

Center for American Progress



Strategic Reset

*Reclaiming Control of U.S.
Security in the Middle East*

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Progressive Ideas for a Strong, Just, and Free America

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Strategic *Reclaiming Control of U.S. Security in the Middle East* Reset

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INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

With the Iraq war well into its fifth year, the Bush administration still lacks a realistic plan for the Middle East and Iraq. The United States must reclaim control of its core national security interests by taking active steps to stabilize the entire Middle East and abandon the delusions at the heart of President Bush's policies. Otherwise, U.S. security will continue to suffer by weakening the U.S. military and draining resources away from destroying terrorist networks such as Al Qaeda.

The current Iraq strategy is exactly what Al Qaeda wants—the United States distracted and pinned down by Iraq's internal conflicts and trapped in a quagmire that has become the perfect rallying cry and recruitment tool for Al Qaeda. The United States has no good options given the strategic and tactical mistakes made on Iraq since 2002, but simply staying the course with an indefinite military presence is not advancing U.S. interests.

Instead, the United States must reset its strategy by looking beyond the deteriorating situation in Iraq in order to counter the threat from global terrorist groups and ensure stability in the entire Middle East and Gulf region. To do this, we need to develop a new overall Middle East strategy, not just a series of tactics focused heavily on Iraq. Retired Marine Corps General John Sheehan succinctly identified the main problem when turning down the Bush administration's offer to serve as the White House "czar" for Iraq and Afghanistan:

“What I found in discussions with current and former members of this administration is that there is no agreed-upon strategic view of the Iraq problem or the region...the current Washington decision-making process lacks a linkage to a broader view of the region and how the parts fit together strategically.”¹

In 2003, the president and his top supporters argued that the road to peace in the Middle East ran through Baghdad and that the Iraq war would stabilize the Middle East. By getting rid of Saddam Hussein, the United States would set into motion a democratic wave that would topple Middle East dictators and autocrats who were state

sponsors of terrorist groups threatening democracies worldwide. More than four years later it is clear that the opposite has in fact happened—terrorist attacks continue to rise, tensions between countries in the region are growing, Middle East autocrats are more deeply entrenched in power, and the Arab-Israeli conflict continues to rage.

By 2006, when Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice described the conflict between Israel and the Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah as the “birth pangs of a new Middle East,” it was clear that a new Middle East was emerging: one less stable

Strategic Reset: Our New Plan

Accept the Reality of Iraq's Political Fragmentation

- Immediately phase out the unconditional arming, equipping, and training of Iraq's security forces.
- Shift reconstruction, governance, and security assistance to provinces where practical and possible.

Implement a Phased Military Redeployment from Iraq within One Year

- Extract U.S. troops from Iraq's civil wars before the end of 2008.
- Make counterterrorism our country's No. 1 priority.
- Redeploy U.S. troops to neighboring countries and temporarily station 8,000 to 10,000 soldiers in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq until 2009 to prevent a cross-border conflict involving our key ally Turkey, and to protect the region from an expansion of intra-Iraqi violence

Initiate Regional Security and Diplomatic Efforts to Contain Iraq's Conflicts

- Promote collective security efforts with active working groups on counterterrorism, refugees, and security confidence-building measures.
- Use the forthcoming review of the United Nations mandate for Iraq to secure formal commitments from other countries to help Iraq as the United States redeploy from Iraq.

Develop a Strategy to Resolve the Arab-Israeli Conflict and Stabilize the Middle East

- Appoint a special Middle East envoy with support from two senior ambassadors who would work on two key tracks—containing and managing Iraq's multiple conflicts and resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- Work with partners in the Middle East Quartet as well as regional organizations such as the Arab League to manage and resolve conflicts in the region.

and less favorable to U.S. national security interests. What's worse, President Bush has placed the well-being of U.S. troops in the hands of Iraq's squabbling national leaders—essentially giving a divided Iraqi leadership a veto on when and where to use U.S. military forces.

The fundamental premise of Bush's surge strategy—that Iraq's leaders will make key decisions to advance their country's political transition and national reconciliation—is at best misguided and clearly unworkable. Neither U.S. troops in and around Baghdad nor diplomats in the Green Zone can force Iraqi leaders to hold their country together. As Major General Richard Lynch, currently commanding the Third Infantry Division, noted last month, even if the security situation does improve, there will not be significant progress on the government side.²

The United States cannot stabilize Iraq without serious action by Iraq's leaders. The “no end in sight” strategy fosters a culture of dependency among Iraqis by propping up certain members of Iraq's national government without fundamentally changing Iraq's political dynamics. It does so at the cost of grinding down the strength of U.S. ground forces, as the readiness of these forces continues to decline. Our ground forces are so overstretched that many of our soldiers and Marines are being sent to Iraq without proper training and equipment, some multiple times; our National Guard has become an operational rather than strategic reserve.

The consequences of President Bush's stubbornness are dire. Many events that some fear would result if U.S. troops left Iraq are unfolding now just as the U.S. troop presence is getting larger—vicious ethnic and sectar-

“Our situation is really tragic. We are surrounded on all sides and can't do anything. Whichever side you work with, you end up being targeted by the other, and the worst thing is that there are more than two sides.”
— Iraqi college student³

ian conflict, growing tensions on Iraq's borders, increasing provocative actions by Iran, and the largest refugee crisis in the Middle East since 1948. Iraq currently suffers from four major internal conflicts and tensions: Shi'a vs. Shi'a in the south; Sunni vs. Shi'a in the center and east; Sunni vs. Sunni in the west; and Arab-Kurd tensions in the north (see map on page 6 for more details).

A recent National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq noted that "the term 'civil war' does not adequately describe these multiple, overlapping conflicts in Iraq or adequately capture their complexity as they also include extensive Shi'a, Al Qaeda, and Sunni insurgent attacks on U.S. forces, and widespread criminally-motivated violence."⁴ The United States cannot settle Iraq's many internal conflicts even with its considerable conventional military power, particularly since the use of this military power is employed in an overall approach to the Middle East and the threat of global terrorist networks that is partial and incomplete.

Instead of passively waiting for Iraq's national leaders to make a series of political decisions that they have shown themselves fundamentally incapable of making amid multiple internal conflicts, the United States should adopt a more active stance to advance its interests throughout the Middle East. In short, the United States needs to implement a strategic reset aimed at using U.S. power to protect our core national interests. The four simultaneous steps our country must now take are:

- Adopt policies to accept the reality of Iraq's fragmentation
- Implement a phased military redeployment from Iraq in one year
- Initiate regional security and diplomatic efforts to contain and resolve Iraq's conflicts while reshaping the geopolitical balance in the region
- Develop a realistic strategy to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict and stabilize the broader Middle East

U.S. Policies Must Accept the Reality of Iraq's Fragmentation

Iraq's leaders are fundamentally at odds over what Iraq is, how power should be distributed, and who should control the nation's oil wealth. To advance its own national security interests, the United States needs to come to grips with this new reality of Iraq's fragmentation and respond by diversifying our military, diplomatic, and development presence in and around Iraq. We need to build on the efforts of the Bush administration to put more emphasis on provincial and local leadership rather than on working primarily with the national government.

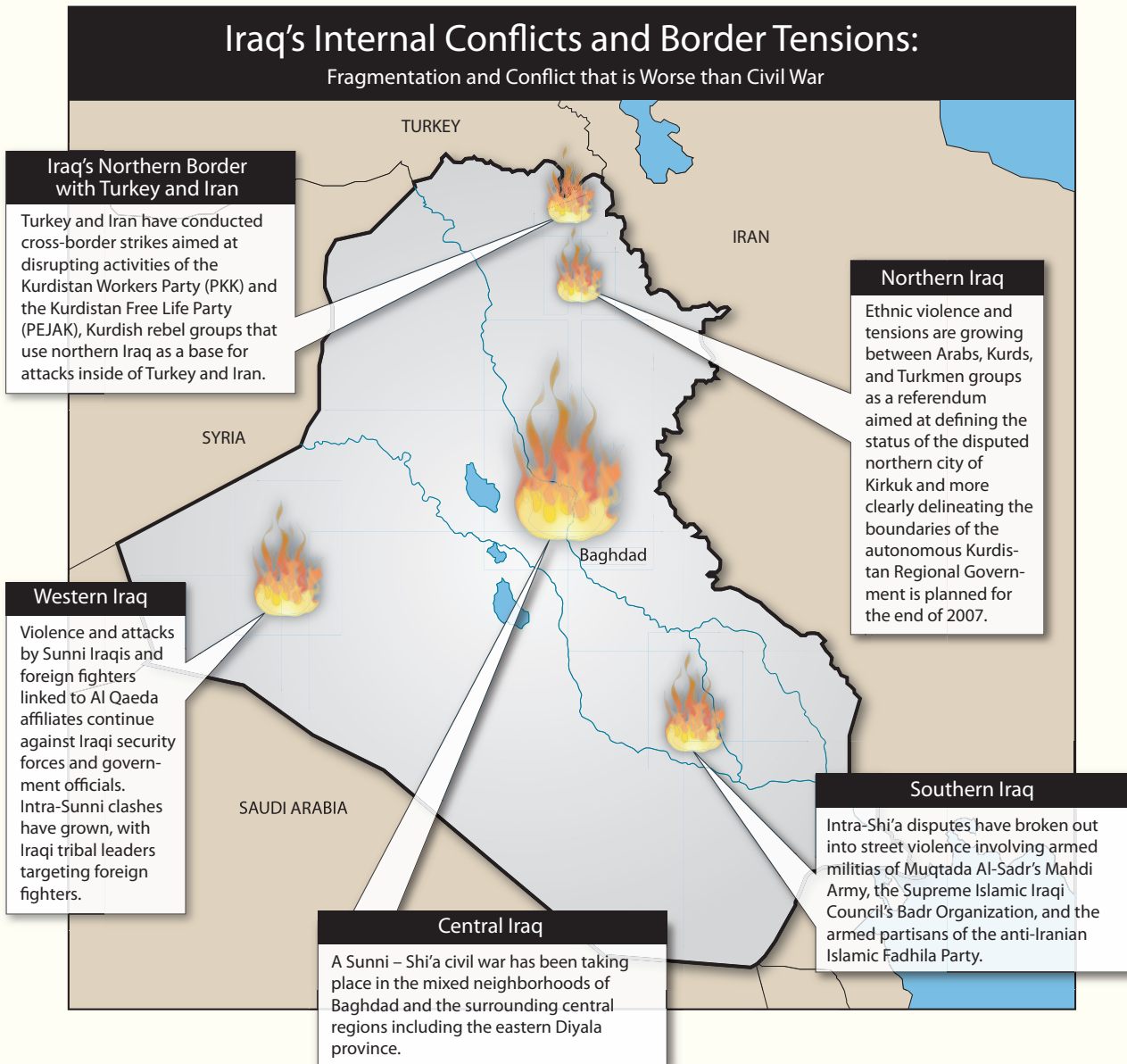
The United States should mitigate the increasingly violent fragmentation in Iraq by ceasing the unconditional arming and training of Iraq's national security forces until a political consensus and sustainable political solution is reached. As the United States redeploys its military forces, it should immediately phase out its training of Iraq's national security forces and place strict limits on arming and equipping them. Spending billions to arm Iraq's security forces without political consensus among Iraq's leaders carries significant risks—the largest of which is arming faction-ridden national Iraqi units before a unified national government exists that these armed forces will loyally support. Training and equipping Iraqi security forces risks making Iraq's civil war even bloodier and more vicious than it already is today. It also increases the dangers that these weapons will one day be turned against the United States and its allies in the region.

Furthermore, the United States should discard its plan to build the world's largest embassy in Baghdad and instead make

plans to reassign diplomatic and intelligence personnel throughout Iraq and neighboring countries with adequate protection. We should encourage Middle East leaders and the United Nations to continue working with Iraq's national leaders to peacefully settle their differences over power-sharing, but the United States should not unilaterally continue to try to force an immediate resolution of Iraq's political disputes.

should reassign U.S. personnel to secure consulates around Iraq in order to assist in local efforts to address Iraq's problems more effectively. The localities of Iraq are where politics shape Iraq's future, not in the isolation of the Green Zone. Finally, to fulfill a key moral obligation to the Iraqi people, the United States should increase the number of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons it might accept annually from the current level of 7,000 to 100,000.

Where security conditions permit and where it is practically possible, the United States



Comparison of Alternative Iraq Plans

- **The Bush Iraq Plan.** This plan involves sending more U.S. troops to Iraq to stabilize the country so that its national leaders have breathing space to strike political deals on Iraq's constitution, oil- and revenue-sharing laws, and other unresolved questions. The fundamental problem with the Bush strategy is that it focuses heavily on maintaining a large, prolonged, open-ended U.S. military presence in Iraq, which harms U.S. strategic interests by weakening U.S. ground troops and serving as a rallying cry for global terrorist groups. The strategy also fosters Iraqi and regional dependency on the United States.
- **The Iraq Study Group.** This promising proposal offered a bipartisan consensus plan for transitioning the mission in Iraq. It stressed the need for new diplomatic and political approaches in the entire Middle East as key missing ingredients to resolving and containing Iraq's conflicts. These diplomatic recommendations remain relevant, but Iraq's internal dynamics have changed dramatically since the release of the study late last year. The ISG focused on building up the national authority

in Iraq through continued training and support for Iraq's national army and police and focused efforts aimed at getting Iraq's national leaders to advance their country's political transition and national reconciliation process. Alas, the ISG's set of recommendations aimed at Iraq has been overtaken by events—the ISG was examining an Iraq that simply does not exist anymore. In addition, several military analysts note that embedding more U.S. troops with Iraqi forces to train and assist them is impractical because it would create unmanageable force protection problems for U.S. troops.

- **Our Plan.** The new alternative from the Center for American Progress recognizes the grim realities of Iraq's fragmentation and the fundamentally changed regional dynamics. We recommend shifting U.S. priorities from refereeing Iraq's multiple conflicts to aggressive counterterrorism alongside multiple efforts to stabilize the region (see summary points on page 2). We advance a more pragmatic approach aimed at garnering necessary international support for Iraq while taking the fight to our real terrorist enemies.

Phased Military Redeployment from Iraq in One Year

The United States should immediately begin redeploying its troops from Iraq and declare it does not intend to maintain military bases permanently in Iraq. A swift strategic redeployment from Iraq, coordinated with Iraq's government, gives the United States the best chance to revitalize its ground forces now stretched too thin to address growing threats on other fronts in the fight against global terrorist groups in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Getting U.S. troops out of Iraq's multiple conflicts and positioning troops in neighboring countries puts the United States in a better position to prevent Iraq's multiple sectarian conflicts from spreading beyond its borders and gives Iraq and its neighbors the right incentive to help resolve Iraq's internal conflicts. It also would increase U.S. capacity to confront threats from global terrorist groups more effectively than our massive troop presence in Iraq currently does. U.S. armed forces need to regroup to fight the enemies we have, not referee Iraqi combatants with other scores to settle.

Regional Security and Diplomatic Initiatives to Contain and Resolve Iraqi Conflicts

The United States should begin intense regional and international efforts to contain, manage, and ultimately resolve each of Iraq's conflicts. The United States should build on the suggestions of the Iraq Study Group and the steps already taken by the Bush administration in the first half of 2007 to participate in regional security conferences in Baghdad and Egypt and hold bilateral discussions with Iran.

All of Iraq's neighbors have a stake in key aspects of Iraq's internal conflicts. The consequences of an escalated conflict in Iraq could be dire for these countries—more refugees, the possible spread of attacks by global terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and its affiliates, and more crime and lawlessness. A sustained set of regional initiatives could help lessen the violence within Iraq and help reduce the potential threat of these conflicts spilling beyond Iraq's borders. These initiatives include enhancing border security, boosting cooperation on regional counterterrorism efforts, and encouraging security confidence-building measures to avoid more military conflict.

