Iraqi conflict, but there is a severe danger of oversimplifying the similarities between these two conflicts. In Vietnam, the United States was not deeply concerned with advancing democracy. Rather, it sought to prop up an existing government and military rather than create a new one from the ashes of a deposed regime. The United States therefore was only interested in maintaining the status quo. In that respect, the effort in Iraq is much more ambitious. Additionally, in Vietnam, the United States faced a large, motivated, and exceptionally tough enemy military force that had strong and tangible international backing. North Vietnam also had a realistic strategy that ultimately proved successful in seizing control of South Vietnam. The mostly Sunni Iraqi insurgents have almost no prospect of seizing and controlling all of Iraq following a U.S. departure, but under some circumstances they may have a credible chance of toppling the existing Iraqi government following a U.S. withdrawal and then plunging the country into civil war. They apparently hope such a conflict could be concluded on terms favorable to them.

The two aspects of Vietnam and Iraq that show the most similarities involve an effort at state-building in an alien culture that is poorly understood by the United States and the attempt to sustain U.S. domestic support for a prolonged war against an irregular enemy. Even here the similarities are incomplete. In Iraq, the newly created government must do what Vietnam failed to do, establish a viable governing structure and create the forces that are willing to defend that government, but under quite different conditions. While the Iraqis must cope with a deadly enemy insurgency while doing so, this enemy is dramatically less formidable than the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI) and the North Vietnamese. Also, during the Vietnam War, the United States attempted to maintain domestic support for a war that was waged with a conscript military, the use of which was much more likely to produce a strong antiwar movement.

In Iraq, the United States is fighting the war with a volunteer military, without the political problems of a draft, but with the potential danger of running out of recruits.[28]

American efforts at stabilization and reconstruction have not always come as a result of major wars. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has participated in numerous interventions to repair failed or failing states with infusions of liberal democratic principles. The best planned was probably the 1994 incursion into Haiti to restore President Jean-Bertrande Aristide to power and finally establish a functional democratic state. Extensive interagency coordination established a list of tasks and responsibilities to achieve that laudable goal, but again local realities and a lack of long-term will by occupying powers precluded success.[29] At a recent symposium on stability operations, attendees joked sarcastically about the repeated "successful reconstructions" of Haiti, highlighting the apparent intractability of the problems there.[30]

Parties involved in recent stability operations in the Balkans have shown more willingness to stay the course, but long-term success remains elusive. There is peace in Bosnia and Kosovo because of strong military forces deployed there, but the ethnic tensions that spawned fratricidal warfare remain, and the pluralistic democracy the international community wishes to establish is still a dream. Kosovo experienced deadly ethnic rioting as recently as March 2004. After 5 years of international control, that province elected as prime minister a former Albanian guerrilla leader who is being investigated for war crimes against Serbs by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.[31] A recent alarming report by the International Crisis Group on the lack of progress in achieving liberal democratic stability opens with "Time is running out in Kosovo. The status quo will not hold."[32]

According to Kimberly Zisk Marten, this result should not be surprising, as such recent failures to transplant democracy have much in common with similar efforts by colonial powers. The United States, Great Britain, and France have all repeated the aforementioned experience of Cuba in trying to relinquish control of colonial holdings, while leaving lasting positive change behind. The record of international attempts to impose democracy is especially dismal during the wave of such interventions in the 1990s. Looking

at operations such as those in Haiti, the Balkans, and East Timor, Marten concludes "Nowhere have the liberal democratic military peacekeeping operations of the 1990s created liberal democratic societies. They did not even create much forward momentum in that direction, in any of the countries where they were deployed." Her study emphasizes that recent interventions, like the imperial era, demonstrate the continuing ability of disciplined soldiers to establish order, but also shows that liberal democratic states rarely demonstrate the will, or coherent policy direction, to transplant their values to other cultures.[33]

This dismal historical record suggests some guidelines for policymakers: avoid setting the bar too high, or being too specific, when proclaiming visions for postwar endstates. It is relatively easy to remove threats or restore order, but changing values and cultures takes much longer. The same liberal democratic system that seems so worth transplanting also hinders such states from conducting the long-term occupations necessary to make it stick. And even after extended reconstructions, the endstate will still most likely be more a result of local realities than imposed structures. The best course of action appears to be to recognize these trends, and aim for generic peace and stability with unique regional characteristics rather than more specific reforms. This leads to quicker withdrawals and fewer heartaches, even if the result will not be as ideologically tidy as exporting U.S. types of democratic institutions.

The Issue of an Endstate for Post-Occupation Iraq.

The historical examples noted above suggest the exceedingly complex nature of military occupation and the difficulty of empowering the population in question while achieving the endstate that the United States and its indigenous allies desire. These examples also demonstrate that a military occupation resembles the major combat phase of a war in that both require maximum flexibility and adaptability on the part of military forces to meet consistently changing conditions. The basis for this flexibility, however, must include detailed planning based on comprehensive information and intelligence about the country in question. Such planning must also be infused with a healthy sense of what can go wrong in the course

of occupying the particular nation in question.[34] Moreover, the above examples further illustrate that the population of a democratic country engaged in occupation duties can rapidly become first wary and then disillusioned as the enterprise continues into the indefinite future without clear and rapid progress.

A central question of any responsible occupation involves what goals must be achieved to allow the occupying powers to begin withdrawing most or all of their forces in a way that leaves a viable and cohesive society behind. The initial goals for the U.S. administration in invading and occupying Iraq involved removing the Saddam Hussein regime from power and disarming Iraq of its suspected weapons of mass destruction. Other goals favored by the U.S. administration included establishment of a multiethnic/ multisectarian democratic government with a market economy and a basically friendly outlook towards the United States and the West.[35] The sweeping scope of these latter goals now seems especially challenging, and increasing calls are made for leaving Iraq as soon as it has a stable government, even if full democracy is not immediately established there.[36] Given these differences, the question of what is an acceptable U.S./coalition supported endstate for Iraq needs to be considered.

For reasons that will be discussed in detail later in this report, the United States almost certainly has only a limited amount of time that it can maintain large numbers of troops in Iraq (probably no more than an additional 3 years).[37] The U.S. leadership, correspondingly, needs to consider what its minimum goals for Iraq are, and ensure that they are met before political pressures from both the Middle East and within the United States become untenable. These vital or core national interest goals must be met because they relate directly and significantly to the safety and future well-being of the United States and, as such, cannot be voluntarily subjected to compromise.[38] Other subsidiary goals may be possible and desirable but may also be considered expendable if progress on them is deemed to be too costly and difficult or if efforts to implement them threaten core interest goals. To establish vital interest goals, it is probably best to start by considering what endstates in Iraq are clearly unacceptable. The most important of these threats is a large-scale Iraqi ethnic and sectarian civil war. Such a development would polarize major Iraqi groups

forcing most individuals to choose sides, while giving extremists the chance to rise in warring communities. Such a crisis would also have a number of extremely serious ripple effects across the region, threatening U.S. political and economic interests regionally and not simply in Iraq.[39] Thus, avoiding an Iraqi civil war is fundamental to U.S. interests and well-being in addition to being vital to the future of Iraq and the region.

An important ideological goal that the United States has set for Iraq involves creating the conditions that allow democracy or at least power-sharing with minority rights among key communities to flourish—if that is possible. The further advancement of democracy in Iraq will be a complex process that may or may not be aided by the continuing presence of U.S. and other foreign troops in that country beyond the point at which an Iraqi government can survive on its own. There is also a problem if nurturing democracy becomes the justification for a continuing U.S. presence in Iraq. The desire for democracy among at least certain Iraqis may be strong, but nationalism is also a powerful force to be considered. Arab and Iraqi nationalism may be especially powerful in this instance because of long-standing Arab and Iraqi grievances over Western domination.[40]

Considerable disagreement exists in foreign policy circles about the degree to which democracy in Iraq has become important to the U.S. national interest. U.S. vital interests have never demanded a democratic state in Iraq before 2003, and it remains uncertain if Iraq is going to be democratized as the result of a foreign presence in that country. Clearly, the successful consolidation of governmental authority will depend upon the degree to which most Iraqis make supporting and defending the new government a continuing priority. If they do not, it becomes important to ask if the United States can live with less than a Western-style democracy in Iraq and, if so, how much less? Furthermore, if a more modest set of goals becomes inevitable, what is the best way to implement them without abandoning the establishment of full Iraqi democracy in the long term after the departure of all or most U.S. troops?

According to President George W. Bush, one form of government that is not favored but is nevertheless acceptable to the United States is a Shi'ite-dominated Islamic government, so long as such a system

does not become undemocratic or oppressive toward Sunni Muslims, Kurds, or other minorities.[41] Religious Shi'ites are currently the most important leaders of post-Saddam Iraq, and these individuals already have been able to expand their political power dramatically through democratic means. Some observers wonder if the religious leadership of Iraq and its supporters are using democratic institutions to dominate that country without any deep commitment to those aspects of democracy that involve rule of law and minority rights. Moreover, if the Shi'ite religious parties consolidate control over elected institutions, concerns that they will also achieve control over the military and internal security organizations of the state exist. At such a point, very few domestic checks on their behavior regarding the Sunni Arabs, and perhaps secular Iraqis as well, will be available.

While there are troubling questions associated with Shi'ite religious party leadership, the United States cannot allow itself to be placed in the position of maintaining that too many Shi'ites voted in the last election or that Washington supports democracy so long as the countries involved elect leaders favored by Washington. The U.S. commitment to democracy dictates a relationship with the Shi'ite parties as long as they also support all of the central features of democratic government. U.S. support for minority rights and the rule of law is an important part of this relationship.

It also seems possible that a partially democratic Iraq may emerge as a perhaps very long interim solution, if a viable Western-style democracy cannot be created and sustained by Iraqi leaders in the near term. A potentially acceptable, although not optimal, interim solution may include some of the same principles of governance as the current government of Yemen. While Yemen has a very different social and political history from Iraq, some of its governmental procedures appear to be at least an interesting source of ideas. Any comparison between the two countries, nevertheless, must not be drawn too rigidly, since Yemeni society is much less educated, much more tribal, and has no recent history of a strong central government anywhere near the level of Saddam Hussein's regime. Additionally, while Yemen has large Sunni and Shi'ite elements within the population, the Yemeni form of Shi'ism often is considered to be quite close to Sunni Islam.[42] Moreover, Yemeni political approaches

are not techniques to be considered unless Iraq clearly fails to install a more fully democratic government and is descending into political collapse.

Yemen is a mixed political system with both authoritarian and democratic aspects. An elected president and parliament often disagree on important issues. International observers have pronounced various national elections in the 1990s to have been fair, although more recent elections have been marred with serious problems, illustrating a retreat in the democratic process that hopefully would not be duplicated in Iraq, should the Iraqis move toward a partially democratic system.[43] Additionally, domestic opponents of the regime in Yemen may find themselves with substantially less than the full range of constitutional protections found in Western Europe or the United States, and Yemeni security forces operate without many of the constraints found in a more liberal system. Since Yemen's current president comes from a majority tribe and controls the most powerful political party, he can sometimes afford to support a majority rule political system. Interestingly, President Saleh has announced that he will not run for re-election in 2006.[44] This announcement may be genuine, but in the Arab World is widely distrusted as a political tactic, upon which he will ultimately renege.[45]

Yemen also exists with an authoritative national government and some extremely strong subnational units in the form of tribes, which often behave very independently, and are protected by well-armed militias.[46] Allowing the tribes to have some democratic input and domestic autonomy is often easier for the central government than efforts to impose strong political control over tribal areas. The drawback here is that highly autonomous Yemeni tribes are, under some circumstances, willing to protect terrorists from the central government unless they are given incentives not to do so.[47] Moreover, in Yemen, tribes sometimes engage in uprisings against the government, although many of these are more theatrical than real and are aimed primarily at gaining government concessions.[48] While Yemen maintains a workable political system, it is a delicate balance and its principles might not be applied too directly to other nations as anything more than a stopgap measure to prevent worse consequences.

Unfortunately, Iraq also has moved to a situation where almost every important political party has a militia, and the government (like that of Yemen) may have to accommodate itself to this fact and engage in a process of bargaining with powerful local leaders rather than seeking immediate central control. The instability of this type of situation is dangerous, but such a system is also a way to accept the reality of armed local interests and hopefully indefinitely defer any movement toward civil war. Ominously, militias also can serve as the building blocks of civil war, but efforts to disarm them too rapidly can quickly provoke a backlash by those who may consider themselves undefended without such institutions.[49]

Interestingly, Iraq's Kurdish President, Jalal Talabani, advocates some aspects of a decentralized militia-oriented system. Talabani stated in April 2005 that the insurgency could be ended immediately if the authorities could make use of Kurdish, Shi'ite, and other militias.[50] The Kurdish leadership, in general, have for some time advocated a muscular form of "federalism" which is really more confederal. Talabani has also stated that without federalism, the Kurds will no longer consider themselves to be Iraqis.[51] Additionally, the type of federalism of interest to the Kurds involves much more expansive borders than the current Kurdish area as well as Kurdish control over the disputed city of Kirkuk, which the Kurds refer to as their Jerusalem.[52]

Other possibilities for an Iraq unable to maintain viable democratic institutions are even less desirable, and any U.S. decision to accept a partial democracy in Iraq may involve efforts to stave off alternatives that are worse. A new, but less oppressive dictatorship ("Saddam lite") would be a failure for the United States unless this system served only as an interim step (which would be difficult to guarantee). Additionally, an Islamic regime that adopts nondemocratic means would be a major failure by U.S. standards. Each of these types of systems would betray the promise of freedom to the Iraqis and fail to justify the massive cost of the war in U.S. lives, wounded, and resources. Such regimes also may lack legitimacy and may choose to assure their continuation in power through increasing efforts at repression. Nevertheless, a modernizing, non-Islamist strongman may not constitute an immediate threat to U.S. vital interests and

still be pressured to democratize in order to maintain the flow of U.S.-supported international aid. A friendly but undemocratic Iraq that does not engage in massive human rights violations would look very similar to an array of current U.S. allies in the region, and this outcome, in most cases, would still be better than a sustained and bloody civil war should these two alternatives become the only available choices. Ongoing pressure to democratize could still be leveled at such a regime, even in the aftermath of a U.S. withdrawal, since there would be a strong Iraqi interest in maintaining the flow of U.S. aid for reconstruction.

The Issue of Iraqi Governmental Legitimacy.

As noted earlier, a central issue in establishing a U.S. disengagement policy is that of Iraqi government legitimacy as the basis for an authoritative government. To move this policy forward, the United States has the unenviable task of helping to empower an emerging government, while avoiding the appearance of dominating that government. Under Saddam Hussein, as well as a variety of his predecessors, repression was the bond that held the system together, and public order was maintained through fear and intimidation. Such an approach is now unacceptable, and a new system based on the rule of law is the ideal. Such a system requires a government with a high level of domestic legitimacy, which is usually based on meeting the needs of its citizens as they define those needs.

In addressing the issue of Iraqi governmental legitimacy, U.S. civilian and military intelligence organizations will be forced to make periodic assessments about the government's progress in gaining the support of its citizens. Such assessments can be used to help plan U.S. policy regarding exit strategy. Unfortunately, political legitimacy is an extremely difficult concept to measure.[53] Often the degree of legitimacy enjoyed by a government is only demonstrated when that government either survives or crumbles in the face of a major challenge to its existence. Nevertheless, it is vital to attempt to understand the factors that influence whether a government is viewed as legitimate or not, considering both region-specific and

more universal factors that can be expected to influence the Iraqi population on this issue.

In the United States, both the January 2005 Iraqi elections and the expected follow-on elections are viewed as central elements for establishing governmental legitimacy. In Iraq, a government education campaign attempted to depict the January 2005 elections and the constitutional process set into motion by these elections as Iraq's salvation.[54] Moreover, the power of free elections, under the right conditions, should not be underestimated. Elections are a major source of legitimacy in a variety of countries throughout the world. In a backhanded compliment to democratic institutions, a number of dictatorships even feel the need to hold sham elections to keep up the pretense that they are acting democratically. Thus, elections should not be viewed as a Western concept without potential widespread appeal. Fair elections can serve as a legitimizing factor for many governments worldwide, provided all parties are willing to accept the electoral outcome and view the elections as legitimate.

A major problem for Iraq's electoral process is that the numerically dominant Shi'ites, who have the most to gain in an election defined in sectarian terms, are the group most consistently enthusiastic about majority rule democracy. Consequently, the system is sometimes viewed by other Iraqis as empowering the Shi'ites at the expense of Sunni Muslims and Kurds.[55] Grand Ayatollah Sistani, for example, issued a number of *fatwas* encouraging his supporters to vote while he also publicly favored the overwhelmingly Shi'ite United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) coalition of political parties.[56] Some of these *fatwas* are quite detailed and convey an urgency about voting that may have been designed to shame those of his Shi'ite followers who might have considered abstaining out of fear or disinterest.[57] The Shi'ite and Kurdish communities also have strong political parties that helped achieve high voter turnout within their areas. The Sunni Arabs have no mass parties capable of serving in this role.