The United States should also work with other global powers and key allies in the Middle East to build consensus for a new United Nations Security Council Resolution to replace the one that expires on December 31, 2007. This new U.N. resolution should ensure that other countries do their share, including sending troops to Iraq, to help stabilize Iraq and the Middle East. It must include transparent, verifiable commitments by Iraq's neighbors not to undermine Iraq's security. The resolution should incorporate the efforts made to create the International Compact for Iraq, a five-year

plan launched in April of this year under the auspices of the United Nations with benchmarks for Iraq's national reconciliation and economic reconstruction, as well as formal commitments of support from the international community.

Develop a Realistic Strategy to Resolve the Arab-Israeli Conflict and Stabilize the Broader Middle East

The United States needs to pick up the pieces left by President Bush's flawed Middle East strategy by building a comprehensive sustained diplomatic approach across the region. We need to revive steady and regular diplomatic efforts to resolve Arab-Israeli conflict, stabilize Lebanon, more effectively manage our interests in Syria, and address the threat posed by Iran. All of these challenges are interlinked, far more than when the United States invaded Iraq in 2003.

The United States must find ways to turn Middle Eastern interdependencies to our advantage rather than disadvantage. One way to do so is by making strides toward easing Arab-Israeli tensions. Key countries and people in the region view the United States more positively when it leads efforts aimed at addressing tensions between Israel and its neighbors. Active engagement on resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict will make it easier to obtain and maintain support from pragmatic leaders in the Arab world and other key allies as our forces redeploy from Iraq.

President Bush should appoint a special Middle East envoy with support from two senior ambassadors devoted to resolving key Middle East conflicts. The special Middle East envoy should be an individual who can represent the United States at the highest levels and signal to the world that he or she

represents the president, and that the issue is a top priority for the United States.

The end goal of a more realistic U.S. strategy in the Middle East is a more secure region developed without turning our backs on democratic values. In the next year, the United States needs to focus its Middle East regional strategy by:

- Developing crisis management strategies to address more effectively the fallout from conflicts such as the intra-Palestinian battles in the spring of 2007
- Using regional and international proposals to provide a diplomatic framework to move the Arab-Israeli conflict toward resolution
- Engaging in diplomacy with U.S. rivals such as Iran and Syria similar to the way the United States negotiated with the Soviet Union and China in the Cold War
- Offering smartly targeted rule-of-law assistance to reduce and eliminate security vacuums and help foster democratic values from the ground up.

By taking these steps, the United States will be able to muster its still considerable power to advance our long-term national security interests in the region.

Time to Act

Over the past two years, President Bush has ignored an alternative Strategic Redeployment strategy⁵ first proposed in 2005 by the Center for American Progress and subsequently embraced in large part by members of Congress on both sides of the political aisle. At the end of 2006, President Bush squandered another opportunity to listen to the majority of Americans, his top military commanders on the ground at the time in Iraq, the Joint Chiefs of Staff,⁶ and the bipartisan Iraq Study Group.⁷

Isolated in the world and at home, President Bush committed more troops just as members of the dwindling “coalition of the willing,” including our most reliable ally, Great Britain, made plans to reduce their forces significantly. As a result, the United States will have an all-time high of at least 170,000 troops in Iraq by the summer of 2007 trying to quell multiple conflicts while risking the destruction of the all-volunteer U.S. Army.

President Bush can no longer ignore the realities in Iraq and around the region, and Congress and the country can no longer allow him to do so. The comprehensive plan that follows provides the policy framework needed to restore U.S. power and prestige in the region and reset our national security priorities on the real terrorist threats to our country.

Action Agenda for Strategic Reset in the Middle East in 2007–2008

- 1. Call for a redeployment of U.S. troops and closure of U.S. military bases in Iraq by the end of 2008.** Congress should use the 2008 Defense Authorization and Appropriations bills to call for an immediate redeployment of U.S. troops.
- 2. Advocate for measures to enhance U.S. military readiness.** The current Bush Iraq strategy has led to historic problems with personnel and equipment in the U.S. Army, Marines, and National Guard.⁸ Congress should include measures to re-equip our armed forces and support U.S. military personnel and veterans in the Defense Authorization and Appropriations bills.
- 3. Cut off unconditional U.S. support for Iraq's national security forces.** Congress should stop training Iraqi national forces and seek enforcement of the Leahy Amendment (see page 20 for details on the amendment).
- 4. Increase the number of Iraqis allowed in the United States annually from 7,000 to 100,000.** The United States has a moral obligation to help Iraqis displaced by the conflict, particularly those who risked their lives working with the U.S. military and diplomatic personnel. The Bush administration should raise the limit immediately and implement measures to more efficiently respond to requests for asylum.
- 5. Downsize the U.S. embassy in Baghdad and diversify U.S. presence around Iraq.** Congress should use legislation to make the U.S. embassy smaller without diminishing security for diplomatic personnel.
- 6. Put pressure on other countries to provide increased economic and humanitarian assistance to Iraqis.** Congress should ask for a full review of the total development and humanitarian assistance needs of Iraq from the Bush administration, a complete accounting of assistance pledged by other countries, and a plan to help Iraq garner support for economic reconstruction.
- 7. Create a new special envoy for Middle East diplomacy.** Congress should require the president to appoint a seasoned high-level envoy who can command attention in the region and the resources the State Department and other agencies may need to contain and manage Iraq's conflicts and resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. This senior diplomat should provide Congress with quarterly reports outlining steps toward stabilizing the region and resolving its conflicts.
- 8. Provide additional funding and support for collective security efforts in the Middle East and Gulf region.** The United States should support cooperative security measures as it resets its military presence in the Gulf region with confidence-building measures such as enhanced border security and increased communications and early warning systems to prevent conflicts.
- 9. Advocate for a new U.N. mandate for Iraq.** The United States should lead an international dialogue on the mandate to restructure international support for Iraq when the current U.N. mandate authorizing the U.S.-led coalition expires at the end of 2007.
- 10. Prevent continued waste, fraud, and corruption in Iraq.** Congress should continue to exercise increased oversight of the billions of dollars lost in Iraq reconstruction projects. Working with the World Bank and other international organizations, the United States should set good governance standards for Iraq's provincial, local, and national governing authorities.

ACCEPTING THE REALITY OF IRAQ'S FRAGMENTATION

Partition U.S. Policy, not Iraq

Iraq is trapped in a bitter struggle for power among multiple factions who question Iraq's fundamental identity and proposed power-sharing arrangements. While some Iraqi leaders are calling for a return to a more centralized state, the dominant tendencies in Iraq are towards decentralization. More than two years after they began discussions over the current constitution, Iraq's leaders are still debating whether to define Iraq as an Arab country in its constitution, what the dividing lines are for the Kurdish autonomous area, and how large the Iraqi Sunni Arab community is.

This stalemate at the national level means that the United States and other countries must adopt a fundamentally different approach. First, the United States must immediately phase out the arming and training Iraq's security forces. In the current absence of political consolidation and consensus among Iraq's leaders about what Iraq is and

how to divide power, sending more weapons to Iraq risks inflaming its internal conflicts.

Second, the United States should place even greater emphasis on its political and economic assistance strategies of empowering provincial and local governing authorities to improve the lives of Iraqis. This shift may create conditions for a possible national reconciliation in the medium to long term—perhaps sometime in the next decade. Instead of a “one size fits all” Iraq policy, the United States should instead adapt its strategy to reflect the different realities that exist in the different corners of Iraq (see map on page 6).

ADJUSTING TO THE REALITIES OF IRAQ'S NATIONAL POLITICAL STALEMATE

Iraq's political transition and national reconciliation are stuck. Iraq's leaders at the



Key leaders of Iraq's fragmented national leadership. Top row: Grand Ayatollah Ali Husseini Al-Sistani, Muqtada al-Sadr, Tariq al-Hashimi, Massoud Barzani. Bottom row: Nouri Al-Maliki, Abdul Aziz Hakim, Adnan Dulaimi, and Jalal Talibani. (AP)

national level are debating some of the same issues in 2007 that they have debated since 2003. Iraq's leaders fundamentally disagree on what kind of country Iraq is and should be, and Iraq's political transition has not succeeded in bridging these divides. This lack of political consensus among Iraq's leaders has resulted in a violent struggle for power.

Structurally, Iraq is not ripe for a major political settlement at the national level. Even if the United States and other countries can motivate Iraq's leaders to peacefully address the unanswered questions in Iraq—such as militias, disputes over resources, and power sharing between the national, provincial, and local governing authorities—it is unlikely that these accords would be fully implemented.

On most issues, what happens *de jure* in Iraq at the national level will not matter very much in the next few years; it will be the *de facto* practices, actions, and institutions that will shape events. For example, Iraq's national government may at some point take action on finalizing new oil- and revenue-sharing laws. These laws may even win the approval of the national parliament. But the greater challenge will come in implementing the laws' provisions, because Iraqi institutions since 2005 have a weak record of following the letter of the law.

Instead of trying to hold together a center in Iraq that may have ceased to exist, the United States and the international community need to concentrate resources on persuading the centers of power in provinces and localities around the country to reach multiple reconciliations. U.S. military redeployment should give Iraqis greater incentives to build their own democracy.

Iraq's so-called “national unity” government is neither unified nor an effective government. The first year of Iraqi Prime Minister

Nouri al-Maliki's government was dominated by continued jockeying for power among the various Iraqi political factions.

In the first half of 2007, two Shi'a parties, Fadhila and a bloc led by Shi'a cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, withdrew from the government headed by al-Maliki, leaving him with very slim support in Iraq's parliament. Sunni leaders have repeatedly threatened to pull out of the government in order to force the Shi'a-led ruling coalition to fulfill its promises to change the constitution as part of a deal that brought Sunnis into Iraq's political process in 2005.⁹

Iraq's national government currently lacks a unified leadership that works for the common good of the whole country. For example, the Iraqi Kurds' strong push for even greater regional autonomy cuts against the grain of initiatives aimed at bringing and holding together a strong central government. In the spring of 2007, Kurdish officials took more steps toward greater autonomy. The Kurdish Regional Government's energy minister, Ashti Hawrami, announced that Kurdish authorities in the north planned to triple the presence of foreign oil companies in the northern Kurdish regions—regardless of what happens with the national oil law.¹⁰

Or consider the use by Iraqi political factions of ministries to benefit their own sectarian groups rather than the national interest, especially national security forces, as detailed on page 15. In addition, internal divisions between Shi'a and Sunnis have also led to the creation of parallel government structures. For example, National Security Minister Shirwan Al Waili, a Shi'a leader with close ties to Iran, created an alternative structure to Iraq's National Intelligence Service, a service created as a cross-sectarian unit headed by Sunni General Mohammed Shahwani with a Kurdish deputy.¹¹

Iraq's Political Transition Is Stalled

In January 2007, Secretary Rice outlined a “notional political timeline” that called for certain objectives for Iraq’s political transition to be met by the end of March of this year.¹² No major progress was achieved on these objectives by March, and Congress included these among a set of 18 “benchmarks” in the supplemental funding bill passed on May 25, 2007—benchmarks President Bush has authority to waive. Key benchmarks include:

- **Constitutional reform.** Iraq’s current constitution, narrowly approved in an October 2005 referendum, left unanswered many questions fundamental to establishing a new post-Saddam Iraqi state, such as how to divide power between national and provincial governing authorities.

- **Oil and revenue-sharing laws.** These laws would create the structures for managing Iraq’s oil wealth, setting regulations for distributing oil revenues, and allowing foreign investment in the country.
- **De-Baathification laws.** These measures would clarify how the current Iraqi government plans to reintegrate Iraqis who were members of Saddam Hussein’s Baath party and served in government.
- **Provincial elections.** A new law to organize and regulate provincial elections is also a key benchmark.

In addition to these internal divisions within the national government, key Iraqi sectarian, ethnic, and political groups are themselves becoming more internally fragmented with each passing day. This presents an additional dynamic that contributes to political stasis at the national level.

Sunni Fractures

Among Iraqi Sunnis, important divisions have emerged. After Saddam Hussein’s execution, former members of his Baath party became increasingly divided. There is now an internal power struggle between Izzat Ibrahim, a former chief deputy to Saddam, and Mohammed Yunis Ahmad, a former top general.¹³

More broadly in the Iraqi Sunni community, major divisions emerged in the fall of 2006 after Al Qaeda-affiliated groups declared

the Islamic State of Iraq and attacked Sunni Iraqi leaders who took positions in the Iraqi security forces and governing authorities. At the national level, in response to the Islamic State of Iraq, a new group of Sunni Iraqis formed the Islamic Army of Iraq, and by the spring of 2007 had built an alternative coalition opposed to foreign fighters known as the Reform and Jihad Front.

And at the local level in the western province of Al Anbar, a group of local tribal sheikhs, reacting to a spate of vicious attacks by Al Qaeda-affiliated groups, formed Anbar Awakening, a coalition of tribes led by Sheikh Abdul Sattar Rishawi (sometimes referred to as Abu Risha).¹⁴ But even the Anbar Awakening coalition may be short-lived, as reports surfaced just a few weeks after its emergence that internal divisions were splitting this Sunni tribal coalition apart.¹⁵

Shi'a Divisions

Several divisions have also emerged among the Shi'a members of Iraq's ruling coalition. For the past year, Shi'a factions have fought for control over oil operations, business interests, local government, and police throughout cities and towns of southern Iraq including Basra, Amarah, Kut, and Diwaniya.

Two main Shi'a militias, the Madhi Army led by Muqtada al-Sadr and the Badr Organization, which is affiliated with the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council headed by Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, have fought in open battles—even though they are technically coalition partners in the so-called national unity government led by the United Iraqi Alliance. The United States has provided air support to some Iraqi forces fighting Shi'a militias in what some have characterized as an intra-Shi'a civil war.¹⁶

In Basra, clashes between rival Shi'a groups and demonstrations against an unpopular governor from the Fadhila party have impeded progress toward stability in Iraq's second-largest city.¹⁷ Signs of fragmentation exist at deeper levels among Iraq's Shi'a community. There is evidence that some movements such as the Sadrists are splintering internally, with up to several thousand members of al-Sadr's

Mahdi militia no longer under his control and perhaps receiving financing from Iran.¹⁸

PHASE OUT UNCONDITIONAL TRAINING AND ARMING OF IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

The United States should phase out its training of Iraq's national security forces and place strict limits on further arming and equipping Iraq's forces. Spending billions of dollars to arm Iraq's security forces absent political consensus among Iraq's leaders comes with two significant risks to U.S. national security interests.