The January 2005 Iraqi election for a Transitional National Assembly (TNA) produced a turnout of around 58 percent of the electorate, despite a series of election day attacks that killed 44 people and wounded a number of others.[58] Turnout in Shi'ite and Kurdish areas was exceptionally heavy. This election was widely characterized as meeting international norms of fairness by a number

of international observers. Additionally, many nations opposed to the U.S. invasion of Iraq publicly praised the election. Such nations included a variety of European, Arab, and non-Arab Muslim states.[59] In a more homogenous society, such high levels of participation might serve as a strong legitimizing factor for the process, and it is still possible that most Iraqis will view the election process as a new source of pride and progress if Sunni Muslims can be brought into the system in ways that assuage the major concerns of that community.

The Kurdish parties participated in the election with tremendous intensity as an important way to safeguard their interests, but they have also made it clear that they will not submit to potential majority decisions on certain key issues such as their demands for federalism and the continued separate existence of Kurdish military forces, even if these demands are made through democratic institutions. Sunni Arab leaders are even further outside of the political process. In the period leading up to January 2005, many demanded a boycott of the election, and insurgents were often able to intimidate prospective Sunni voters in the event they were not moved by the statements of the boycotters.[60] As a result, Sunni Arab turnout was abysmal. Although Sunni Arabs comprise up to 20 percent of Iraq's population, only 17 were elected to the 275-seat transitional parliament.

Throughout the period leading up to the election, as well as during its aftermath, many Sunni groups raised pointed criticisms regarding the issue of electoral legitimacy.[61] Their most important questions centered on how such elections can be fair if they are conducted while the country remains under foreign occupation.[62] Elections under these conditions, they maintained, can be unduly influenced by the concerns and behavior of the occupying forces. Severe criticism also has been directed at the electoral process as a tool of U.S. hegemony with "made in Washington stamped all over it."[63] Thus, under this logic, the elections are illegitimate. Many Sunnis, of course, also point to the disorder in the areas where they reside. While all of these arguments have some salience, many Sunnis opposed the election because they knew that their sect was certain to lose in any election defined in sectarian terms. Nevertheless, some Sunni leaders who previously supported

the boycott have now expressed regret about doing so in what is clearly a promising sign.[64]

A figure who might have helped bridge the Shi'ite-Sunni gap was Interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi (P.M.: June 2004-March 2005), a secular Shi'ite, known for his interest in working with Sunni leaders including what he calls the "fringe of the insurgency"—that is, the redeemable supporters of the insurgents. His government took office with extremely strong popular backing, including an almost 73 percent public approval rating, partially based on a lack of any kind of visible subservience to the United States.[65] He thus presented himself as an Iraqi nationalist, while promising to improve the security situation. His strong opposition to far-reaching de-Ba'athification reassured numerous Sunnis, who viewed these policies as a sectarian-based form of collective punishment and disempowerment.[66]

Unfortunately, Allawi, who did not have a strong party organization behind him, did poorly in the 2005 elections, with his party taking only 40 seats in the 275 seat assembly.[67] The Sistani-backed UIA, by contrast, has 140 seats, and the Kurdish parties have 75.[68] Allawi seemed to display an excellent combination of firmness and reconciliationism. His continuing efforts to reach out to the Sunni community correspondingly has set a high standard which one hopes the UIA leadership will find informative. At the time of this writing, Iraq's Kurdish President Jalal Talabani has echoed Allawi's words, but both the religious and secular Shi'ite leadership of the UIA continues to favor broad brush de-Ba'athification.[69] More ominously, elements within the UIA, and particularly the Interior Ministry, may be seeking to mold the security forces so that they are completely dominated by Shi'ite Islamists.[70]

Correspondingly, an emerging problem for Iraqi government legitimacy is that the new leaders may be viewed by some Iraqis as representing and protecting the rights of only one portion of the population. The empowerment of Iraqi Shi'ites, including a number of powerful Islamists, by the election was an important exercise in democratic process, but the consolidation of Shi'ite power may only provide legitimacy for such a government within the Shi'ite community. The new Iraqi leadership has claimed it will seek to represent all Iraqis, but it is not clear how sincere these claims are

or how seriously they are taken. Consistent efforts have been made to reassure the Sunni Arabs, but these efforts also have important and clear limits, such as those seen when Shi'ite Parliamentarians vetoed a series of Sunni candidates for Defense Minister prior to the appointment of returned exile, Saddon al Dulaimi.[71] Unfortunately, in Iraq there is no towering national hero who stands above ethnic/sectarian divides and can hold the country together such as a Washington, De Gaulle, or Ataturk.

Governmental legitimacy challenges may also remain for the loyalty of those Iraqis who initially were pleased with the result of the election. This situation has developed because the government is charged with the responsibility for establishing a constitution that will be at least minimally acceptable to all major Iraqi ethnic and sectarian communities. Although major Kurdish and Shi'ite leaders have displayed an ability to coordinate on common objectives, they have also differed strongly over key issues for the future government of Iraq.[72] These differences will have to be addressed in the process of creating and agreeing upon a constitutional framework for governing the country.

Iraqi government dependence on U.S. support for its survival is another challenge for building legitimacy, although the intensity of this issue currently varies within the leadership of the various Iraqi communities. A professed belief among at least some sections of the Sunni Arab public has been that the United States is encouraging violence and instability in Iraq as an excuse to stay and control Iraqi oil.[73] A related problem that has plagued the state-building process is the limited UN role in creating the post-Saddam order, which stands in sharp contrast to that organization's involvement in Afghanistan.[74] Many Arabs (including Iraqis) have a basically positive view of the UN and believe that a more robust UN role could help insulate Iraq from the danger of U.S. domination. These individuals do not seem to accept the explanation that the UN has remained outside of Iraqi reconstruction because of its own reluctance to become involved for political and security reasons. Rather, they view UN reluctance to be part of the process as a natural result of being offered a role on what they see as narrow U.S. terms.[75]

Moreover, the regional environment has often been hostile to U.S. efforts to create and empower a new Iraqi government because the

majority of the Arab media remains angry about the invasion of Iraq and the changing U.S. rationales for this invasion and occupation.[76] The constant challenges of the U.S. role by the regional media may serve as an additional complication for the emerging Iraqi government as it seeks to establish its own legitimacy. More effective U.S. public diplomacy based on historical and cultural knowledge of the region almost certainly could help mitigate this problem, but the depth of regional opposition to the U.S. role in Iraq makes it unlikely that hostile news coverage and propaganda could be totally or even largely neutralized.[77]

Governmental corruption is also a problem for legitimacy, and can cause at least some citizens to feel alienated from the government.[78] Iraq's population has suffered under a system of government sanctioned corruption for over 30 years, and a new government will have to implement strong anti-corruption policies to distinguish itself from earlier forms of governmental abuse of power. At this point, it is not clear that the Iraqi government is moving decisively in this direction.[79] Political favoritism based on sectarianism may help to ensure the loyalty of part of the population and the hostility of those portions that are not favored by the government.[80] Many states worldwide are able to tolerate a certain amount of corruption, but at a point it threatens a government's ability to function.

Another factor that may also have implications for the Iraqi government's legitimacy involves the issue of exiles in that government.[81] Iraqi exiles from a variety of countries have now returned to their homeland. Some of these, such as Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Chalabi, have come from the United States, but a great many more have come from Iran. In many cases, the Iraqi population in general distrusts these exiles because of the fear that they may be subjected to undue influence from the countries that harbored them during the Saddam Hussein years. The strong involvement of exiles in Iraqi politics does, however, have an important positive effect for the health of the Iraqi political system in that many exile leaders became acquainted with each other during their years abroad. Many are, therefore, comfortable negotiating with each other and in some cases have working relationships with the leaders of other anti-Saddam political parties.

The Iraqi government's current difficulty in addressing the basic public needs such as security is another problem for governmental

legitimacy. Additionally, undermining public confidence in the new government is a central goal of the Iraqi insurgents' campaign of assassination and intimidation, especially when it has been directed at government officials. Iraqi insurgents have killed a number of senior governmental and security officials, sometimes breaching strong security and numerous bodyguards.[82] They have also kidnapped various officials or their family members, often with the goal of forcing them to resign and renounce all ties to the government. Some officials have, correspondingly, made accommodations with the insurgents to relieve the burden of having both themselves and their families remain targets of insurgent violence. Many are also aware that, years in the future, coalition troops may have departed, while members of the current insurgency may still wield the ability to strike at their enemies.

The Post-Election Iraqi Government and the Writing of a New Constitution.

Another challenge for Iraqi governmental legitimacy is the constitutional process itself, which has involved a large number of difficult transitional steps. The transitions began when the United States created an Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) under the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). This organization was followed by a formally sovereign, but U.S.-appointed, transitional government under Ayad Allawi. The Allawi government was followed by an elected transitional government created by long and painful factional negotiations after the January 2005 election. As a result of these transitions, the public and especially the security forces have been asked to give their loyalty to a government with rapidly changing institutions and personalities. These transitions are not yet concluded, and the most difficult tasks remain ahead. At the time of this writing, the current assembly was struggling to meet an August 15 deadline to propose a draft Constitution, which must then be submitted to a nationwide referendum no later than October 15, 2005. If the document is approved, new elections under the ratified Constitution will be held by December 15, 2005, and a new government will take office on December 31, 2005.

Until the ratification and enactment of the new Constitution, Iraq is supposed to be governed under institutions and timetables created by the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), sometimes referred to as the Interim Constitution.[83] This situation places power in the Transitional National Assembly (TNA), which has 275 members. A two-thirds majority of 184 seats is needed for many of the most important decisions to be made by the new government, although it is possible that Iraqi leaders may look for ways to bypass these rules outside of the legal framework created by the TAL.[84]

Additionally, writing a new constitution and its supporting laws so that they can be accepted by most elements of a diverse society is never a simple task. Constitutions codify the principles by which a society is governed, and they also proscribe the ways in which power is to be allocated and used. The most difficult task for the creators of the prospective constitution will be to devise government institutions that unite the Iraqi people including, at a minimum, all of its major sectarian groups, while also avoiding government paralysis and deadlock. This effort will be a serious challenge since these objectives may not be fully compatible. Many Shi'ite leaders are expected to favor majoritarian institutions with a minimum of quotas and vetos for ethnic and religious minorities. Such a system of government, however, would be troubling for a number of Sunnis and Kurds, who understand that their own concerns could easily be bypassed without such measures.

An array of exceptionally difficult issues also must either be addressed by the Constitution or deferred if this cannot be done and dealt with in later legislation. Many of these issues will remain controversial well after a constitution is put forward publicly, even if it eventually is ratified in the projected referendum. One of the most important involves Islam's role in future Iraqi governance and the role of *shariah* (Islamic law) in the new Iraqi legal code. The prospect of enshrining *shariah* into the Constitution appears to be serious, and Prime Minister Ibrahim Ja'afari has told the German magazine, *Der Spiegel*, that he favors such an effort but with *shariah* as "one of several sources of jurisprudence" rather than the sole source of law.[85] Islamic hardliners, such as Shi'ite radical Muqtada al-Sadr not surprisingly have demanded the imposition of *shariah* as the

sole source of Iraqi law under his militant interpretation of *shariah*.[86] Sadr is not a member of the Assembly and has sought to maintain an image of aloofness from U.S.-backed institutions, but he does have an important following of about 20-25 "independents" within the Assembly.[87] Additionally, hardliners, such as the Sadr supporters, are expected to clash with moderates in the constitutional process over the rights of women under a system of full or partial Islamic law.

A March 2005 poll by the International Republican Institute found that 46 percent of the Iraqi population supports a separation between religion and state, and 48 percent believes that religion has a special role to play in the government.[88] Statistically, this is an equal division suggesting that compromise may be difficult. Furthermore, divisions over religion have the potential to aggravate ethnically-based disagreements. The Kurdish population of the north is much more secular than large sections of the south and central part of the country, and leading Kurdish politicians have called for a separation of religion and the state.[89] President Talabani has indicated that, like federalism, the installation of an Islamic regime is a "red line" that will cause the Kurds to reconsider their decision to remain part of a unified Iraqi state.[90]

The Kurds also have strongly endorsed what they refer to as "federalism" but is more aptly described as a highly decentralized confederation bordering on an association of sovereign entities. They do not seem prepared to compromise on any of the major aspects of this issue, including governmental structure, the borders of the Kurdish autonomous region, and the disputed status of the city of Kirkuk, which virtually all Iraqi Kurds consider to be a non-negotiable part of Kurdistan.[91] In an interview given before he was President, Kurdish leader, Jalal Talabani, stated "If the Arabs do not accept the principle of federalism, we will no longer be Iraqis."[92] These sentiments are echoed by virtually all major Kurdish leaders. Moreover, the Kurdish interest in including a conditional right to secession as a legal guarantee in the constitution underscores Kurdish intensity on this point.[93] Many Iraqi Arabs view the implementation of a strong federal system along Kurdish lines as the first step in a Kurdish drive to achieve independence.[94]

Some Iraqi Arab leaders have spoken out strongly against federalism as defined by the Kurds. Rather than viewing federalism as a potentially hopeful form of government, they have portrayed it as a threat to the national unity of Iraq.[95] One leading cleric, Ayatollah Maqi al Modaresi, has even suggested that a decentralized federal system is "a time bomb that will spark a civil war in Iraq."[96] Furthermore, the Sunni leadership seems to be even more concerned about the dangers of federalism leading to the country breaking up than are the Shi'ite leaders.[97] An amicable breakup of Iraq is virtually impossible to imagine since many of the most important areas, including Baghdad, are ethnically and religiously mixed, and since contradictory claims to oil producing regions are not subject to compromise.

Additionally, many Kurds have watched the efforts of some Shi'ite extremists to impose a reactionary version of Islamic social mores on the southern part of the country. These policies are deeply offensive to most Kurds, who fear that an Islamic regime would seek to impose hard line behavior codes on the entire country.[98] Furthermore, prior to 2003 up to several hundred thousand Shi'ites were sent to northern Iraq as part of the efforts to "Arabize" the northern part of the country, and some are known to be friendly to the Sadr movement, which is spearheading such efforts.[99] While Sadr supporters are no more than a minor nuisance to the Kurds at present, the specter of newly empowered religious police operating with the support of a strong central government seriously concerns the Kurds and can only reinforce their desire for maximum autonomy from Baghdad.

Crucially, many of the difficulties of the constitutional process will echo in the security forces. Iraqi soldiers face the same uncertainty that other Iraqi citizens do regarding their government, but for them these problems are more pressing. It is not yet clear to many Iraqi soldiers what kind of government will actually be produced by the constitutional process. Yet, Iraqi security forces must first believe that the outcome will be worth fighting for if they willingly are to risk their lives to preserve it. Such a commitment is a serious demand on their faith in the process, and many Iraqi soldiers may only be able to give the government a conditional form of legitimacy,

until they are certain that their own tribes, ethnic groups, and religious sects will be treated with dignity and power-sharing under the emerging government.[100] Soldiers fighting under the banner of conditional legitimacy may not have the commitment to assume the dangers of confronting the current insurgency. Bolstering the Iraqi government's legitimacy is therefore a vital military requirement, as well as an exercise in nation-building.

The Iraqi Security Forces.

Closely related to the issue of governmental legitimacy is the development of a strong multiethnic/multisectarian Iraqi security force, including military, police, and border security forces. Any government views its first duty as safeguarding its own existence and ability to govern. Furthermore, an Iraqi government that could provide security for the population without consistently calling upon U.S. troops for assistance would support the government's efforts to establish its own legitimacy, so long as the public views the security forces protecting rather than oppressing all major elements of the population.

It appears increasingly unlikely that U.S., Iraqi, and coalition forces will crush the insurgency prior to the beginning of a phased U.S. and coalition withdrawal from that country, although any damage done to the insurgency will improve the chances for the Iraqi government to survive a U.S. departure.[101] According to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, "Insurgencies tend to go on 5, 6, 8, 10, 12 years. Foreign forces are not going to repress that [Iraqi] insurgency."[102] Under these circumstances, the Iraqi security forces that remain in place following a departure of the majority of U.S. forces will have to deal with the ongoing struggle. Iraq, therefore, will have to continue building a military while simultaneously waging an internal war.[103] Hopefully, Baghdad will also seek to build security forces that are multiethnic and multisectarian, although this may be difficult to achieve. Shi'ite recruits previously have been much more interested than Sunni Arabs in participating in these forces and have joined the security services in much greater numbers.[104]

Despite ongoing difficulties, the objective of creating multiethnic and multisectarian security forces is not a goal that should be casually

discarded. Some leaders within the Sunni Arab community clearly fear the development of a security force that is composed heavily of Shi'ite Arabs with perhaps a number of Kurds as well. Such a force could more easily be used as an instrument to repress or even subjugate Sunni Arabs should a Shi'ite-dominated government issue orders for them to do so. In response to this concern, a number of major Sunni clerics, including some members of the powerful Association of Muslim Scholars, issued an April 2005 *fatwa* in which they urged young Sunni Arabs to join the security forces.[105] It does not appear that this *fatwa* produced a significant response.[106]