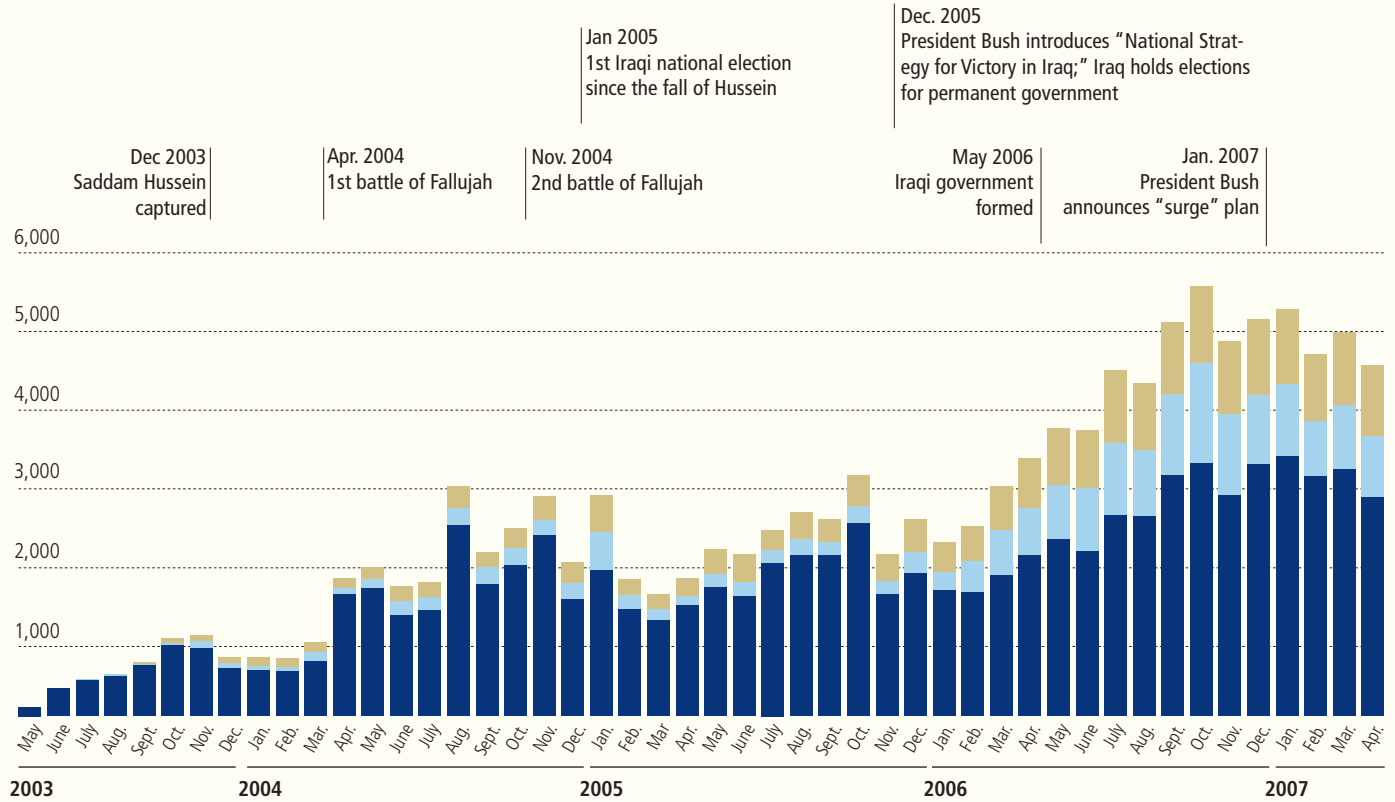
First, the United States is arming up different sides in multiple civil wars that could turn even more vicious in the coming years (see table on page 14). Second (and more important to America's strategic interests) billions of dollars of U.S. military assistance is going to some of the closest allies of America's greatest rival in the Middle East—Iran. The Shi'a-dominated Iraqi national army and security forces could quite quickly turn their weapons against American troops and allies in the region.

Since 2005, the size of Iraq's security forces has grown considerably. Not including the Facilities Protection Forces, which number

The medicine of more weapons and training for Iraq's security forces may actually end up killing the patient—and will certainly end up killing more Americans, too.

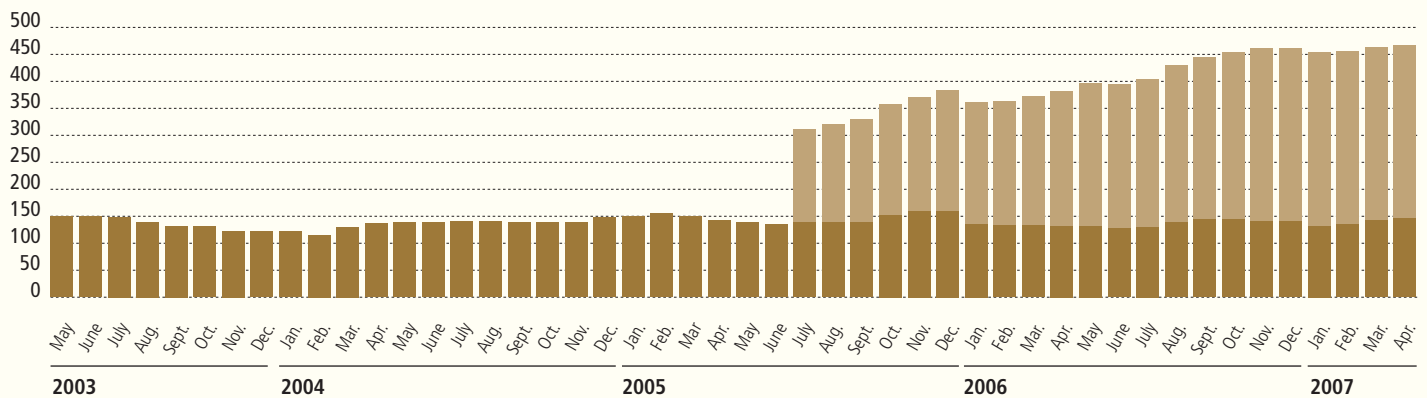
IRAQ VIOLENCE GROWS AS IRAQ'S SECURITY FORCES INCREASE

■ Attack(s) on coalition
 ■ Attack(s) on civilians
 ■ Attack(s) on Iraqi security forces



■ Number of U.S. military forces in Iraq (in thousands)
 ■ Number of Iraqi army and police trained and equipped (in thousands; figures do not include Kurdish peshmerga or Facilities Protection Service)

Total Number of U.S. and Iraqi forces



Sources: For attack numbers and Iraqi security force size to up 1/07: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07677.pdf>, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07612t.pdf>, and for Iraqi security force size from 1/07 to present: State Department Weekly Status reports, <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rpt/iraqstatus/c20699.htm>.

nearly 140,000, the number of Iraqi military and police personnel has more than doubled from about 142,000 in March 2005 to about 350,000 in June 2007 (see below and map on page 16). But as the Government Accountability Office reports, the changing composition and growth of Iraqi security forces have not led to a decrease in violence.¹⁹

Why? Most of Iraq's violence is related to a vicious struggle for power. Training and skill-building are not crucial for Iraq's security forces. In fact many of them have more training than hundreds of U.S. soldiers being deployed as part of this surge. Rather, the Iraqi forces' problems are related to motivation and allegiance. In the past

Status of Iraq's Security Forces

On paper, Iraq has more than half a million personnel in its security forces: 150,000 members of the Iraqi Army, nearly 200,000 police, 100,000 Kurdish peshmerga forces, and an additional 140,000 Facilities Protection Service personnel working in 27 ministries. But our commanders report significant problems with absenteeism and attrition in nearly all of these forces.

Currently, the 150,000-strong Iraqi Army is divided into 10 divisions. These divisions are generally deployed evenly across Iraq. The Iraqi Army's First and Seventh Divisions are based in the troubled western province of al-Anbar,²⁰ and the Sixth and Ninth Divisions of the Iraqi Army are currently deployed in or near Baghdad²¹ (see map on page 16 for locations of Iraqi army divisions). Iraq has sent additional army battalions drawn from other divisions to deploy in the capital as part of the Baghdad security plan.²² But these battalions remain in Baghdad for only 90 days before rotating back to their home provinces, hardly enough time to provide adequate help for the Baghdad surge.²³

The Iraqi National Police, a national-level paramilitary force of more than 26,000 based in Baghdad, operates country-wide under the authority of the interior minister. The Iraqi Police Service, or IPS, is a local-level law enforcement organization with dual chains of command to provincial governments and the Interior Ministry. At 135,000, the IPS is the largest

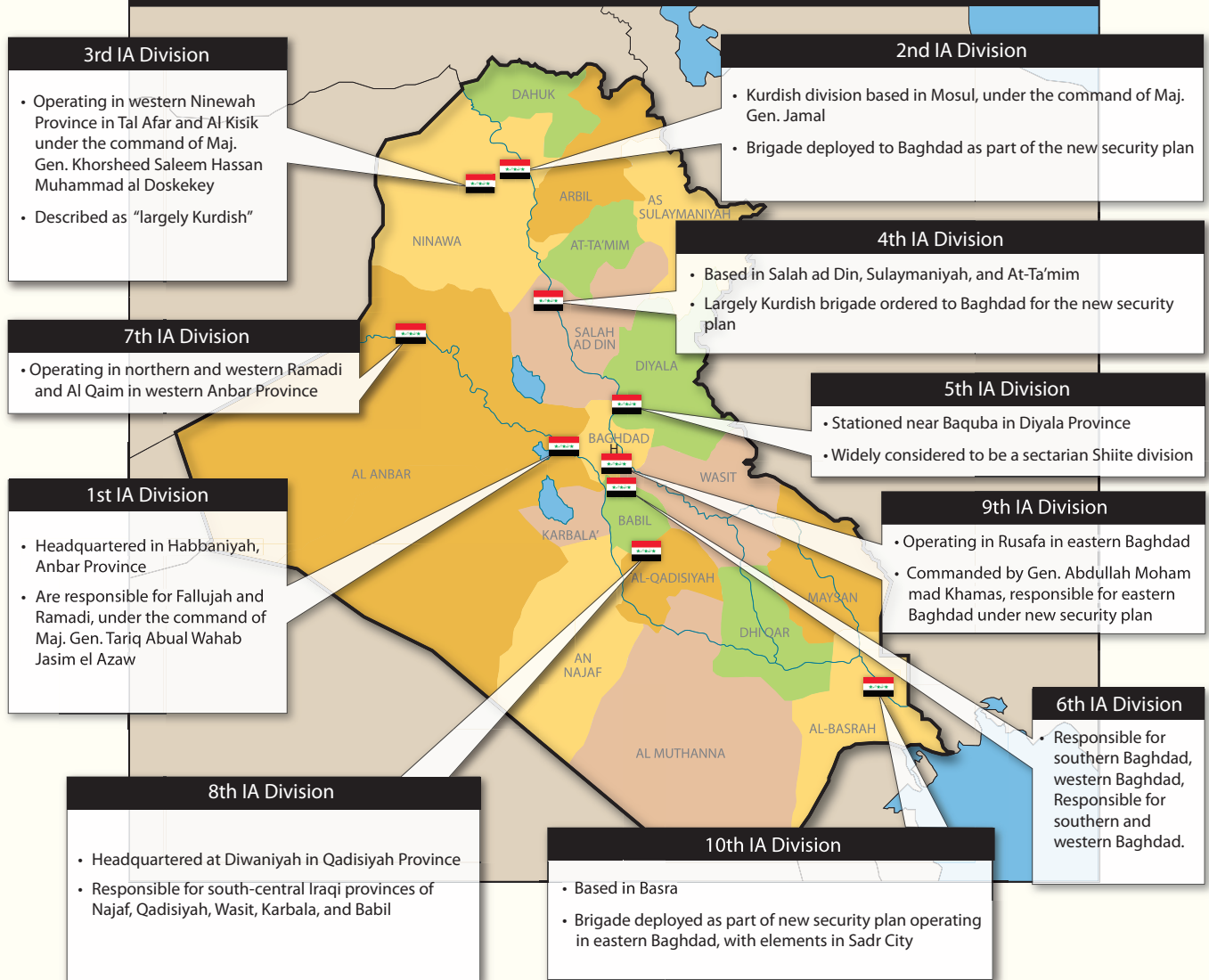
component of the Interior Ministry. More than 140,000 Facilities Protection Service personnel are tasked with protecting Iraqi government buildings and facilities.

In April 2007, the United States and Iraq announced plans to spend an additional \$14 billion on Iraq's security forces, with \$5 billion coming from U.S. taxpayers and \$9 billion from Iraq's budget, according to U.S. Army Lieutenant General Martin Dempsey. This year, 2007, will be the first year that Iraq's government will spend more of its own money than the United States on arming and equipping Iraq's security forces.²⁴ As that money is spent, the Iraqi army by end of 2007 will grow from 10 to 12 divisions and will have 170,700 soldiers—nearly 35,000 more than at the end of 2006. Iraq's police force, including national, local, and border patrol units, will grow from 192,000 at the end of last year to 198,600 at the end of 2007.²⁵

The growing number of Iraqi security forces masks a serious problem: growing divisions among Iraq's leaders. The fundamental problem with Iraq's security forces is that they lack the allegiance to the national government and in many cases the motivation to defend their country. The United States has poured more than \$20 billion into building a national army and police force designed to defend a government that does not have the unity and support of its own leaders.

Iraq Army Locations in the Country

The Iraqi Army consists of ten divisions, consisting of 152,500 trained-and-equipped soldiers. A 30,000 soldier expansion was recently approved and is under way. Iraqi Army forces are commanded by either the Multinational Corps - Iraq or the Iraqi Ground Forces Command in Baghdad, which serves as command-and-control for the eight army divisions that have been transferred from coalition command. Information and location on the Iraqi Army divisions:



Source: U.S. State Department Weekly Iraq reports; MNF-Iraq and Pentagon press releases; and news articles by Associated Press, *The Christian Science Monitor*, National Public Radio, *The New York Times*, and *USA Today*.

three years, the size of Iraq's security forces and the levels of violence have both grown steadily, even as the U.S. troop presence remained constant.

Endemic Sectarianism and the Central Problems of Allegiance and Motivation

The Iraqi security forces suffer from two major problems—factionalism and absenteeism caused by a lack of political consolidation in

Iraq. The central problem today in Iraq is that too many Iraqi leaders are hedging their bets, not fully supporting their own government by maintaining an independent power base with militias or attempting to carve out greater autonomy by seeking control of the country's security forces. These sectarian and ethnic divisions have been on full display in the actions of Iraqi security forces at numerous times during the past year.

In March 2007, for example, Shi'a police in Tal Afar killed several dozen Sunnis following a bombing that left more 150 Iraqis (largely Shi'a) dead. Iraqi police went on a rampage in the Sunni district of al-Wahada, dragging innocent civilians into the streets and slaughtering them.²⁶ Officials in the U.S. military have accused the Fifth Iraqi Army Division operating in Diyala province of engaging in blatant sectarian bias and violence, using Iraqi state resources in a sectarian cleansing campaign.²⁷

Furthermore, despite recent purges, the Badr Organization, the Shi'a militia for the Supreme Iraq Islamic Council, has extensively infiltrated the National Police, units of which have perpetrated sectarian violence and formed death squads against Sunnis.²⁸

Similarly, the Facilities Protection Service, or FPS, has been widely recognized as a source of funding and jobs for al-Sadr's Mahdi Army militia.²⁹ The FPS gets its funding through different ministry budgets, and some groups such as the Mahdi militia have used the FPS as a jobs program for their own supporters.³⁰ The involvement of the FPS in death squad activity is widely al-

leged,³¹ yet General David Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, has discussed plans for using FPS units as part of the Baghdad security plan.³²

The head of Iraqi police in Dhi Qar province, General Abdul Hussein Al Saffe, said he could not trust one in three of his own officers, but he could not fire the ones he did not trust because they had political protection.³³ Indeed, Iraqi police have been involved in high-profile attacks and abductions that have some connection to Iraq's sectarian divisions. Last November, kidnappers wearing Iraqi police uniforms conducted a mass abduction at Iraq's Ministry of Higher Education in Baghdad. Iraqis wearing police commando uniforms kidnapped a group of British contractors at the ministry of finance in Baghdad in late May 2007.³⁴

Militia infiltration of Iraq's security forces is so bad in some places that U.S. soldiers sometimes do not know whether to trust their Iraqi counterparts.