The prospects for increased Sunni Arab participation in the security forces has been further complicated by the problems of de-Ba'athification, and some of the requirements for vetting candidates for positions within the security forces.[107] There is, however, a serious need for increasingly vigorous vetting of security applicants in order to disqualify disloyal individuals from serving. Infiltration of both military and police forces by pro-insurgent agents is a major problem that threatens the ability of those forces to function effectively.[108] Even elite units have been infiltrated by pro-insurgent forces, while high-ranking officers throughout the security establishment, including generals, have been relieved from their positions or arrested for cooperation with the insurgents.[109] The temptation to marginalize Sunni participation in the security forces may, therefore, be significant and based on real concerns, although doing so would almost certainly push the Sunni Arab community to provide greater support for the insurgency and further lay the groundwork for a sectarian war. Some Sunni Muslim leaders have already charged that various Shi'ite-dominated special police commando units have grown increasingly comfortable in brutalizing Sunni Arabs.[110]

In addressing this myriad of difficulties, the Iraqi government has shown a strong interest in building elite forces such as the 6,000 member Iraqi Intervention Force and police special commando units, the most well-known of which is the "Wolf Brigade."[111] This "quality over quantity" approach correctly assumes that a military unit that is both willing and prepared to fight is worth more than an interminable number who are not willing to do so. The attraction here is obvious since the U.S. and Iraqi governments can deemphasize the

training of poor units and concentrate on units that seem to have the potential to grow into their new role.[112] This approach sidesteps the problem of various police and perhaps Army units, which are sometimes deemed so corrupt and infiltrated by the insurgents that they cannot be redeemed.[113]

For all of the important and undeniable advantages to developing elite military forces and special police units, there are problems with this approach. A disproportionate reliance on elite forces may cause them to be overused to the point that their capabilities are seriously eroded and their morale undermined. Conversely, the development and professionalization of only elite military units may cause the Iraqi government to withhold those units from combat on the assumption that they are vital to the government's survival and should be preserved from all but direst threats. This approach would mean that a Praetorian force may soak up the best human and material resources while failing to actually engage in combat.

Another problem is that emerging elite units often rise to a higher standard due to particularly able leaders serving in the key positions within these units and particularly as the commanders. Enemy insurgents consequently adapt to this situation by targeting key leaders within the security forces.[114]

This tactic strongly reinforces the military requirement for junior leaders and subordinate commanders to be continually trained and mentored. While none of these concerns should be taken as an argument against building elite forces, the Iraqi government will have to take care to avoid overreliance on them. Moreover, if the Iraqi and U.S. Governments give up on large numbers of conventional units, these units will certainly give up on themselves. The government needs to be certain that a unit is irredeemable before labeling it as such.

In order to support the Iraqi security forces, it is also necessary for the United States to overcome all serious delays and bureaucratic obstacles to providing them with modern weapons and equipment.[115] Such assets cannot inspire an unmotivated military or redeem an irredeemable fighting force, but the lack of such systems can break a force that is hovering between hope and demoralization. Iraqi Army and National Guard units have been almost entirely composed of

non-mechanized infantry with small arms. The Army was at least initially better trained and somewhat better armed than the National Guard (particularly with regard to mortars). Strong efforts are being made to overcome these discrepancies, as the Army and National Guard are merged into a single force.[116]

Iraqi forces also are being asked to fight mostly without their own Air Force and are instead relying on coalition assets. This situation is acceptable so long as U.S. forces dominate the ground fighting. Nevertheless, aviation assets are expected to be valuable in fighting an insurgency, and U.S.-Iraqi efforts to stand up a reliable air force have been slow.[117] A U.S. withdrawal strategy will need to consider how the airpower gap best may be filled following a departure of the majority of U.S. forces. Iraqi helicopter gunships and transport fixed-wing aircraft and transport helicopters would be especially useful in providing Iraqi forces with both mobility and firepower.[118] Iraqi pilots from the Saddam era would have to be rehabilitated and reintegrated into the new air force to achieve this goal in a timely manner.

Some concern also exists that Iraqis of military age may no longer choose to join and remain part of the security forces in sufficient numbers to fill out the ranks so that a U.S. withdrawal is possible. Finding recruits is, nevertheless, not a major problem at the current time. The Iraqi recruits earn about $200 to $500 a month, which is viewed as a good salary within Iraq, and this contributes to a fairly large applicant pool.[119] Additionally, between 1,500 and 3,000 police and military recruits join the Iraqi security forces each week.[120]

Motivating Iraqi soldiers who are already in the service sometimes appears more difficult. Desertions and overstaying one's leave have been common until fairly recently, and it is uncertain how the trend will develop.[121] In the first year following the creation of the new Iraqi Army, the desertion rates were extremely heavy, especially during periods of intense combat. Most Iraqi men seem to join as a way of providing for their families, but it is not clear that the majority are willing to die to defend the new and evolving Iraqi government. They have been more likely to focus on keeping out of danger and staying alive if possible. This kind of mentality is a problem for unit effectiveness and, not surprisingly, leads to increased desertions

at times of heightened insurgent activity.[122] It should, however, be noted that the desertion rate has declined significantly over the last year, and some Iraqi soldiers do behave bravely. Additionally, the desertion and AWOL problems may be complicated by the requirement for Iraqi soldiers to return to their homes to give money to their families physically in some cases and to deal with family crises.

U.S. Army Lieutenant General David Petraus, former commander of the program to train the Iraqi military, has stated that Iraqi units also have suffered personnel losses "due to severe intimidation."[123] At least some members of the Iraqi military wear ski masks to conceal their identities while on duty and mislead their neighbors by suggesting they have jobs that having nothing to do with the Iraqi government.[124] This tactic is generally used to protect the individuals and their families, but is probably unlikely to lead to solid results. Insurgents make a strong effort to join the security forces and seem to have developed an impressive intelligence network about who else has joined these organizations. Even a relatively few enemy infiltrators can produce a bonanza of information on other members of the military and security organizations, despite operational security measures.

Some special problems were seen with Iraqi security forces and especially the now renamed Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC, now the Iraqi National Guard) in April 2004, when radical cleric Muqtada Sadr's clumsy and poorly-trained militia forces rose in rebellion against the Iraqi government. This action occurred simultaneously with coalition fighting against Sunni insurgents in Falluja. According to Major General Martin Dempsey, "About 40 percent of the Iraqi security forces fighting Sadr walked off the job because they were intimidated. And about 10 percent actually worked against us."[125] Dempsey described the later group as infiltrators. This description seems reasonable, but other explanations are also possible. The soldiers who changed sides may have been Shi'ites who viewed the mission of fighting the Sadrists as particularly onerous and unexpected. Many impoverished Shi'ites have joined both the government's security forces and the Sadrist's "Mahdi Militia."

Insurgents clearly understand that an effective security force is essential if the Iraqi government is to survive a U.S. withdrawal.

Therefore they have waged strong and continuing war against the security forces in an effort to prevent their development into effective units. This struggle is comprehensive and displays a wide range of tactics to undermine the ability of the security forces to function. Insurgents have attacked police stations and consistently target long lines of applicants seeking to join the military and police forces.[126] The south gate of the Muthanna Barracks in Baghdad, for example, has been bombed at least five times, and 198 people have been killed there since it became a recruiting center. Another 465 have been wounded.[127] Overall, more than 1,300 Iraqi police officers have been killed between Saddam's ouster in April 2003 and January 2005.[128] According to March 2005 testimony by U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff General Richard Meyers, Iraqi soldiers are dying at twice the rate of U.S. soldiers in Iraq.[129]

Like the military, the effectiveness of the Iraqi police has been subject to disaster when challenged substantially by a serious enemy. In an especially serious encounter in November 2004, 4,000 out of about 5,400 Iraqi police in Mosul deserted the force in response to an insurgent uprising within the city.[130] While the forces in Mosul are assessed to be much more professional now, this crisis is particularly important in illustrating how an effective enemy can roll back coalition progress in preparing the Iraqis to defend themselves. The Mosul battle and its implications for the future of Iraq will therefore be considered more comprehensively later in this monograph.

The Sustainability of U.S. Military Operations in Iraq.

A number of factors unrelated to progress in building a functioning Iraqi state may also influence the debate on when and how the United States will depart Iraq. Foremost is the willingness of American society to provide a continuous stream of volunteers to join the Army, Marine Corps, and their reserve components and accept the likelihood of possible combat duty in Iraq.[131] Should the pool of military age volunteers permanently decline or even evaporate, there is almost certainly no political will to restart military conscription. Public opinion polls consistently demonstrate overwhelming opposition to a draft. This opposition will almost

certainly become more intense should the prospect become more likely.[132] Politicians embracing the idea of restarting the draft would be effectively ending their political careers. Furthermore, the process of resolving draft-related controversies on such issues as conscripting women, deciding what kinds of deferments to allow, and other such matters would probably require a significant amount of debate prior to congressional action. The Iraq situation may have fundamentally changed by the time a draft is organized and implemented, and the conscripted soldiers are trained and prepared for deployment.

U.S. public opinion about the Iraq War may also become an important factor influencing the nature and timing of an exit strategy, even without the possibility of a military draft. Most case studies of U.S. public opinion behavior suggest that the American public will endure ongoing military casualties and high monetary expenditures in a sustained but limited war if they are able to see progress towards military and political goals.[133] Public support for the Iraq war peaked when the Saddam Hussein regime fell in April 2003 when 76 percent of those polled stated that the war was worth the sacrifice. By May 2005, a *USA Today*/CNN/Gallup poll indicated that only 41 percent of the American public believed the war was worth the sacrifice; 57 percent said that it was not.[134] Support rebounded in July 2005 when 53 percent of those surveyed by the same polling organization said the war was not a mistake and only 46 percent believed it was an error. Surprisingly, only 37 percent of those surveyed in the July poll believed that it would be possible to create a stable, democratic Iraq.[135] It may also be significant that temporary spikes in public approval for the Iraq operation have been produced by events such as Saddam's capture and the January 2005 elections, but these improvements failed to last due to the continuation of the insurgency and the inability of the United States to reduce its commitments in troops and resources to Iraq.

Against this background, the U.S. public may see increased casualties or any requirement to boost troop strength in Iraq as indications of a faltering U.S. effort in meeting its goals. Increasing U.S. financial expenditures for the war, in addition to the hundreds of billions of dollars already spent, may also become a future problem for U.S. public opinion. As noted, a policy of "staying the course" in

a democratic society is most effective when the public can see clear progress towards an acceptable result. If the public views the Iraq conflict as showing little or no progress, the conflict may become redefined by many U.S. citizens as a quagmire, and pressure to withdraw would become nearly irresistible. Moreover, while many hopeful signs of progress exist in Iraq, it is not clear that the public will find them compelling if such progress does not lead to a situation where the United States can begin withdrawing troops.

It has already been noted that a serious decline or even a collapse in recruiting and retention for the U.S. Army and Marine Corps could eventually influence the U.S. ability to sustain a large military presence in Iraq.[136] A series of problems in recruiting (but not retention) started to appear in 2004 with the Army Reserve and National Guard and later spread to the regular Army.[137] The most immediate impact of these problems involves a shortfall of newly enlisted recruits, but there are other less visible and longer-term effects should the United States accept large numbers of only marginally qualified applicants, and these individuals remain in the military as professional soldiers.[138] Moreover, various journalists have stated that strong opposition to the Iraq war among some minority groups, and particularly African-Americans, has begun to influence the Army's ability to recruit minority soldiers.[139] Since a military draft appears politically unsustainable, it is not clear what will be done if the Iraq war becomes increasingly unpopular, and military enlistments take an even more dramatic fall. In response to these types of concerns, Army Vice Chief of Staff General Richard A. Cody has stated, "What keeps me awake at night is what will this all volunteer force look like in 2007?"[140]

Recruiting problems nevertheless may be at least partially reversible even under contemporary circumstances. In the face of current problems, the military recruiting system has expanded, and new methods to attract recruits have been implemented. Near-term solutions currently being pursued have involved increasing enlistment and reenlistment incentives, making limited reductions on educational requirements to enter the Army or Army Reserve, seeking transfers from the Navy and Air Force, creating 15-month terms of enlistment, and raising the maximum age for U.S. Army Reserve recruits.[141]

U.S. Army retention (reenlistment, rather than first-time enlistment) is currently not a major problem when considering overall numbers, although there are shortfalls in various important military occupational specialties (MOS).[142] Retention rates may remain high so long as troops and their families feel that their sacrifice is serving a long-term good. Nevertheless, some individuals may now be opting to leave military service after 20 years with the minimum retirement benefits, despite the fact that they had previously planned to stay in the service longer. On an even more threatening level, retention could collapse if a belief that the war is futile begins to dominate the society, and this outlook then begins to influence troops who might otherwise reenlist. Additionally, there are some disadvantages today's troops have when compared to soldiers fighting in earlier wars. In Vietnam, for example, only those who volunteered to do so served a second tour in combat, except in rare instances involving career officers and soldiers. In Iraq (and Afghanistan), many troops are required to perform a second or even a third combat tour as part of normal unit rotations. These requirements increasingly could cause soldiers to rethink the disproportionate burden that society is placing on them, while the bulk of the population remains sheltered and in some cases indifferent to the war.[143]

Another related problem is the rate at which military equipment is worn out in combat conditions. According to some estimates, a sizable number of Army and Marine Corps vehicles, weapons, and equipment are wearing out at up to six times the rate provided by normal usage.[144] Both regular and reserve units are experiencing this problem, and the equipment of these organizations will have to be recapitalized as a result. Furthermore, it is uncertain that efforts to maintain and replace worn-out equipment indefinitely can keep pace with the rate at which it is being expended and overutilized in Iraq.

Sustainment difficulties for the United States will also be influenced by the decisions of various allied nations to remain in Iraq or withdraw their military forces from that country. The United States is correspondingly faced with the ongoing challenge of keeping the coalition of allied forces together and preventing more nations from reducing their forces in Iraq, or even withdrawing them altogether as the result of increased casualties and domestic

pressures within their own countries.[145] Such reductions will not be a major problem if Iraqi troops rise to the tasks they have been assigned. Should they fail to do so, allied troop withdrawals may place more stress and responsibility on U.S. forces. In early 2005, the United States contributed around 140,000 troops to Iraq, while a coalition of several dozen countries contributed around 23,000 troops.[146]

The United Kingdom remains America's most important and reliable partner at this time, with around 9,000 troops in Iraq in early 2005.[147] This force will probably be maintained at the current level for some time, despite the weakening of the Labour Party in the May 5, 2005 British elections.[148] The continued presence of other allied forces in Iraq may be more problematic. Spain withdrew its 1,300 soldiers in April/May 2004.[149] The Netherlands completed the full withdrawal of its last 800 troops in April 2005.[150] Italy has plans to withdraw all of its 3,160 troops beginning in September 2005. Poland has announced that it will withdraw its 1,700 troops from Iraq when the UN mandate for the multinational force expires in December 2005.[151] All of the 1,600 Ukrainian troops are scheduled to depart Iraq by October 2005. Bulgaria plans to withdraw all 450 of its soldiers by the end of 2005. Australia, in contrast, has promised modest increases in the numbers of troops it is willing to deploy, from 950 to 1,400.[152] If all currently announced withdrawal plans take place as envisioned, non-U.S./non-Iraqi coalition strength in Iraq is expected to dip to 11,300 soldiers, the majority of which will be British.

Dangers of the Timetable Option.

The ongoing uncertainty in Iraq has prompted considerable competing analysis on when and under what conditions the United States can safely begin to turn over full control of that country's security to the Iraqis. This withdrawal will be conducted in phases whereby U.S. and allied forces are expected to be progressively withdrawn as the Iraqi security forces assume greater responsibilities. The transition to Iraqi forces is further expected to begin with those provinces least plagued by insurgent violence, although it will also be conducted in full knowledge of insurgent mobility. The decision to begin withdrawing forces, therefore, will

need to be based on an assessment of governmental and security forces viability. The success or failure of the U.S. effort in Iraq will be directly linked to making this assessment correctly and then acting upon it.

The idea of creating a timetable for a military withdrawal from Iraq sometimes has been presented as a solution for current troubles there.[153] Milestones have already been set for the rehabilitation of the Iraqi army, but these milestones are event and process driven goals and do not contain rigid dates, which cannot be adjusted with circumstances.[154] A timetable would be a much more public, formal, and dramatic option, which requires a withdrawal of U.S. forces at some defined point, apparently more or less regardless of the state of Iraqi readiness for self-government and self-defense.

Edward N. Luttwak, long-time scholar of national security affairs, has suggested that, in absence of public U.S. plans to withdraw, various radical Iraqi groups can polish their nationalist credentials by waging war against U.S. forces in preparation for the political competition following the eventual U.S. departure.[155] There does seem to be some evidence supporting this assertion. Shi'ite radical Muqtada al-Sadr challenged U.S. forces in April 2004 with his militia force, the *al Mahdi* Army, in a haphazard way that nevertheless rebounded to his favor. In a series of one-sided battles, his *al Mahdi* Army was severely mauled by U.S. forces, which themselves suffered only light casualties. Nevertheless, Sadr's decision to confront the United States led to a significant jump in his public standing within Iraq and improved his ability to recruit new individuals for the al Mahdi Army.[156] Sadr's military failure was a political success, which he may have sought to repeat in brief November 2004 fighting, although with less success.