In the Ameel neighborhood of Baghdad, the local commander of Iraqi national police has been replaced three times since March

“We don't trust 'em,” said 1st Lt. Steve Taylor, serving at a joint Iraqi-American security station in Sulakh. “There's no way to know who's good and who's bad, so we have to assume they're all bad, unfortunately.”³⁵

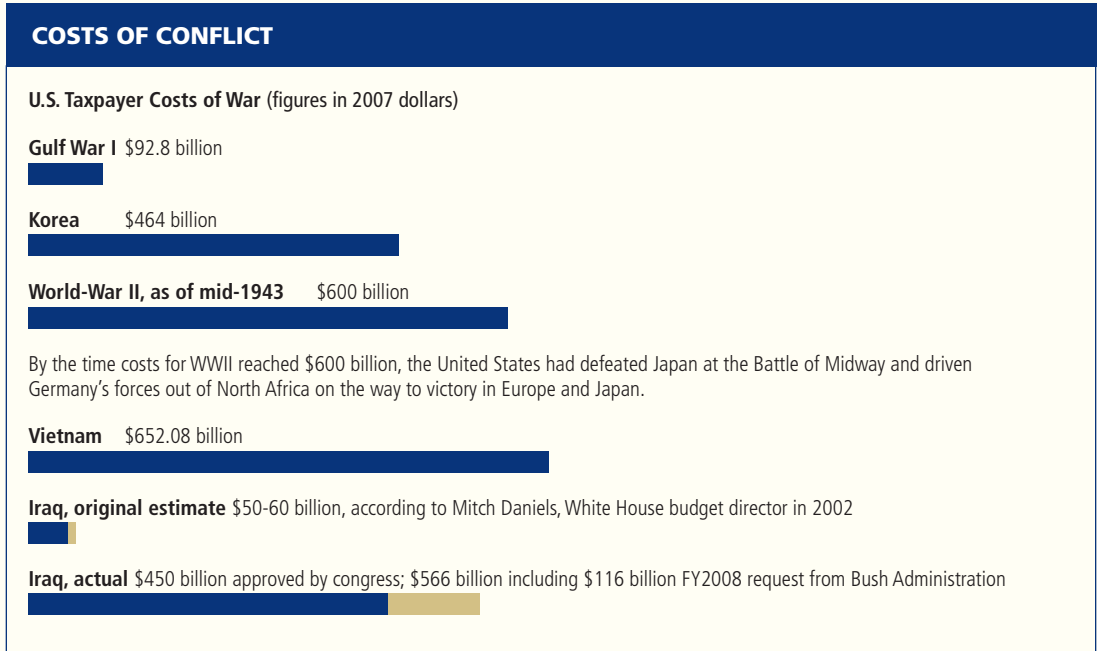
because of ties to militias or insurgent groups.³⁶ In some instances, American soldiers have been killed by Iraqi security forces that they were actually training.³⁷

The composition of Iraq’s governing coalition, which includes several militia-linked Shi’a political parties, does not bode well for national unity among Iraq’s security forces. Prime Minister Maliki, if given free rein, would likely focus national military efforts on Sunni insurgents and not disarm Shi’a militias who are part of his political base.³⁸ This only serves to reinforce sectarian conflict in the country, not resolve it.

There is also a major absenteeism problem, particularly for the Iraqi Army. At least a third of the Iraqi Army—almost 50,000 troops—is on leave at any given time.³⁹ The Pentagon continues to use

vague criteria for assessing whether or not Iraqi units are “in the lead” as the surge unfolds amid all these problems. The Pentagon has also refused to supply either Congress or the GAO with its readiness assessments of Iraqi units.⁴⁰

Multiple reports, however, indicate that Iraqi forces will not go on combat missions without American forces.⁴¹ Appearing before Congress earlier this month, Lt. General Martin Dempsey testified that Iraqi security forces are today unable to play a significant role in pacifying the country. And in some cases, Iraqis trained and armed by the United States may have joined the insurgency. When asked whether absent Iraqi police previously trained by the United States could be fighting U.S. troops, Dempsey said he did not know, but that this was something the United States was trying to track.⁴²



Source: “War costs are hitting historic proportions,” Joel Havemann, *Los Angeles Times*, January 14, 2007; “Costs of Major U.S. Wars and Recent U.S. Overseas Military Operations,” <http://digital.library.unt.edu/govdocs/crs/permalink/meta-crs-6990:1>, conversion from 2002 dollar figures provided in that report to 2007 dollars (\$1=\$1.16) is from the BLS, <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>; “White House Cuts Estimate of Cost of War with Iraq,” Elisabeth Bumiller, *The New York Times*, January 2003; “The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11,” Amy Belasco, Congressional Research Service Report, March 14, 2007.

Force Protection Risks of Embedding U.S. Troops

Since 2005, U.S. efforts to train and equip the Iraqi security forces have focused on embedding U.S. advisors with Iraqi forces in the form of “transition teams.” The Iraq Assistance Group, or IAG, has embedded more than 500 teams of between 11 and 15 American soldiers with Iraqi forces since the start of the program in early 2005.⁴³ There are now approximately 5,000 U.S. troops embedded in Iraqi units throughout the country.

The IAG has control over transition teams embedded in the Iraqi Army, border patrol, and National Police. The transition teams assist and advise Iraqi forces in assuming responsibility from the battalion to the division level, while simultaneously being the connection between Iraqi units and the U.S. military providing such assistance as close air support, artillery, intelligence, and medical evacuation.

Traditionally, this sort of training has been done by Army Special Forces, but in Iraq as in Vietnam, regular U.S. forces are being slotted for this role. A brigade from the 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley, Kansas, has been specially tasked to oversee the training and equipping of the transition teams as they head out for Iraq. These transition teams’ effectiveness is hampered by sectarianism and absenteeism among Iraqi security forces they advise.

The Iraq Study Group report recommended increasing the number of troops embedded with Iraqi security forces to between 10,000 and 20,000.⁴⁴ However, the ISG’s recommendations on troop training have been overtaken by events, and the current situation in Iraq raises serious questions about force protection risks associated with leaving behind large numbers of trainers embedded with Iraqi units.

Furthermore, U.S. soldiers would have to rely on the Iraqi units they are embedded in to understand the environment in which they are operating. Given the complex nature of Iraq’s multiple conflicts and the significant language barriers, there is no guarantee that embedded U.S. soldiers will know on which side they or their Iraqi units are fighting.

As the United States begins its phased redeployment, U.S. forces should phase out the training and arming Iraq’s security forces. U.S. troops need to concentrate on the real enemies in Iraq—Al Qaeda—not on protecting fellow U.S. soldiers from ambushes and kidnappings against the backdrop of Iraq’s multiple civil conflicts.

Provide More Oversight for Arming and Equipping Iraq’s Security Forces

Arming and equipping Iraqi security forces during the past three years has resulted in several problems. Efforts through early 2005 to equip the Iraqi security forces with small arms such as AK-47s and rocket propelled grenades, or RPGs, were severely hampered by a lack of accountability: the Iraqi security forces could not account for thousands of weapons. According to the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, only about 10,000 of the 370,000 small arms delivered through U.S. assistance had their serial numbers recorded for record-keeping.⁴⁵ Moreover, the majority of these unrecorded small arms went to the notoriously corrupt Ministry of Interior rather than the Ministry of Defense.

The economic incentives for participating in the weapons black market are strong. Iraqi police officers are paid \$60 a month and soldiers \$317 a month; an AK-47 can get \$500 on the open market, RPG launchers \$100 (the grenade rounds themselves are worth \$50), and Glock pistols anywhere from \$900 to \$1,100.⁴⁶ With serious con-

cerns about the reliability and loyalty of Iraq's security forces, the United States quite properly has been reluctant to hand over heavy weapons to the Iraqi security forces. U.S. Army officers expressed concerns that any heavy equipment the United States provided to the Iraqi Army would wind up providing the muscle for a coup or fuel a civil war.⁴⁷

The Bush administration has recognized these problems and adjusted its efforts. In September 2006, Iraq requested 101,500 M16s and M4s in foreign military sales from the United States, along with 35 million rounds of suitable 5.56 mm ammunition.⁴⁸ These new weapons are being issued with tightened controls and record-keeping: Iraqi soldiers issued new M16s or M4s are fingerprinted, given a retinal scan, and photographed with the rifle and its serial number. This information is then entered into a database in Baghdad to prevent the weapon from winding up on Iraq's extensive weapons black market.⁴⁹

As it phases out the training of Iraq's national-level security forces and completes current programs to arm and equip these forces, the United States should increase its oversight over the weapons and equip-

ment being provided. In particular, the U.S. Congress should ensure that any additional assistance to Iraq's security forces complies with the Leahy Amendment, which prohibits U.S. military assistance to known human rights abusers (see box below).

Alternatives to Unconditional Support to Iraq's National Security Forces

The United States needs to guard against the risk that weapons and equipment might be used to settle political scores. Given that U.S. training and arming of Iraq's national security forces amid political fragmentation risks a more vicious civil war and threatens our broader strategic interests in the Middle East, the United States should examine different models for providing support. But before any further security assistance is considered, the United States needs to redeploy its forces out of Iraq's internal conflicts by 2008 and demand a greater degree of political consensus among Iraq's leaders as a condition for any future security-sector assistance.

Rather than putting so much effort into building a national police under the control of a national Ministry of Interior, the United States, working with other countries under an umbrella of a new U.N. mandate (see page

The Leahy Amendment

The Leahy Amendment, first introduced by Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT) as an amendment to the 1997 Foreign Operations Appropriations Act, prohibits U.S. security assistance to foreign military or security units "against whom exist credible allegations of gross violations of human rights." Since 1997, Congress has continued these restrictions on such assistance in amendments to the Foreign Operations and

Defense Appropriations Acts, which permits the Secretary of Defense to waive the restriction on assistance if "extraordinary circumstances" require assistance to continue to units credibly believed to have engaged in gross violations of human rights. Since 2003, the Bush administration has refused to apply the provisions of the Leahy Amendment to U.S. security assistance to Iraqi units.

The multiple fragmentation of Iraq means the United States should partition its own policy approach to Iraq. It should significantly decrease the size—in terms of personnel and physical presence—of its embassy in Baghdad, which occupies a space about the size of the Vatican City in Italy.

40), could develop police- and security-sector reforms that build local police authorities and makes them accountable to local governing structures. The national military and police units are today too compromised by political and sectarian discord at the national level to be of much value to provincial and local leaders. In addition to local police units, the United States, working with international aid organizations, can help build the crucial judicial sector in order to strengthen court systems in Iraq.

If the United States shifts more of its focus to developing provincial and local capacity and boosting the ability of police forces with oversight from those provincial and local governing authorities around Iraq, it should examine the network of International Law Enforcement Academies started by the United States in 1995 to combat international terrorism, drug trafficking, and crime. The focus

of the ILEA network was to support regional and local criminal justice institution building and law enforcement—something that is still lacking in many parts of Iraq today.

ACT LOCALLY AND DECENTRALIZE U.S. POLICY IN IRAQ

The United States should reassign its personnel from the Baghdad embassy to consulates throughout Iraq to help assist in initiatives needed to better advance U.S. interests in Iraq.

These consulates would be located in areas of Iraq that are relatively safer, such as Erbil in the northern Kurdish autonomous region. They would require additional security protection, including a contingent of at least two hundred Marines with backup air support from U.S. military bases in neighboring countries.

In addition to serving as a base for intelligence operations against global terrorists who flocked to Iraq in the wake of the U.S. invasion, these consulates should provide increased consular services to assist the millions of Iraqis internally displaced by Iraq's conflicts and help Iraqis who sided with us secure visas to travel to the United States and other countries. Finally, these provincial outposts could work more closely with international aid agencies to help Iraqi provincial and local institutions improve their capacity to govern and root out corruption in order to provide a better quality of life for Iraqi citizens.

Addressing Local Needs, Building Local Institutions

Bogged down by Iraq's sectarian infighting, the United States and other countries have not been able to achieve progress on Iraq's economic reconstruction. Iraq's considerable oil wealth still does not benefit its people. According to a recent report by the United Nations Development Program, one in three Iraqis lives in poverty.⁵⁰ And the 2007 Failed State Index produced by Foreign Policy Magazine and the Fund for Peace ranks Iraq number two among the world's failed states.⁵¹

The country's health care system is in shambles, with many doctors and medical professionals fleeing the country after a spate of terrorist and insurgent attacks targeted them. According to the World Health Organization, 70 percent of Iraqis lack regular access to clean water, and UNICEF found that one in five Iraqi children suffer from malnourishment.⁵²

Economic reconstruction efforts will not yield results while conflict rages in parts of Iraq. Most international aid and humanitarian agencies have left the country because of the widespread violence. But there are pockets of the country, particularly northern Iraq, where a lot more work can be

done to help Iraqis rebuild their country's economy. The United States should adopt a new pragmatic approach of doing what it can, where it can on Iraq's reconstruction and political development.

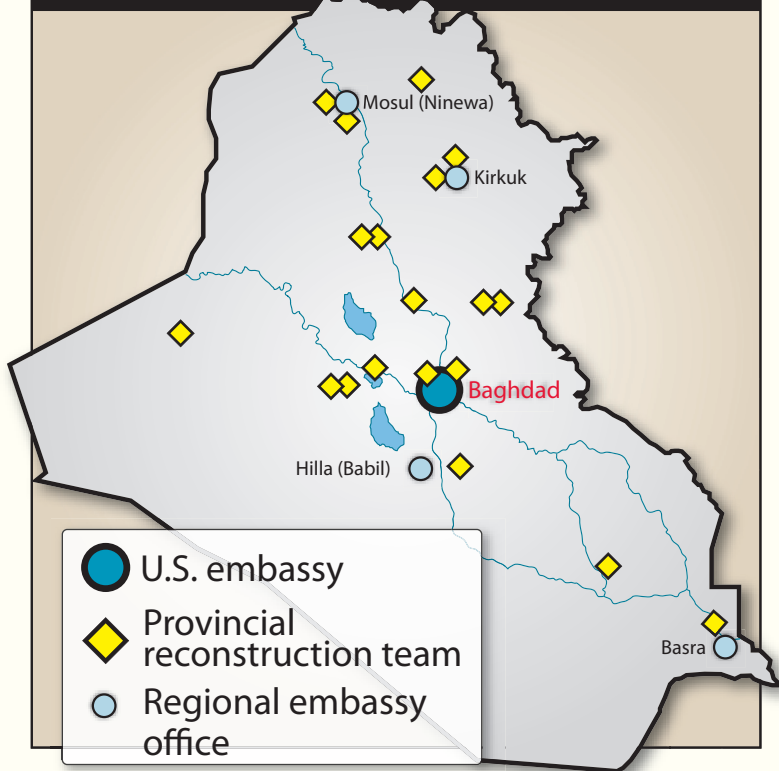
The United States, working closely with the international community, should shift its strategic focus to sub-national structures in order to make investments in the institutions that offer the best chance for improving the quality of life in Iraq in the short-term. Again, the emphasis should not be on forcing a *de jure* national partition but rather on a pragmatic approach of doing what the international community can where it can.

To a certain extent, the Bush administration has already shifted part of its strategy toward a more decentralized approach, at least with its governance and reconstruction efforts. In 2005, the United States set up 10 provincial reconstruction teams, or PRTs, which are small integrated civilian-military units aimed at boosting provincial and local government capacity to deliver essential services. Despite significant problems in staffing the civilian components of these teams, President Bush announced in January 2007 that the United States was doubling the number of PRTs (see map on page 23).⁵³

Creating a new model for assistance to provincial and local governments centered on consulates in selected parts of Iraq would help streamline and consolidate the uneven assistance currently being provided through the PRTs. Tapping our allies and Muslim-majority countries for additional help would direct the most useful international resources to where they would be most effective.

A consolidated and modified version of the current provincial reconstruction team model would more effectively address the considerable challenges in building local and provincial institutions. For example, in Feb-

U.S. Diplomatic Presence in Iraq



February 2007 the U.S. State Department announced a regional reconstruction team, or RRT, for the Iraqi Kurdistan region covering the provinces of Dohuk, Erbil, and Sulaimaniyah. This RRT has provided assistance to the Kurdish National Assembly and other Kurdistan Regional Government institutions in developing laws and regulations and increasing their governance capacity.

In addition to providing policy advice, the RRT has helped coordinate economic assistance and facilitate private international investment in local business ventures. And importantly, the RRT is multinational—headed by a South Korean diplomat with participation from American Foreign Service officers and development assistance professionals.⁵⁴

This integrated multinational approach offers a promising model. The United States should work with international aid agencies

to boost the capacity of local and provincial governments through the deployment of provincial and regional reconstruction teams. U.S. diplomats, for example, could work with international organizations such as the World Bank to address Iraq's "second insurgency,"⁵⁵ its endemic corruption, through these and other new programs. Indeed, Iraq's second insurgency cries out for international intervention. According to a recent report, anywhere from 100,000 to 300,000 barrels of oil a day are unaccounted for in Iraq, costing up to \$15 million a day.⁵⁶

The head of Iraq's Public Integrity Commission, an Iraqi anti-corruption commission, said that Iraq has lost more than \$8 billion through corruption and mismanagement in the last three years.⁵⁷

By focusing its efforts on selected communities, localities, and provinces in Iraq, the United States would be able to help Iraqis achieve progress toward building more democratic institutions in the long run. One such case is northern Iraq. Because of the relative safety and calm in northern Iraq, the U.S. government, as well as nongovernmental organizations such as the National Democratic Institute and Freedom House, has more space and ability to support Kurdish government authorities, political parties, and civic groups to advance democracy and to engage in localized conflict-resolution sessions in places such as Kirkuk (see box on page 24).

Test Case: Kirkuk

Kirkuk is a particular challenge looming on the immediate horizon, but the disputed city also offers a chance for nongovernmental, nonpartisan groups such as the United States Institute for Peace and the National Democratic Institute to play a constructive role in quietly mediating conflicts and helping build the advocacy and political negotiation skills of Iraqis.

Kirkuk is a city located on the fault line between the northern Iraqi Kurdistan region and the rest of Iraq with a mixed population of Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, and Assyrians, among other groups. Home to one of the world's largest oil fields, the area surrounding Kirkuk has an estimated 30 percent to 40 percent of Iraq's overall oil reserves and more than half of its proven natural gas reserves.

Saddam Hussein pushed tens of thousands of Kurds out of Kirkuk and relocated Iraqi Arabs there in an attempt to "Arabize" the city in the 1980s. After Saddam's ouster in 2003, Kurdish leaders have worked to reverse the effects of "Arabization" by encouraging Kurds to move back into the city. These shifts in demographics now have serious implications for security within Kirkuk.

Article 140 of Iraq's constitution, narrowly approved in a national referendum in October 2005, requires a referendum to determine the status of Kirkuk and whether it will be included in the areas under the Kurdistan Regional Government. Many Iraqi Arabs and Turkomens oppose making Kirkuk a part of the Kurdish region, and al-Sadr reportedly sent members of his Mahdi Army to Kirkuk in 2006 to defend the interests of Iraqi Arabs. In addition, Turkey opposes Kurdish control of Kirkuk, fearing that exclusive Kurdish control over Kirkuk's considerable oil and gas fields will encourage the Kurds to push for even greater autonomy.⁵⁸

This complex mix of forces in and around Kirkuk are emblematic of the local and provincial divides in Iraq. Yet these very same dynamics play to the strengths of forceful provincial and regional diplomacy backed perhaps by a multilateral military presence. This is the kind of local arena where the realignment of U.S. strategic interests could foster dialogue and compromise that is all but impossible to broker in Baghdad.

Assistance to Internally Displaced Iraqis

The United States should increase assistance to internally displaced Iraqis and refugees. The United States has a moral obligation to these individuals, particularly those who worked with U.S. troops and officials.

Our performance to date, however, has been dismal. In contrast to the 7,000 Iraqis the United States has promised to consider taking in, Sweden, which had nothing to do with the 2003 Iraq war, took in 9,000 in 2006 alone, and is expected to receive applications for asylum from 20,000 more Iraqis this year.⁵⁹

The provincial consulates described in this plan should also serve as hubs to advance U.S. interests in the different corners of Iraq. One key job would be to administer an expanded consular program so that Iraqis internally displaced by Iraq's conflict have a reasonable chance to participate in the expanded program to provide more Iraqis with temporary residence in the United States. The current level allows 7,000 Iraqis to enter the United States. Under our new strategy, up to 100,000 would be allowed in, with preference given to those who aided U.S. efforts over the past four years and groups such as religious minorities specifically targeted by the violence in Iraq.



An Iraqi child sleeps next to her mother at a camp for displaced Iraqis in Najaf. The deterioration of Iraq's water and sanitation systems means only an estimated 30 percent of children have access to safe water. (AP Photo/Alaa al-Marjani)

Having a larger but protected consular presence in the different corners of Iraq would help facilitate the process of responding to the growing calls for asylum from Iraqis. Currently, many Iraqis do not have access to the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, and the visa process is slowed by additional vetting requirements. A special priority should be given to Iraqis who worked with the U.S. military and other American groups, as well as their families. Officials from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which has already placed staff in embassies in Jordan and Syria, could help respond to requests for asylum from Iraqis at these consulates.

ENCOURAGE INTERNATIONAL MEDIATION TO ACHIEVE PROGRESS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

In addition to dedicating more of its efforts to boosting provincial and local institutions and police in Iraq, the United States needs to encourage an increased leadership role by

the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and other international mediators such as representatives from the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Representatives from these organizations would face some problems operating in certain parts of Iraq due to the security situation, but they may be seen as more credible mediators than U.S. soldiers and diplomats.

The United States should encourage these efforts despite the low expectations that something tangible will result from discussions by Iraq's national political leaders. Progress on this front can only come with the United States acting as a neutral partner in the process with other organizations that are more credible mediators playing key roles and reaching out to Iraq's various political factions (see box on pages 26–27 for a list of local, regional, and international players in Iraq as the U.S. resets its strategic interests in the region).

Background Basics: Iraq's Groups and Regional Actors

Iraq: Sunni Arab Groups

Al-Anbar Awakening/Anbar Salvation Council: Alliance of Sunni tribes organized to fight Al Qaeda in Anbar province and supportive of the ruling national coalition.

Baath Party: A secular Arab nationalist party that dominated Iraq under Saddam Hussein.

Islamic State of Iraq: Umbrella organization for Al Qaeda in Iraq and other jihadist and insurgent groups affiliated with its ideology. The ISI seeks ultimate control over Iraq's Sunni insurgency.

Islamic Army of Iraq: Sunni nationalist insurgent group opposed to Al Qaeda-affiliates such as the Islamic State of Iraq as well as the ruling coalition.

Iraqi Accord Front: Sunni Islamist coalition that currently serves in the al-Maliki government but has threatened to pull out if promised constitutional changes are not delivered. The IAF is the main Sunni bloc in the Iraqi parliament.

Iraqi Islamic Party: Strongly nationalist Sunni Islamist party that is the main component of the IAF. Led by Tariq al-Hashimi, one of Iraq's vice presidents.

Iraqi National Dialogue Front: A nationalist-oriented, Sunni party founded by Saleh Mutlak, the chief Sunni negotiator on the constitution who wound up opposing the constitution.

Association of Muslim Scholars: Formed by a group of Sunni Muslim religious leaders in Iraq, the AMS opposes the U.S. military presence and has voiced opposition to Iraq's political transition.

1920 Revolution Brigade: A Sunni nationalist group in Iraq named after the 1920 revolution against British colonial rule that has fought against elements of Al Qaeda in Iraq.

Iraq: Shi'a Arab Groups

United Iraqi Alliance: The coalition of Shi'a religious parties commanding the largest number of seats in the Iraqi parliament. Along with the main Kurdish parties, the UIA keeps the current government in power.

Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council: Formerly the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. SIIC is an Iranian-aligned Shi'a Islamist party headed by Abdul Aziz al-Hakim and part of the leading Shi'a bloc, the UIA.

Badr Organization: The paramilitary wing of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, heavily suspected of infiltrating Iraqi security forces, especially the Interior Ministry.

Sadrism Movement: Shi'a Islamist movement headed by Muqtada al-Sadr that is strongly nationalist and anti-coalition. Sadrists recently left the al-Maliki government, though they remain a part of the UIA.

Madhi Army: Militia controlled by Shi'a cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. Widely suspected of perpetrating much of the anti-Sunni sectarian violence and infiltrating Iraqi security forces.

Dawa Party: Shi'a Islamist party that has provided Iraq's two elected prime ministers, Ibrahim al-Jaafari and Nouri al-Maliki. Member of the UIA.

Fadhila Party: Anti-Iranian and anti-Sadrism Shi'a Islamist party. Fadhila controls the government of the main southern city of Basra and recently withdrew from the government and the United Iraqi Alliance.

Kurdish Groups

Patriotic Union of Kurdistan: One of two main Kurdish nationalist parties, the PUK is headed by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani.

Kurdistan Democratic Party: One of two main Kurdish nationalist parties, the KDP is led by Kurdistan Regional Government President Massoud Barzani. Fought the PUK in the mid-1990s.

Kurdistan Regional Government: The KRG is an autonomous region comprising three Kurdish-majority provinces in northern Iraq. It is governed primarily by an alliance between the KDP and PUK.

Peshmerga: Long-standing Kurdish militia. Some peshmerga were integrated into the Iraqi national army, but many remain under the control of the KDP and PUK.

Kurdistan Workers Party, the PKK: Turkish Kurd separatist organization that has used terrorism in its armed campaign against Turkey. The status of the PKK in northern Iraq is a major sticking point in Turkish-Iraqi relations.

Iraqi Cross-Ethnic and Sectarian Nationalist Groups

Iraqi National List: Non-sectarian parliamentary bloc headed by interim Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi and his Iraqi National Accord party.

Regional Groups and Diplomacy

Arab League: International organization composed of all Arab states. The Arab Peace Initiative has been promoted under the auspices of the Arab League.

Arab Peace Initiative: A 2002 proposal by Saudi King Abdullah, further adapted by the Arab League, to trade Israel's return to its 1967 borders in return for comprehensive peace and normal relations with all Arab states. Discussion of the Initiative has been renewed recently by the Arab states and Israel.

Clinton Parameters: Presented by President Clinton at a meeting of Israeli and Palestinian officials after the collapse of the 2000 Camp David

summit, the Clinton Parameters offered guidelines to address the fundamental issues at the heart of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict including final borders, refugees, and Jerusalem, among other issues.

Fatah: Secular Palestinian nationalist party led by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Negotiated the Oslo agreement and recognizes Israel.

Fatah al-Islam: Palestinian-Lebanese Islamist extremist group that fought Lebanese security forces in mid-2007. Not to be confused with the Fatah party headed by Abbas.

Gulf Cooperation Council: A loose alliance between the Arab Gulf states of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

Hamas: Palestinian Sunni Islamist political party with an armed wing that frequently engages in terrorism. Does not recognize Israel's right to exist.

Hezbollah: Lebanese Shi'a Islamist party with an armed wing that engages in terrorist actions and does not recognize Israel's right to exist.

Organization of the Islamic Conference: International organization consisting of most Muslim-majority countries.

Palestine Liberation Organization: Primary political organization regarded by the Arab League since 1974 as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people" and includes main Palestinian factions such as Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Palestinian People's Party, among other factions, but does not include Hamas.

Quartet on the Middle East: Established in 2002 and consisting of the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations, the Quartet has worked to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

PHASED MILITARY REDEPLOYMENT FROM IRAQ IN ONE YEAR

Disengaging U.S. Troops from Iraq's Internal Conflicts by 2008

None of the diplomatic initiatives to reset our national security interests in the Middle East can have any serious impact until the United States offers an end date to our military mission in Iraq and begins an immediate redeployment that concludes within 12 months. The United States should immediately announce that it does not intend to maintain permanent military bases or forces in Iraq. It should also immediately phase out training of Iraq's national security forces and focus the final year of U.S. ground operations in Iraq on targeted counterterrorism efforts. The United States should coordinate its military disengagement with the Iraqi national government.

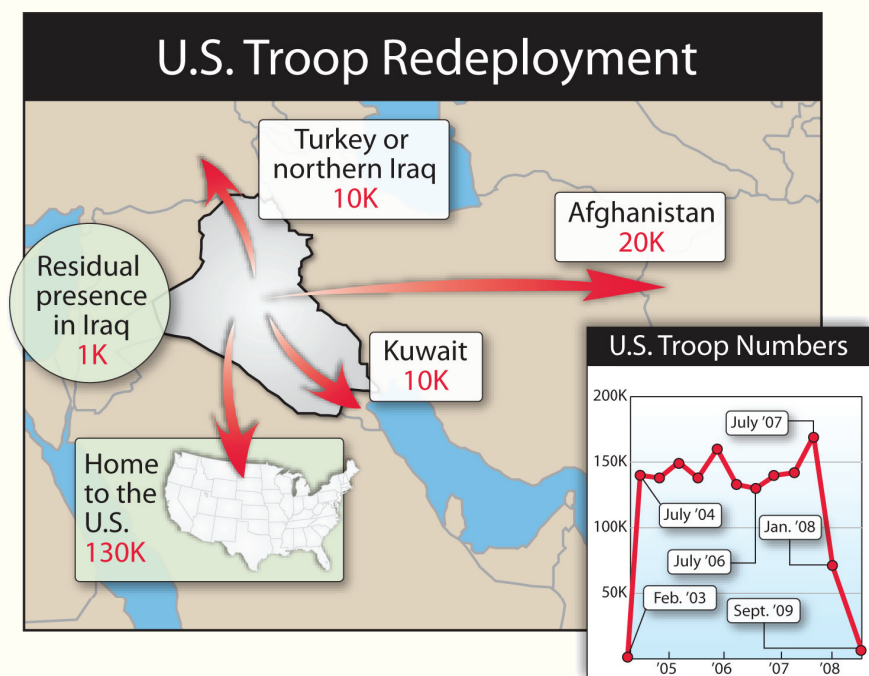
Implementing Redeployment in 2007–2008

President Bush's 2007 escalation in Iraq will result in American troop levels at an estimated 170,000—the highest level since

the initial invasion in March 2003. If the United States begins troop redeployment by the summer of 2007 at the latest, U.S. troop levels in Iraq could decline to about 70,000 by January 2008, with a full redeployment completed by September 2008. This would be accomplished by not replacing units that complete their tours on a one-for-one basis. Redeploying in one year would allow sufficient time to dismantle U.S. bases such as Camp Victory in Baghdad and Balad and Tallil Airbases, as well as to return most U.S. military equipment to the United States.⁶⁰

As the redeployment begins in 2007, U.S. forces would continue to rotate into the region to take up missions in Kuwait, Turkey, and Afghanistan. Forces currently deployed in Iraq will rotate home, while other units will come into the region to take up critical missions outside of Iraq, positioned to strike at global terrorist targets in Iraq and to enhance regional security. The post-rede-

By the fall of 2008, the U.S. troop presence inside of Iraq's borders would be minimal but sufficient to safeguard the American diplomatic presence in Iraq—the Baghdad embassy and consulates located throughout the country.



northern Kurdish region with the goal of withdrawing these forces in 2009. This military presence would work with Kurdish peshmerga in protecting Iraqis who have fled to northern Iraq to escape the violence and safeguard against the spread of conflict from the central and southern part

ployment U.S. force structure in the Middle East would include: an Army brigade and a tactical air squadron stationed in Kuwait; two light, mobile Army brigades stationed in the northern Kurdish areas; a Marine Expeditionary Unit afloat in the Gulf; and four to five Army combat brigades stationed in Afghanistan to complete the unaccomplished mission of eradicating Al Qaeda there.

In this new plan, the first unit to deploy to Afghanistan could be the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, which is currently scheduled to deploy to Iraq this coming September.⁶¹ It can be shifted to Afghanistan to increase the number of combat brigades there. Other units currently scheduled to go to Iraq would instead be deployed to Afghanistan, phasing in an increase in U.S. force levels there by at least 20,000 (see map above for U.S. troop presence in Iraq and throughout the Middle East after redeployment).