Supporters of a withdrawal timetable further suggest that as the United States withdraws its forces from Iraq, the basis for a tactical alliance among diverse insurgent groups would begin to unravel.[157] This assertion also appears to have some validity, since the Iraqi insurgency is highly diverse and composed of groups which do not appear to be natural allies. Islamic extremists, such as those associated with Abu Musab al Zarqawi's al Qa'eda of Mesopotamia and Ba'athists formerly associated with Saddam Hussein, hold widely divergent views of how they would like to see Iraq governed.

As the banner of anti-Western unity begins to fade, quarrels and power struggles can be expected to emerge among these groups. Yet, even if this set of assertions is correct and insurgent cooperation will be undercut by a U.S. withdrawal, there is still a danger. If the insurgents can hold themselves together long enough to defeat the Iraqi government, any subsequent division among them will have little meaning for U.S. and moderate Iraqi national interests in the region. Rather, victorious Sunni insurgents seeking to claim power would probably face a new fight against Shi'ite militias, in what could be expected to develop into a sectarian war.

It is also technically possible that convincing evidence of an upcoming U.S. withdrawal from Iraq will prod Iraqi ethnic and sectarian groups into redoubling their efforts to find common ground and avoid civil war. According to this line of thought, the imminent departure of U.S. forces that are currently helping to deter intercommunal conflict will remove a crutch that may help foster intransigence among groups. These groups know they can engage in brinkmanship with each other without consequence so long as U.S. military forces deter communal warfare. Nevertheless, Iraq's factional dynamics are so complex that such linear reasoning seldom leads to the desired result. Rather than seek compromise, Iraqi factions may instead accelerate the development of their militias, seek foreign regional support, and position themselves for a civil war.

Iraqis themselves are divided on the issue of a timetable.[158] Much of the Sunni religious leadership, some of whom are sympathetic to the insurgency, has been particularly assertive about the need for a timetable, and the powerful Association of Muslim Scholars has made a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. forces their central demand before they are willing to cooperate with Iraqi government.[159] This distrust of the United States is also apparent in the Sunni Arab community at large. In March 2005, for example, Zogby polling indicated that 82 percent of Iraq's Sunni Arabs want the United States to leave "now" or "very soon."[160] Iraq's Shi'ite Arab leadership has not yet shown the same impatience, with the exception of Muqtada al Sadr. Sadr seeks not only a timetable, but calls for an immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces.[161]

Yet, despite some potential advantages, catastrophic dangers lurk in announcing a timetable, and these dangers seriously outweigh any advantages that will accrue from such a policy. From the moment a timetable is announced, all Iraqis working with the U.S.-led coalition will calculate that U.S. protection is a declining asset, and they correspondingly will have to make a decision about how to safeguard themselves and their property. Some may choose to establish links to the insurgents, while others may seek the protection of a militia. Furthermore, leaving the country before the Iraqis have established a viable government with the forces able to provide for national security raises some alarming prospects. The Iraqi institutions that have been put into place may crumble under such conditions or dissolve into sectarian factions, and the lives and funds sacrificed to rebuild Iraq will not be redeemed. Additionally, an announcement of a U.S. withdrawal with an accompanying timetable might also encourage the insurgents to buildup their forces, bide their time, and wait for American forces to leave, just as the North Vietnamese did.

An early withdrawal scenario is equally problematic for the Iraqi security forces. When U.S. and coalition forces begin to withdraw, a security vacuum will start to develop and be filled by either Iraqi security forces or the Iraqi insurgents or local militias. If the Iraqi security forces can stand up to anti-government forces, a fundamental U.S. and Iraqi governmental goal will have been met. Conversely, if they cannot, Iraqi forces may be defeated by either a progressive erosion of their authority and capabilities or, in the worst case, Iraqi security forces would crumble rapidly in the face of the insurgent threat, with their individual members probably deserting and joining various ethnic and sectarian forces. In either case, previous efforts to train, equip, and professionalize Iraqi security forces will have been rendered meaningless, and the United States will almost certainly not have the resources or political will to restart the training and military rebuilding process from the beginning.

The case of Mosul in November 2004 may be of special importance in illustrating this point. U.S. troops present in that city were cut by two-thirds in early 2004 as part of a unit rotation scheme whereby the 101st Airborne Division was replaced by a Stryker brigade.[162] Iraqi police forces in the area appeared competent, and the city itself

also appeared calm enough to justify this fairly substantial reduction in the U.S. presence. The U.S. withdrawal became a serious problem in November 2004 when approximately 75 percent of the Iraqi police forces in the area deserted in the face of sustained insurgent attacks.[163] It is at least an open question as to whether these forces could eventually have performed to a much higher standard had they not been asked to do too much too soon. While the situation in Mosul appears much better now, the example of an apparently effective security force unexpectedly crumbling is a worrisome precedent. Additionally, the abysmal performance of the Mosul police may indicate that a security unit should not be viewed as competent until it has proven itself in serious combat. This situation also suggests that the progress of all Iraqi units must be seriously monitored, and strong efforts must be made to avoid unwarranted optimism.

There is also the problem of what to do next if a timetable is established, and troop withdrawals are scheduled to begin prior to the Iraqi government being able to function without the support of U.S./coalition troops. The United States will then have to choose between withdrawing on time and possibly allowing anarchy to develop or reversing itself and ignoring the timetable. Iraqi and wider Arab World distrust of the United States is likely to increase if the the United States makes promises to withdraw its troops and then does not keep them.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a timetable surrenders the judgment of military and intelligence professionals to that of an inflexible and arbitrary commitment. If Iraq is redeemable, but key goals are not accomplished in accordance with the timetable, the United States may end up abandoning a potentially hopeful situation and instead allowing that nation to plunge into civil war and anarchy. If it becomes obvious to intelligence professionals, regional experts, and other informed observers that Iraq is irredeemable, then why wait to withdraw according to a timetable? The timetable option can only serve in the gray area whereby the Iraqi government may have only a small chance to survive, but the U.S. leadership does not wish to announce publicly that we have basically given up on Iraq. The timetable option allows the United States to appear before the world community as having provided Iraq one last chance before allowing it to sink into anarchy.

The Danger of Seeking Permanent U.S. Military Bases.

The United States is currently building a number of military facilities in Iraq, including 14 major installations sometimes referred to as "enduring bases" to be used by the Iraqi Army.[164] Such construction is both necessary for the future effectiveness of the Iraqi military and not particularly surprising for a strategy that seeks to empower indigenous security forces since many of Iraq's prewar bases and military infrastructure were in serious decline on the eve of U.S. intervention. Additionally, and more importantly, the widespread and often systematic looting that followed the ouster of Saddam Hussein caused massive and sometimes total destruction of those military facilities. In some cases, looters with cranes and trucks stole everything valuable at military sites.[165] Rebuilding a totally shattered military infrastructure thus has become a necessity.

Some suggest that the U.S. Government may be tempted to seek its own large and significant military bases to remain in that country after the departure of the majority of U.S. forces.[166] The disadvantages associated with such a policy clearly have been recognized by the U.S. administration, and Secretary Rumsfeld has characterized the suggestion that the United States is interested in such facilities as "inaccurate and unfortunate."[167] President Bush has also made the statement that "We will stay in Iraq as long as we are needed, and not a day longer," which some observers have interpreted as an indication that the administration is not seeking permanent bases.[168]

The question naturally arises as to how long the United States will stay to help fight the Iraqi insurgents without enjoying "permanent" basing rights. If the insurgency lasts for 12 years, as Secretary Rumsfeld suggests it might, does the United States keep some forces in Iraq throughout that time while maintaining that such deployments are not permanent? Perhaps because of these ambiguities, a great deal of suspicion exists in the Middle East and elsewhere that the United States will reverse itself at some key point and seek military facilities in Iraq beyond those needed to assist the Iraqi government with its struggle against the insurgents.[169]

Part of the suspicion of U.S. intentions is probably simply a general distrust of U.S. policy, but it may also reflect awareness by Middle Eastern publics of the calls by some neo-conservative commentators

for U.S. basing rights in Iraq.[170] Furthermore, the decision to relinquish U.S. bases in Saudi Arabia is sometimes seen as a factor driving the United States to seek Iraqi bases.[171] There is some logic behind these worries. While the primary purpose of the Saudi bases was usually presented as deterring and containing Saddam Hussein, these facilities also entered into the strategic equation regarding Iran and other problematic Middle Eastern scenarios. Thus, the decision to leave the Saudi bases is sometimes viewed as a setback for U.S. strategic flexibility.

Within the Iraqi context, the primary justification for retaining U.S. bases would be to support the Iraqi governmental security forces after the majority of U.S. troops have withdrawn from that country. Moreover, it would signal a strong and continuing U.S. interest in the future of this country. Nevertheless, these reasons for staying in Iraq in most circumstances will be strongly outweighed by the disadvantages associated with such a policy if they involve U.S. military assets that remain after U.S. forces are no longer necessary to cope with the insurgency.