Assuming the Iraqi Kurdish leadership concurs, the United States should plan to maintain a small and temporary residual force of 8,000 to 10,000 U.S. troops in the

of the country. Offering this protection will provide support to one of the few remaining broadly pro-American groups in the entire Middle East—the Kurds.

In addition, the temporary military presence in northern Iraq would help crack down on cross-border smuggling and operations by Kurdish terrorist organizations that have conducted numerous attacks inside Turkey and Iran. One of the brigades deployed to Kurdistan would be based along the Turkish-Iraqi border in Dahuk and Erbil provinces to monitor and police the cross-border region. This limited and temporary U.S. presence in northern Iraq could also serve to deter the Kurdistan Regional Government from pushing for full independence.

The United States could send into the Kurdish area an airmobile brigade from the 101st Airborne Division and a Stryker brigade such as the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, scheduled to rotate into the region in August 2007.⁶² These units are more mobile and have a lighter footprint than heavy armor brigades. The repositioning of U.S. forces in

northern Iraq would have to be predicated on agreements reached at the national and local level in Iraq and in concert with our allies in the region. The diplomatic means to foster this dialogue is discussed on page 35.

MAKE COUNTERTERRORISM THE TOP U.S. MISSION IN IRAQ IN 2007–2008

Though most of Iraq’s violence today is sectarian and political in nature, it would be unwise to turn a blind eye to the threats now posed by global terrorist groups throughout the Middle East. Redeployment will open the door for more effective U.S. counterterrorist action, inside Iraq and throughout the Middle East.

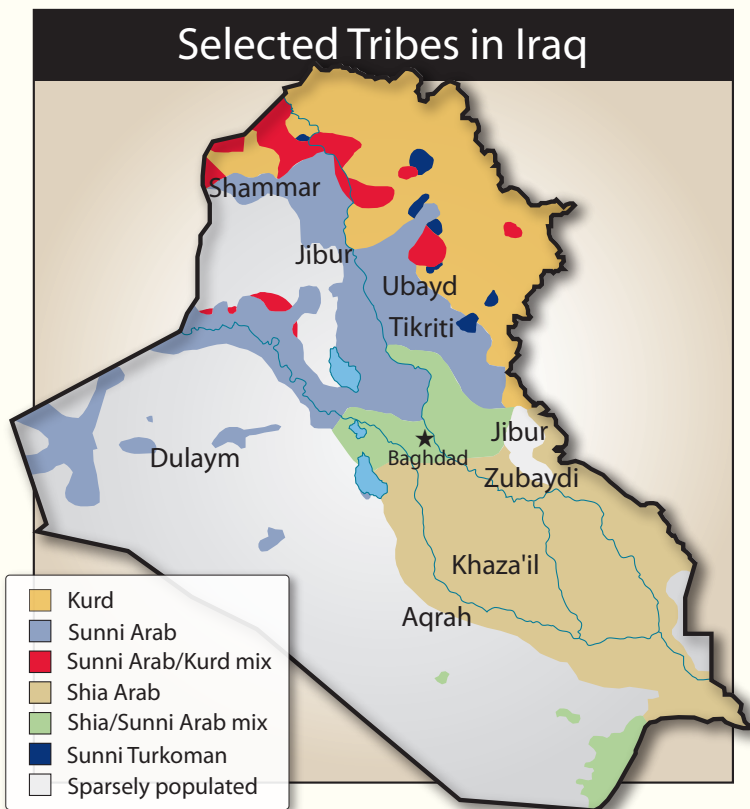
The global terrorist network Al Qaeda has articulated a strategic agenda that places Iraq at the center of a global jihad. Global terrorist groups exploited the security vacuums

created after the fall of Saddam Hussein, and the continuing U.S. military presence in Iraq provides Al Qaeda with an ideal ideological argument and rationale. The United States should invalidate this argument by leaving.

Keeping U.S. troops in Iraq would actually be counterproductive to combating global terror groups affiliated with Al Qaeda because of widespread and growing opposition to the U.S. military presence in Iraq. As Muhammad Abdul Khaliq, the mayor of the Amiriyah, explained in late May 2007, Sunni residents of this west Baghdad neighborhood were rising up against Al Qaeda, but if U.S. forces got involved, “it would blow up because they [the Americans] are the enemy of us both, and we will unite against them and stop fighting each other.”⁶³

Case in point: in early May 2007, Ayman Zawahiri—Al Qaeda’s No. 2—actually criticized efforts by the U.S. Congress to withdraw American troops from Iraq, saying a bill to set a timetable for U.S. withdrawal from Iraq would “deprive us of the opportunity to destroy the American forces which we have caught in an historic trap.”⁶⁴ Today, Iraq is a quagmire for the United States; leaving Iraq will make it Al Qaeda’s quagmire.

The rotation of U.S. forces out of Iraq would be the most effective move that the United States could make in the fight against Al Qaeda. As U.S. forces redeploy, Sunni Iraqi nationalist elements will focus their attention away from fighting the “occupation” and more and more on battling foreign radical Sunni elements. In tandem with international efforts—including the active participation of Muslim-majority countries around the world (see page 41 for details)—nationalist Sunni militants now arrayed against U.S. forces will find it in their own self-interest to get rid of these foreign radical elements.

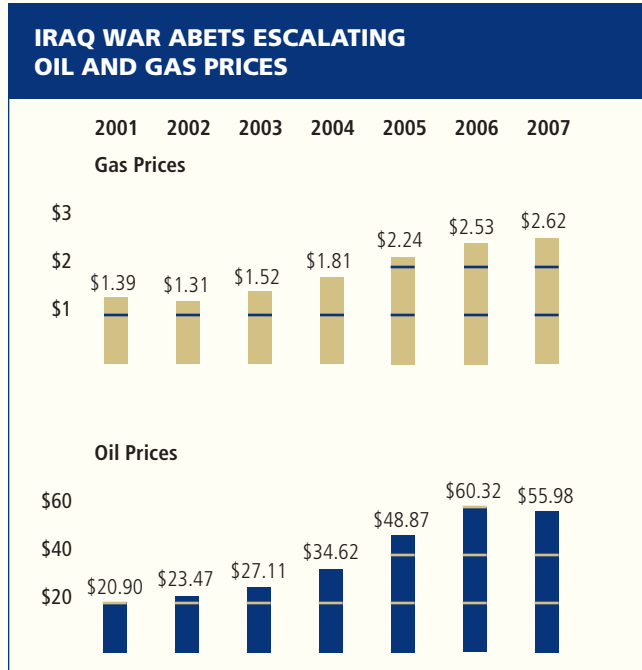


Source: “Iraq: Tribal Structure, Social and Political Activities,” Hussein D. Hassan, Congressional Research Service,

In fact, some of the Iraqi Sunnis complain that the current U.S. approach against global terrorist groups is not effective enough. One leader in Anbar Awakening, Sheikh Hamid al-Hais, criticized the U.S. military for being too soft on foreign terrorists and said Iraqis could deal with these groups more effectively.⁶⁵ More evidence that Iraqi Sunni groups are turning against the foreign fighters comes from the actions of the Islamic Army of Iraq and the 1920 Revolution Brigade, which battled against Al Qaeda affiliates in late 2006 and early 2007.⁶⁶

Because of the significant fractures and fragmentation inside of Iraq, redeploying U.S. troops would make Iraq a quagmire for our terrorist enemies and rivals in the region. Extremist elements of Shi'a and Sunni Islamist movements would likely turn against each other in a battle for power as a result of U.S. military redeployment from Iraq. Yet having fighters from two different anti-American groups become deeply mired in battles with each other will not undermine vital U.S. strategic interests—especially if more moderate forces in Iraq turn away from military conflict.

As the rest of U.S. troops redeploy from Iraq in the coming year, Marine units and Army Special Forces remaining in Iraq until the fall of 2008 would focus on counterterrorism. The focus of these counterterrorist operations would largely be in the Western province of al-Anbar and the province of Diyala province north of Baghdad. Marine units serve in Iraq on seven-month rotations; the current Marine units in the western province of Al Anbar would rotate home in August-September 2007. Another Marine Expeditionary Force, however, could be deployed for a seven-month rotation, which would itself redeploy back to the United States without replacement in April 2008.



Source: Department of Energy—Energy Information Administration. 2007 gas price as of June 18; 2007 oil price as of June 8.

These successive redeployments would in fact capitalize on some relative success in the counterinsurgency efforts in al-Anbar. For example, Marine units now support local Sunni Arab tribes that have organized to fight extremist terrorist elements led by Al Qaeda (see map on previous page).⁶⁷ Our redeployment could be key in our long-running fight with Al Qaeda; because the Sunni tribes fighting Al Qaeda would no longer be viewed as U.S. collaborators. Many of the Sunni forces currently working against foreign fighters affiliated with Al Qaeda have made clear that they continue to oppose the unpopular U.S. troop presence.

During redeployment, the United States would also work with institutions in northern Iraq and countries along Iraq's northern border to stop the cross-border attacks conducted by Kurdish terrorist organizations such as the Kurdistan Workers Party, more commonly known as the PKK based on their Kurdish acronym. The main effort would rely on small Special Forces units

working closely with Iraqi, other Arab, and regional intelligence elements to deal with the threat posed by these groups.

After 2008, a phased redeployment with U.S. troops remaining in the region would allow U.S. forces to maintain the capacity to carry out targeted strikes against select terrorist targets in Iraq. This is a strategy that has already borne fruit: air strikes based on Iraqi and Jordanian intelligence eliminated

the leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, last June.

To conduct these strikes, the United States will need to maintain open lines of communication with all of the trusted contacts our intelligence and military officers have built up over four long years of war in Iraq, both within the national government and among local and provincial leaders.

Reality Check: Effect of U.S. Troop Withdrawal

Some analysts outline grim scenarios for Iraq and the Middle East if the United States withdraws its military forces in a year. These arguments, often offered by many of the original proponents of the Iraq war, essentially argue that the United States cannot leave Iraq because it will result in sectarian cleansing, a new base for Al Qaeda, and a regional war. Yet all of these consequences are already occurring even with close to 170,000 U.S. troops in the country. Because faulty assumptions and bad analysis got the United States into this war, it is important to examine the arguments for continuing U.S. military operations in Iraq with no end in sight.

Iraq's violence is already quite deadly, with tens of thousands of Iraqis killed in sectarian cleansing and terrorist attacks since 2003. Deep fragmentation among Iraqis would serve to prevent Iraq's multiple conflicts from coalescing, and no single force will be able to truly gain an upper hand in the country. In addition, the absence of heavy weapons such as tanks, attack aircraft, and artillery, would likely limit the casualty rates and ethnic violence in Iraq, as Steven Simon at the Council on Foreign Relations points out.⁶⁸

Second, the notion that Al Qaeda might take over a portion of Iraq is far-fetched. Foreign jihadist fighters make up only a small portion of the overall insurgency, less than 10 percent according to most intelligence estimates. In addition, at least 80 percent of Iraqis (the Shi'a and the Kurds) as well as a growing number of Sunnis would not allow Al Qaeda to gain a foothold in the country as they see these groups as inimical to their own interests.

Finally, direct military intervention by neighboring armies is highly unlikely. Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Jordan lack the military capacity and face other overriding security concerns, while the United States can deter threats of invasion from Turkey and Iran by remaining in the region. Furthermore, with a more effective strategy for the region built on collective security measures and intensified diplomacy, the United States can help countries in the region more effectively advance their own interests in a more secure Iraq and Middle East.

SECURITY AND DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS IRAQ'S CONFLICTS

Take Concrete Steps to Address Iraq's Conflicts and Advance Gulf Security

The United States should combine a credible military redeployment plan with pragmatic regional security and diplomatic efforts. These efforts should build on the suggestions of the Iraq Study Group and diplomatic steps already taken by the Bush administration in the first half of 2007. The main goal of these regional security and diplomatic initiatives is to ensure that the costs of intervening to exploit Iraq's internal divisions are much higher than the benefits gained from working collectively to contain, manage, and ultimately resolve Iraq's internal conflicts.

Leaders around the world and in the Middle East in particular fear that the forthcoming U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq will lead to terrible consequences for their own countries' interests. It is time for the United States to capitalize on these fears to get our allies, Iraq's neighbors, and other Muslim-majority countries of the world to do more to help stabilize their own backyard. Discussing the implications of the U.S. redeployment from Iraq with all countries in the region will help manage the transition. Maintaining a U.S. military presence in the region as well as initiating these regional security diplomatic efforts will guard against the threat that neighboring countries will increase destructive interventions into Iraq's internal conflicts.

Intensify Regional Security Initiatives and Diplomacy to Address Iraq's Multiple Conflicts

The core problem in Iraq's internal conflicts involves vicious internal struggles for power. Yet several of Iraq's neighbors are linked to the Iraqi groups engaged in these battles. Iran, for example, offers support to some

Shi'a militia while elements in Syria and Saudi Arabia offer financial and logistical support to some Sunni groups in Iraq. In many ways, Iraq's multiple conflicts are mini-regional proxy wars, with neighboring countries supporting one group versus another.

After much delay, the Bush administration finally began the process of reaching out to Iraq's neighbors by participating in regional conferences in Baghdad in March 2007 and Egypt in May 2007. Regional working groups on refugees, fuel imports, and border security were created. The administration also began bilateral discussions with Iran on issues of mutual interest in Iraq in late May 2007.

These represent steps in the right direction—a move away from President Bush's self-imposed diplomatic isolation and toward the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. The formation of a regional contact group, however, is only the starting point for a series of necessary international and regional diplomatic initiatives aimed at managing the risks of the coming U.S. troop redeployment from Iraq. Because it will facilitate joint action on addressing significant border control gaps exploited by criminal and terror networks, it is also a first step in the right direction toward political and diplomatic solutions and away from exclusively military approaches.

Yet all-inclusive regional contact groups hold the potential for achieving few tangible results. The March 2007 Baghdad conference saw tensions rise between Sunni Arab countries and Iraq's government after the Arab League's Secretary General Amr Moussa said its delegation would push for changes in Iraq's constitution to give Sunnis more political power. Moussa also hinted that the

Arab League would take their suggestions to the U.N. Security Council, which prompted the United Iraqi Alliance, the ruling coalition in Iraq, to issue a statement denouncing the Arab League's "irresponsible positions which incite discord and acts of violence inside of Iraq."⁶⁹

This flare-up is just one reminder of how precarious regional diplomacy can be in the Middle East. Nonetheless, there are reasonable alternatives, which is why the next step is for the United States to work with governments in the region to convene like-minded states on Iraq's southern and

western borders—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Jordan—to coordinate their approaches to border control and share information. Should Syria prove cooperative on western Iraq security issues, there would remain a possibility that it could be brought into the border control group as well.

More targeted diplomacy such as this proposed regional working group for western and southern Iraq is premised on the notion that each of Iraq's neighbors has a different stake in each of Iraq's internal conflicts. Turkey, for example, has no strong security interest in the western and southern borders of Iraq, but it has an extremely high stake in the outcome of the simmering Kurd-Arab conflict.



Kurdish Peshmerga soldiers carry coffins of Kurdish victims exhumed during a re-burial ceremony in Irbil, Iraq. In 1983, 8,000 members of the Kurdish Barzani tribe were captured by Saddam Hussein's forces and later executed and buried in mass graves in southern Iraq. (AP Photo/Sasa Kralj)

Targeted Efforts to Address Growing Insecurity Along Northern Iraq's Borders

The first of these regional subgroups should concentrate on the security concerns in northern Iraq. The primary security problem for countries bordering northern Iraq is the status of Iraqi Kurdistan. Turkey has been most concerned with the issue of cross-border terrorism of the PKK, the status of Kirkuk, and the specter of an independent Iraqi Kurdistan.