A basing agreement may also seriously hurt the legitimacy of the Iraqi government, which the United States must seek to support. Resistance to basing rights by Western powers traditionally has been a central characteristic of Arab nationalism, which cannot be casually disregarded by key Iraqi leaders.[172] Even moderate Iraqi politicians fear that the United States may seek to dominate the post-Saddam Iraqi government.[173] Bases could be seen as a central part of such a strategy. Additionally, anti-American radicals in both the Shi'ite and Sunni communities would be given the gift of a major issue with which to rally their followers. Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who has a strong following among Iraq's most impoverished Shi'ites, has made opposition to U.S. influence in Iraq a central demand for his movement.

Perhaps most significantly, large and important Arab countries are seldom the most optimal locations for Western military bases. The presence of such facilities is widely taken to imply a certain higher level of Western influence over the government in question. Such a relationship is not only embarrassing with the public, but it is also a serious obstacle to seeking regional and Arab leadership

and regionwide respect, especially at a time when anti-Americanism is high. Smaller Arab states, by contrast, have no serious chance of claiming Arab leadership, and this factor is not a consideration for them. Additionally, small wealthy states, such as Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain, clearly see U.S. bases as an important source of protection from bullying and perhaps even military invasion by larger regional neighbors.[174] These states are much easier to work with in time of crisis, and their facilities can meet the same operational requirement as bases in Iraq.[175]

Conclusion.

This monograph has sought to illustrate how challenging, multifaceted, and difficult it will be to devise an effective exit strategy for Iraq that can also serve as a victory strategy, leaving both the United States and Iraq better off than when the intervention was undertaken in 2003. While this goal is still attainable, remarkably little room exists for error, ideological dogmatism, or ignorance about the nature of the multiple problems associated with such an undertaking. Although the authors of this work understand that no one can generate a perfect plan for addressing the issue of an exit strategy, the following recommendations are offered in the hope that they will be of value to planners and policymakers grappling with this fundamental issue of U.S. strategic policy.

1. U.S. Government leaders must never forget that the United States will achieve its key objectives once the Iraqi government is viewed by the majority of its people, regardless of sect or ethnicity, as a legitimate government that is worth fighting and dying for; and the Iraqi security forces have the training, know-how, and equipment to put these convictions into practice. Empowering the government and security forces is the key to an endstate in Iraq acceptable to the United States. The U.S. decision to avoid lingering in that country to eradicate the insurgency is therefore compatible with these priorities. All U.S. actions must be considered in light of the burden that they might place on Iraqi governmental legitimacy since this is the key to a government victory.

2. The United States must develop detailed plans for implementing a withdrawal of significant numbers of troops under

a variety of much less than optimal conditions. This requirement means that the Iraqi government may not yet have a strong human rights record, and the security forces may not be able to destroy the insurgency when the United States begins withdrawing troops. If the government is legitimate enough to survive, it may be useful to consider withdrawing the bulk of coalition forces as a way of empowering the new government by giving it the status of a fully independent entity. The United States may also have to scale back its expectations for Iraq's political future. If the United States withdraws and a civil war does not take place, Iraq is better than we found it. Any regime that respects the need to share power among all major Iraqi groups (and one hopes minor groups) is a great deal better than the Saddam Hussein regime. Moreover, some Iraqi governmental violations of human rights may be inevitable, so long as the government is locked in a death struggle with insurgents who are perfectly willing to bomb mosques and murder large numbers of children such as occurred in July 2005. The United States should be prepared to criticize Iraqi human rights violations, but it also must be aware of the context, and the possibility that the criticism will be more effective and meaningful at a point when the Iraqi government is no longer fighting for its existence.

3. U.S. military and intelligence leaders must be painfully honest in addressing the question of when Iraqi security forces will be able to function without a coalition troop presence to prop them up. To answer this question incorrectly could cause the United States fail to meet its minimal objective of helping empower a functioning government in Iraq. One of the most serious threats to U.S. goals in Iraq is the danger of unrealistic optimism about the capabilities and élan of the Iraq security forces, and especially those units that have not actually been tested in combat. Such wishful thinking, if acted upon, could cause the Iraqi military to be given too much responsibility and then collapse in the face of enemy opposition which they are not yet prepared to address. The United States does not have the time or resources to build and then rebuild the Iraqi security force after a series of collapses. False or foolish optimism on the ability of forces may lead to a repeat of the November 2004 Mosul disaster on a nationwide scale.

4. Senior U.S. military leaders must resist the view that they are "grading themselves" when they are asked to train the security forces and to evaluate Iraqi readiness to assume more expanded duties for military and security operations. The viability of Iraqi units must be measured by a series of tough indicators, including real efforts to measure intangibles like morale and unit cohesion, as well as quantifying training and the distribution of weapons and equipment. Iraqi units that have not proven themselves in battle should remain suspect, units that have histories of heavy infiltration by insurgents and high rates of desertion should be even more suspect, units that have an internal culture where troops speak openly in favor of the insurgents or maintain publicly that they will desert to join an ethnic militia if their sectarian leaders ask them to should be especially suspect. While these military problems may not be easily corrected by U.S. trainers and advisors, neither should they be ignored when attempting to make an honest evaluation of Iraqi prospects for self-defense.

5. The United States MUST NOT establish a timetable to withdraw from Iraq so long as U.S. leaders consider the situation in Iraq to be redeemable. If a timetable is established and rigidly adhered to regardless of the situation on the ground, then the United States has, in effect, given up on Iraq, and is engaged in what amounts to choosing a withdrawal date by lottery. It has also replaced the judgement of the U.S. military and intelligence leadership with an arbitrary decision on when Iraqi forces will be ready to assume the security duties necessary for that nation to survive intact. A timetable is not a strategy for even the most limited of form of success in Iraq; it is an excuse for allowing the system to collapse.

6. As a last resort for preventing near-term civil war, the United States may have to swallow the bitter pill of allowing local militias to retain a significant and ongoing role in Iraqi politics if the Iraqi government is interested in pursuing this option and if the Iraqi security forces cannot take full responsibility for the nation's safety. It is no longer clear that the United States will be able to create military and police forces that can secure the entire country no matter how long U.S. forces remain. It is also doubtful that Sunni Muslims will trust the Shi'ite-dominated central government and security forces to the point that that they will give up their militias

without a fight. Militias are better than anarchy, although the danger they may serve as the building blocks for civil war should cause them to be used only as a last resort. It is worth reiterating that this is only one step better than anarchy and should only be considered as a final choice. Once power is decentralized, it will be deeply difficult to recentralize.

7. The United States needs to renounce interest in permanent bases in Iraq on a strong and continuing basis. Once a long-term basing agreement is formalized, it will become a festering grievance for Iraqi nationalists and will be criticized constantly by Iraqi and Arab World radicals. Since a primary U.S. goal is to empower the Iraqi government with legitimacy, such bases must be renounced as a way of reinforcing that legitimacy, which this monograph claims is a military necessity to achieve victory.

8. The United States needs to deemphasize rhetoric that may cause Iraqi citizens to believe their government has been put in place to wage war on U.S. enemies in the Muslim World and otherwise serve U.S. interests. If Iraq is the "central front" in the war on terrorism, then it is part of a campaign that mainstream Muslims view as including Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's actions against the Palestinians and Russian President Vladimir Putin's campaign against Chechnya. The United States does not need to burden the Iraqi government with the specter of collusion in what may be seen as anti-Muslim policies.

9. U.S. leadership must recognize that it may still continue to support democracy after U.S. forces are withdrawn from Iraq, providing that the nation is stable when it leaves. The United States is expected to continue providing the Iraqi government with strong diplomatic and material support for its efforts. Following a U.S. departure, it is conceivable that the Iraqi military will be defeated if they show a lack of fighting spirit, but it is inconceivable that the United States should be willing to allow them to be defeated by a lack of military equipment and weaponry. As noted, materiel support will not save a failed military, but it might save a faltering military of a struggling government.

10. U.S. leaders should continually note the courage, commitment, and sacrifice of our troops in the field, while realizing that these same qualities are reasons to safeguard their lives even

more carefully. All future wars should have carefully planned exit strategies based on something other than best case planning for the future of the countries involved. In undertaking such plans, the United States must take care to maintain realistic expectations of what it can actually achieve with military intervention, especially with regard to the imposition of market economies and democracy on states that we do not fully understand. Goals for intervention might at times be maintained at a limited level and adjusted upwards if conditions permit rather than held to lofty high standards (such as total "de-Ba'athification") which conditions may later force the United States to compromise to extricate itself from a position of indefinite occupation.

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