Iran, which has a large Kurdish population, also has had problems with Kurdish militant groups, having shelled camps in northern Iraq in 2006. And Syria, which also has a sizable Kurdish population within its borders, has not yet expressed the same level of concern with developments in northern Iraq, but could well join this group.

Kurdish rebel attacks have left tens of thousands of Turks dead over the last two decades, with several hundred killed last year alone. During the past year, both Iranian

and Turkish forces have increased their military presence along Iraq's northern borders and in some cases allegedly launched strikes at Kurdish terrorist organizations that have used northern Iraq as a base, at times shelling into Iraq's borders.⁷⁰

Escalating tensions came to a head in the spring of 2007. Massoud Barzani, the head of Iraq's Kurdish Regional Government, threatened to provoke an uprising among Turkish Kurds, which prompted Turkey's top general to respond with a warning of direct military action against the Kurds in northern Iraq.⁷¹

Concerns about ethnic tensions between Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmens in Kirkuk have also raised concerns both inside and outside of Iraq. Top Turkish officials have warned recently that the referendum planned on the status of the Iraqi city of Kirkuk should be cancelled.⁷² The problem of Kirkuk is likely to persist throughout 2007, which is why the United States, working with other global powers and the United Nations, should

Iraq's neighbors have been targeted by global terrorist groups. And at different points since the September 11 attacks the United States has actually coordinated counterterrorism efforts against Al Qaeda with many of these countries, including Syria.

launch a diplomatic initiative aimed at reducing tensions by addressing the concerns of countries that border northern Iraq.

The aim of this diplomacy should be to explore all options for preventing increased conflict erupting over the status of Kirkuk, including a possible delay in implementing Article 140 of Iraq's constitution. During the past year, retired Air Force General Joseph Ralston has led an important diplomatic mission with Turkey and Kurdish leaders over the PKK question.⁷³ These efforts should be reinvigorated following Turkey's election in July 2007. General Ralston's missions should be more closely integrated with the other regional diplomatic efforts outlined in this paper.

The United States has sufficient leverage over both Turkey and Iraq's Kurdish leaders to prevent a further escalation of tensions. Turkey is a member of the NATO alliance and wants to join the European Union. Iraq's Kurdish leaders have had close ties with several U.S. administrations. Furthermore, linkages between northern Iraq and Turkey make the case for a peaceful resolution to these tensions strong. After all, Turkey is a leading trade partner with Iraq and it is also a main supplier of electricity to northern Iraq.

INCREASE REGIONAL COUNTER-TERRORISM EFFORTS AGAINST AL QAEDA

Another key component of this regional diplomacy involves getting other countries to act in their own self-interest in regional stability by working with the United States and other world powers to dismantle global terrorist networks such as Al Qaeda.

Countries in the region must prepare for an additional threat—the “boomerang” effect of foreign jihadists returning to their home

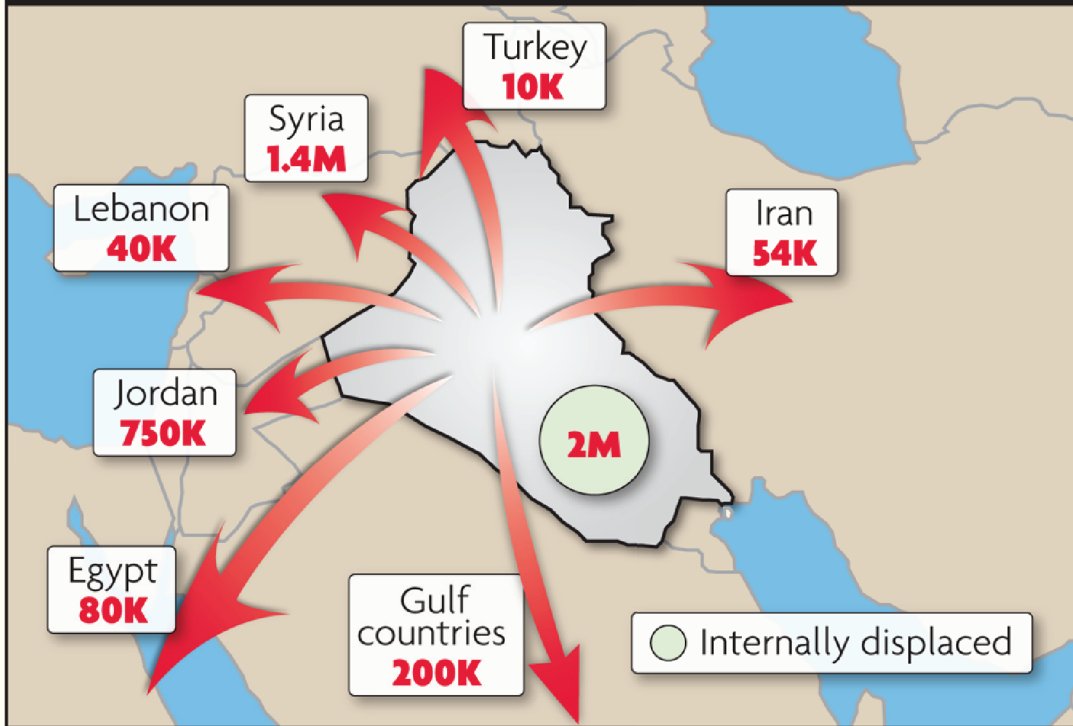
countries after U.S. forces redeploy out of Iraq. When the United States invaded Iraq, the country became a magnet for Islamist militants from across the globe and a live training ground for global terrorist groups. Now there are growing signs that these terrorists are heading to other countries in the region. This is the greatest external security threat facing not just Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Jordan, but also Egypt and the Arab countries of North Africa.

Signs of these threats emerged over the past few years, with the Amman hotel bombings in the fall of 2005 and spring 2007 bombings in Algeria. In April 2007, for example, Saudi Arabia arrested more than 170 suspected militants with alleged ties to global terrorist groups.⁷⁴ In addition, Fatah al-Islam, a militant group with ties to global terrorist groups operating in Iraq, was at the center of violence in a Palestinian refugee camp in northern Lebanon in May 2007.⁷⁵ These terrorist attacks are harbingers of worse things to come in the region, but the United States can help countries in the region deal more effectively with this threat.

Increased terrorist threats can be managed and contained more effectively without a large presence of U.S. ground forces in Iraq, but it requires a modified approach that employs the full potential of U.S. intelligence and law enforcement capabilities cooperating with regional actors. The U.S. should formalize a regional network of government security forces to combat global terrorist networks such as Al Qaeda. It may not be practical to include all countries at this stage given the mutual tensions and animosities, but announcing the intent to support an inclusive effort would put countries such as Iran and Syria on notice.

To facilitate such dialogue even though conditions may not be ripe for decisive diplomatic action, the United States should

Cross Border Flight of Iraqi Refugees



Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Inspector General for Iraq reconstruction.

encourage regular meetings between defense and interior ministers of countries in the region, with a system for direct communication, coordination and intelligence sharing. Over time, as the positive effects of the U.S. strategic realignment take hold, new opportunities to rebuild counterterrorist alliances are sure to arise.

Boost Collective Efforts to Assist Iraqi Refugees

An estimated two million Iraqi refugees have fled to neighboring countries such as Jordan, Syria, Iran, and Egypt, creating social, economic, and potential political problems in those countries in addition to the hardships faced by the refugees themselves (see map above). A more coordinated effort must be made to alleviate the refugees' situation and help their host countries cope with them,

starting with a small working group consisting of the United States, the United Nations, Syria, and Jordan.

The United Nations organized a conference on Iraq's refugees in Geneva in April 2007 at which the Iraqi government pledged \$25 million of its own resources to assist Iraq's refugees in other countries.⁷⁶

Thus far, the United States has funded 30 percent of the appeal for \$60 million from the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, and U.S. Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky outlined plans for an additional \$100 million in U.S. spending on Iraq's refugees.⁷⁷

Other countries with the capacity to assist financially, such as Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, should also be invited to participate.

The United States should appoint a coordinator for Iraqi refugee affairs to work with the United Nations and countries in the region on Iraqi refugees. This coordinator could work to build on the discussions at the April 2007 U.N. refugee conference in Geneva and coordinate the actions of U.S. agencies such as the departments of State and Homeland Security to ensure that the United States is fulfilling its moral obligation to Iraqi refugees.

The United States should get other countries to do more by increasing the number of refugees the United States accepts. Washington should raise the total number of refugees allowed into the United States annually to 100,000 from the current level of 7,000.

The United States should use the growing refugee crisis as an argument for garnering greater support to resolve Iraq's internal conflicts.

Encourage Economic Linkages Between Iraq and its Neighbors

Another way to help get Iraq's neighbors to play a more constructive role is to encourage economic linkages so that countries neighboring Iraq have a greater stake in helping Iraq tackle their internal conflicts.

For example, Iraq depends on several countries to export its oil products, particularly from the northern fields near Kirkuk, which are connected to the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan by a pipeline. Iraq also has pipelines connecting it to Syria that had been used before the 2003 war. Getting these pipelines back up and running at full capacity could help strengthen linkages between Iraq and its neighbors. These pipelines are not fully operational in part because of repeated attacks by Iraqi insurgent groups. In addition, in May 2007 Iran and Iraq signed a deal to increase Iraqi oil exports to Iran via a new pipeline in the southern part of Iraq.⁷⁸

Iraq's economic linkages with Iran go well beyond oil exports. Iraq has become increasingly dependent on a wide range of Iranian imports that are not made in Iraq because its industries were hampered by international sanctions for years. Several cities in Iraq have turned to Iran to address their electricity shortages, including Halabja, a Kurdish city in the north, and Basra, Iraq's second-largest city.⁷⁹ In addition, Iran has provided more than \$64 million in aid the past four years to improve facilities for religious tourists to the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala.⁸⁰

The United States should not fear these economic linkages; we should quietly encourage more cooperation through the regional contact groups and meetings. By encouraging the development of common interests among countries in the region, it can further isolate the extremists and terrorist groups who lack an agenda for improving the quality of life for people in the region.

SUPPORT LONGER-TERM REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION

By developing more productive ways to jointly address the common threats faced by countries in the region, the United States could plant the seeds for more constructive and responsible actions by those countries. The list of security challenges in the Middle East is long and daunting. But by more constructively and directly helping countries address these issues head-on through diplomacy, the United States can build a more sensible strategy for addressing difficult regional security issues such as Iran's nuclear program.

Heading into its last two years in office, the Bush administration has finally started to develop a more thoughtful and clear-headed approach to Iran. By early 2007, it had achieved a second Chapter VII U.N. Security Council resolution aimed at isolating Iran

because of growing international concern about a lack of transparency in its nuclear research program.

Yet the United States also began to engage Iran selectively in diplomatic efforts at regional conferences in Iraq and Egypt and bilateral talks held in Baghdad. These moves prepare the ground for further diplomatic action if Iran continues to defy the world community over its nuclear development program but also hold out the promise of peaceful coexistence and international engagement if more level heads prevail in Iran.

But there are broader steps the United States needs to take. Currently, the United States has a partial regional security strategy aimed at building an alliance of countries in the Gulf region to address the threats posed by Iran. These efforts, which include providing Patriot missile batteries and conducting joint naval exercises in the Gulf, have escalated tensions in the Gulf at certain moments during the past year. Though some of these moves may be necessary as temporary short-term responses to security threats, they do not represent a sustainable long-term strategy.

In order to promote a more sustainable security system in the Gulf, the United States should take additional steps to safeguard against starting a conflict inadvertently as a result of military miscalculations that might lead to a military clash between the United States and Iran. In the long run, the United States should seek to foster a more sustainable security arrangement in the Gulf region—one that seeks to de-escalate tensions and promote coordination. Given broad divisions and growing fragmentation in the Gulf region, no single actor can dominate the area.

Currently, there are some partial efforts afoot to do this, such as NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, which aims to

contribute to long-term stability by offering Middle East countries security cooperation with NATO. The current members include the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council—Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, however, holds out the prospect of including other countries, provided they meet certain standards on security and counterterrorism. This could be one avenue for expanding regional security cooperation in the Gulf, if imminent tensions such as Iran's nuclear program are addressed.

More broadly, the United States should also revive multilateral regional talks on security. More than 15 years ago—in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War and Madrid peace conference—the United States and Russia chaired sessions of the Arms Control and Regional Security, or ACRS, working group that included Israel, 13 Arab countries, and a Palestinian delegation. The working group made progress in outlining a number of incremental confidence-building measures.

ACRS drafted a declaration of principles for regional security and arms control and created a number of maritime confidence-building measures including a prevention-of-incidents-at-sea agreement. The ACRS meetings came to a halt when complications arose in the Arab-Israeli peace process in the mid-1990s and attention shifted to bilateral negotiations between Israel and its immediate neighbors. A dispute between Egypt and Israel over the establishment of a “weapons of mass destruction-free zone” in the Middle East further undermined the ACRS.

Picking up where the ACRS left off more than a decade ago is probably impractical, yet given the dramatically changed Middle East landscape, the ACRS working group proved that the United States, working with

other global powers, can take active steps to build confidence and stabilize the region. The United States should aim to start with modest goals—such as clarifying maritime rules in the Gulf—with the ultimate goal of creating a more sustainable security structure for this oil-rich region of the world.

The alternative is not tenable. A continued conventional arms race that has grown as quickly as the oil profits of countries in the Gulf region is clearly destabilizing.⁸¹ There is also the potential for nuclear arms race after the Arab countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council announced a joint nuclear research program in December 2006 in response to Iran's nuclear program.

As the United States redeploys its forces from Iraq to the region, it must develop more concerted efforts to stabilize the Middle East by containing Iraq's internal conflicts and working to promote security confidence-building measures akin to the ACRS working groups and the still-promising Istanbul Initiative.

ADOPT NEW U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION FOR IRAQ BEFORE END OF 2007

U.S. forces operate in Iraq under terms defined in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1546, which the United Nations has extended twice: first by UNSCR 1637 in December 2005 and then by UNSCR 1723 in November 2006. The current U.N. mandate is set to expire at the end of 2007.

A new U.N. mandate should center on the International Compact with Iraq, or ICI, a five-year plan with benchmarks for Iraq's national reconciliation and economic reconstruction as well as formal commitments of support from the international community. As an international mechanism, the ICI is only as useful as the support and commit-

ments provided by countries involved. The May 2007 Sharm el-Sheikh conference, where the ICI was launched, did not result in significant and concrete commitments by others countries on Iraq's reconstruction and debt relief.⁸²

The United States needs a concerted diplomatic effort to get countries to fulfill their commitments on helping Iraq's reconstruction and debt relief. Since 2003, less than one-fifth of the \$13.5 billion pledged at international donor conferences by countries other than the United States has been disbursed to Iraq. According to estimates from the International Monetary Fund, Iraq owes more than \$50 billion in external debt.⁸³ Countries such as Saudi Arabia have not fulfilled commitments on debt relief.

In addition to boosting support for Iraq's reconstruction and debt relief, a new U.N. mandate, if structured properly and coupled with a firm redeployment commitment by the United States, could garner more support from Muslim-majority countries currently reluctant to do more while U.S. forces are in Iraq in such large numbers. This is clearly a matter of urgency for the United States.

During the past four years the United States and its dwindling "coalition of the willing" has not been able to stem the violence in Iraq. Even with more than 150,000 American troops on the ground, the conflict continues unabated. Iraq's deadliest conflict between Shi'a and Sunnis started sometime in 2004—well before the first bombing of the Samarra mosque in February 2006—and is likely to last at least another four to seven years if recent history is any guide.

For the violence to stop, Iraqis must conclude that it is no longer in their national interest to continue to kill other Iraqis. This is not likely to happen in the foreseeable future unless other countries intervene more

constructively. The world has experienced more than 90 civil wars since 1945, at least a dozen of which are now raging around the world today. The average duration of civil wars since 1945 has been 10 years, with half lasting more than seven years.⁸⁴

On its own, there is little the United States can do to put an end to the deadliest of Iraq's four conflicts—the fight between Sunni and Shi'a in and around Baghdad. But there are steps we can take to encourage leaders in the Arab and Muslim world to do more to reduce Iraq's violence. These leaders would likely have more credibility and standing than the United States, and some have taken some steps toward boosting reconciliation and diplomatic solutions among Iraq's leaders.

For example, in April 2007, Indonesia hosted a gathering of Sunni and Shi'a clerics and scholars to promote reconciliation in Iraq, building on efforts made by the Organization of the Islamic Conference last October to stop the sectarian bloodshed in

Iraq.⁸⁵ The Arab League has also organized conferences aimed at bridging the divisions among Iraqis and boosting regional support for reconciliation. Muslim-majority countries such as Pakistan and Indonesia⁸⁶ have offered to send troops as peacekeepers to Iraq as recently as May 2007 at the Organization of the Islamic Conference meeting,⁸⁷ an offer that Iraq's leaders turned down.⁸⁸

The United States should make use of these concerns from Muslim leaders and organizations to get them to help Iraqis resolve their conflict. Lebanon's civil war was brought to an end not by U.S. military intervention but mostly by the diplomatic efforts of members of the Arab League. Though the 1989 Taif Accords were not perfect and resulted in Syrian control of Lebanon, it effectively ended major hostilities between Lebanese factions.

One of the best ways to get other countries and regional bodies more constructively involved is to send a clear signal that U.S. troops are leaving and to initiate an international dialogue on a new U.N. mandate for Iraq.



Iraqi soldiers investigate the wreckage of an Iraqi police truck at the scene of a suicide bomber's attack. (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)

WORKING TO RESOLVE THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Reviving American Leadership in the Middle East

The United States needs strong, sustained, consistent diplomatic efforts to deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict. Such efforts have been sorely lacking during the past seven years (see box on page 43).

This increased diplomatic engagement on the Arab-Israeli conflict is critical for two key reasons. First, resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict will benefit U.S. national security interests by ending a conflict that has undermined regional security. Second, governments and their people in the Middle East view the United States more positively when it is working to address tensions between Israel and its neighbors and taking an active role in constructively shaping regional dynamics.

This increased diplomacy should be part of a broader compact with the region: the United States focusing more efforts on resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict in return for more constructive efforts on the part of Middle East countries to help manage, contain, and resolve Iraq's conflicts. For the United States, the compact would be carried out with a constant eye on Iran's nuclear posture, close attention to Israel's serious security concerns, and a focus on how best to address increasingly complicated and intertwined issues with collective regional and international leverage resulting from this diplomacy.

The United States can balance and leverage the two broad tracks necessary to stabilize the Middle East—Iraq's conflicts and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Relationships strengthened by working with key countries in the region on some of the toughest issues in Iraq should facilitate efforts by the United States to steer diplomatic efforts on multiple tracks of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

These increased diplomatic efforts on the part of the United States must be coupled with credible policy shifts in the region, including a redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq. Redeployment will give the United States added diplomatic leverage in the region. It will no longer be bogged down in Iraq's internal military and political conflicts. By announcing the Iraq redeployment and simultaneously working to garner support for a new U.N. Security Council Resolution on Iraq and making clear that the United States is newly committed to the Arab-Israeli diplomatic track, the United States can reemerge as a leader and build positive momentum on all fronts.

The broader goal of these efforts is to shift the current frame of perceptions about the United States throughout the region—to change widespread views that the United States simply wants to dominate and occupy countries into a more positive and constructive image that the United States seeks to serve as a partner for stability and progress in the region. Redeployment from Iraq should only occur in combination with this major shift in the U.S. strategic approach to the region.

PUTTING THE RIGHT TEAM IN PLACE

The starting point for a comprehensive approach for the region involves having a fully capable and committed diplomatic team to get the job done. President Bush should appoint a special Middle East envoy with support from two senior ambassadors devoted to resolving key Middle East conflicts. The special Middle East envoy should be an individual who can represent the United States

Seven Lost Years in the Middle East

When historians look back on the period 2001 to 2007, they will see seven years of increased instability and strife in the Middle East, a downward spiral preceded by seven years of relative hope and progress in the late 1990s—seven years of lean preceded by seven years of relative progress.

For too long, President Bush has operated with a jumbled, ever-shifting laundry list of priorities in the Middle East that do not amount to a coherent and realistic strategy, including: addressing the threat of global terrorist networks; supporting a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; advancing freedom and democracy; preventing the spread of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons; and ensuring the safe free flow of oil from the Gulf region. All are important goals; none of them were well coordinated by the administration. Consider:

- Seven years of fitful progress on the Arab-Israeli peace front from 1994–2000 followed by seven years of unrest, including a second deadly Palestinian uprising, a war between Israel and Hezbollah, and a defunct peace process
- Iraq contained and isolated by sanctions and targeted military operations in the 1990s followed by Iraq consumed by multiple conflicts and threatening its neighbors with the largest refugee crisis in the Middle East in nearly 60 years
- Iran's regional influence constrained in the 1990s versus a newly emboldened Iran asserting itself in Iraq and throughout the Middle East and moving ahead unrestrained in its nuclear program

- The terrorist organization Hamas operating on the fringe of Palestinian politics in the 1990s followed by Hamas winning the 2006 elections and taking control of the Palestinian Authority and the Gaza Strip in 2007
- A period of relative regional calm resulting in historically low oil prices followed by increased insecurity contributing to the highest real global oil prices in history.

From the perspective of leaders and their people in the Middle East, the United States under President Bush has sent contradictory messages in its words and deeds. On the one hand, the Bush administration has rhetorically advocated for greater democracy and freedom in the Middle East; yet on the other hand, it has turned a blind eye to human rights abuses and steps to undermine a real transition to democracy in places such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

The Bush administration's fundamental mistake came from shifting so much attention and so many resources to Iraq while disengaging from the Arab-Israeli conflict, thereby undermining our overall interests in the region. In the Middle East, the Iraq war altered the regional political and security architecture in ways that the Bush administration did not anticipate—and the dust has yet to settle from these changes.

The key question is whether the United States will reemerge as a respected leader and help the Middle East make the next seven-year period, 2008–2014, one of progress toward greater stability and prosperity. The Middle East certainly saw violence in the last decade of the 20th century, but it was nothing like the strife engulfing the region in the opening years of this new century.

at the highest levels and signal to the world that the United States is fully committed to remaining engaged in the Middle East.

The two senior ambassadors would be the daily hands-on managers. One ambassador would be responsible for U.S. diplomatic efforts aimed at managing and containing Iraq's conflicts. The second ambassador would manage the Arab-Israeli track. These activities must be linked and coordinated through the National Security Council process to ensure all U.S. resources (not just those within the State Department) are most effectively committed to the effort. This team also would link the efforts of U.S. ambassadors in each country of the region together in a more concerted and comprehensive approach to address the Middle East's interlinked sectarian and ethnic challenges (see map on next page).

TAKING ACTION TO RESOLVE THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT AND STABILIZE THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST

With this high-level team in place, the United States in the next year must focus its regional strategy in three key areas on the Arab-Israeli track by:

- Developing effective crisis-management strategies to address crises more effectively, such as the intra-Palestinian battles in the spring of 2007
- Providing a diplomatic framework for regional and international proposals to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict
- Engaging in diplomacy with U.S. rivals such as Iran and Syria, similar to the way the United States negotiated with the Soviet Union and China during the Cold War

- Offering smartly targeted rule of law assistance to reduce and eliminate security vacuums.

With three senior diplomats focused exclusively on the Middle East with the express mission detailed above, the United States would be able to implement a strategic reset to better advance its interests in the Middle East. This will not be an easy diplomatic shift, but if sustained it could prove to be a promising approach after seven years of serial misfires.

EFFECTIVE CRISIS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The United States has not been a leader on the regional diplomatic scene for the past seven years. Yet it remains the indispensable party for resolving key conflicts. Managing and resolving conflicts in the Middle East are necessary to advance U.S. security interests. As the recent intra-Palestinian violence demonstrates, there is no more time to waste.

In the absence of U.S. leadership over the past few years, Saudi Arabia has stepped up its efforts on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in part motivated by Iran's rising influence in the region. Saudi Arabia brokered an agreement between feuding Palestinian factions in March 2007.⁸⁹ This agreement ultimately broke down with violence between the two top Palestinian factions Hamas and Fatah escalating and leading to the Hamas takeover of Gaza in June 2007.

In light of this crisis, the United States must step forward and assume a leadership position. U.S. leaders should have the confidence to tackle a difficult situation that has become even more complicated. The United States has experienced similar crises before, and it has capably managed similar shocks to ad-

vance its interests. In a short year-and-a-half period from 1989 to 1991, the United States, under a different President Bush, managed the aftershocks from the Soviet Union's break-up, German reunification, and Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. The first Bush administration did so through a series of interlinked, multi-track diplomatic efforts. The United States has managed tough challenges before, and it can do so again.

The key ingredient necessary to put all of these pieces together is U.S. leadership. In the aftershocks of such a grim setback with the violence in Gaza, some argued that the United States should do nothing because the situation is so complicated. This is exactly the wrong approach.

The United States needs more effective rapid-response efforts to emerging crises. That is why having a high-level diplomatic team to coordinate with Israel, the Middle East Quartet, and the Arab League is vital. What happened in Gaza is not an isolated incident, and only through a more coordinated and

effective management of these crises will the United States be able to help lead efforts to ultimately resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

A DIPLOMATIC FRAMEWORK TO RESOLVE THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Managing the crisis presented by deadly conflicts like the one between Fatah and Hamas is just a first step. In the long run, the United States should work to reinvigorate a framework for a sustainable two-state solution.

Neither the Israeli nor the Palestinian leadership is operating from a strong domestic base. In such a context, near-term politics can often override long-term national interests. The United States, aided by other actors, can help make the difference in this equation. A framework such as the Arab Initiative, the Clinton Parameters, or the end-game destination of the Roadmap is critical to set out a political horizon, a path for getting there, and the commitment to be a reliable participant in the process (see

Background Basics on page 26 for details of each diplomatic framework).

At present, the Arab Initiative is one path to peace, with Saudi officials renewing their 2002 Arab League Initiative during the past year. The Arab Initiative is premised on Israel's return to 1967 lines, which would include a return of the Golan Heights, a Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem, and some



Source: CIA maps, Perry-Castañeda Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin library.

resolution to the refugee problem. In return, the Arab Initiative offers Israel normalization of relations with the Arab world and comprehensive peace.

Without endorsing its details, the United States can use the Arab Initiative and any counterproposal that might be put forward by Israel's political leaders as a framework to begin a structured conversation, one that the U.S. should help to engineer. Arab League members have offered to visit Israel for further discussion, a historic opportunity that deserves U.S. support. The United States should offer concrete next steps to follow from that visit, splitting into Palestinian and Syrian tracks, and dividing discussions into a quest for near-term tangible gains and end-game political understandings.

In the past year, hints of new possibilities for a resolution of the Syrian-Israeli conflict have emerged, with word of quiet discussions between Syrians and Israelis about revitalizing peace negotiations.⁹⁰

To take advantage of these new developments, the United States should first remove any roadblocks it may have inappropriately placed on Israeli exploration of Syrian intentions. Then the United States should make clear that pursuit of a Syrian track must not come at the expense of the Palestinian track or Lebanese sovereignty. In other words, the United States' long-term goal should not settle for anything less than a comprehensive peace between Israel and all of its neighbors, and it should not allow a possible reopening of an Israeli-Syrian track to distract from resolving the core Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Next, the United States should explore, through quiet discussions with both Israel and Syria, what we can offer to facilitate these negotiations. For example, Syria is experiencing serious economic challenges,

and the United States might be able to play a role in helping Syria respond to these difficulties in return for serious action on counterterrorism and progress toward resolving the conflict with Israel

If initial U.S. exploration proves fruitful, then the United States should restore diplomatic representation in Damascus, where the United States withdrew its ambassador in 2005 in response to the murder of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.⁹¹ Returning the U.S. ambassador should not be viewed as reward, but rather as a route to improve means of discussing a range of tough issues.

U.S., Arab, Israeli, and world interests cannot wait for the next courageous Anwar Sadat, Yitzhak Rabin, or King Hussein to emerge. Instead, U.S. leadership, aided by pragmatic like-minded allies, should forge the path and help to develop the ground upon which the next generation of brave and bold leaders can grow.

INTENSIFIED REGIONAL DIPLOMACY WITH U.S. RIVALS

For too long, the Bush administration has viewed diplomacy as a reward to others rather than as a tool to advance U.S. interests by outlining U.S. positions and deterring others' actions. This lack of confidence in conducting diplomacy with rivals and adversaries—to sit across the table from representatives of governments that are working to undermine U.S. security interests—is a serious missing link in our country's ability to protect our national security.

Avoiding diplomacy with difficult countries such as Iran has weakened U.S. security by closing off lines of communication necessary to gauge intentions of key countries in the region. The result: The Bush administration has strengthened the most extreme elements in countries throughout the region

by not playing an active role in face-to-face diplomacy. This must change. Instead, the United States must begin serious diplomatic discussions with the following countries.

Iran

The United States has begun to conduct quiet and limited diplomacy with Iran with bilateral talks in Baghdad at the end of May and brief encounters at regional security conferences. These meetings need to be stepped up, given the range and severity of the disputes between the United States and Iran's government.

The United States has a long list of legitimate concerns about Iran: its nuclear research program; its support for militant and terrorist groups in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon; and its leaders' provocative statements. Sitting on the diplomatic sidelines has not served U.S. interests on any of these concerns.

Working with countries neighboring Iran, the United States should look to build a more comprehensive approach that takes into account the growing concerns of Iran's neighbors about how Iran's actions affect them. This approach also must anticipate how to address Iran's own sense of insecurity, whether perceived or actual. It should also seek to thwart dangerous actions by Iran to arm elements in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, and other parts of the region.

Syria

Using the initial discussions with Syria in the Arab-Israeli context, the United States should consider at what level bilateral diplomatic talks should begin on the range of other issues currently on the table directly between the United States and Syria, including its relationship with Hezbollah, its alleged role in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, its



The leaders of Iraq's neighboring countries. From left: Syrian President Bashar Assad, Jordan King Abdullah II, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. (AP)

relationship with Iran, and the growing number of Iraqi refugees inside of Syria.

The presidentially-appointed special Middle East envoy and designated ambassador should provide a ready means of elevating the dialogue should it prove warranted. The ultimate goal of this engagement would be to create greater incentives for Syria to play a more constructive role in stabilizing Iraq and the region and addressing the common threat posed by global terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda.

Lebanon

Internal tensions in Lebanon have escalated in the past year, with opposition Lebanese factions staging protests and boycotting the Lebanese government. Adding to these tensions are clashes between Lebanese security forces and militant groups such as Al Qaeda-inspired Fatah al-Islam and the looming divisions over an international tribunal investigating the assassination of Hariri and, most recently, of Lebanese MP Walid Ido and his son.

The United States needs to continue to remain engaged in providing support to the Lebanese government while managing the regional diplomacy aimed at addressing the Arab-Israeli conflict, ensuring that Lebanese sovereignty is not sacrificed by the efforts to stabilize the region and resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Working with Key Regional Interlocutors

To build and implement an effective comprehensive strategy, the United States should also work with key interlocutors that have influence on other countries in the region and North Africa, including Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan, as well as Saudi Arabia.

Turkey in particular plays a pivotal role in the region. It has ties with the leading pow-

ers in the region including Israel, Iran, and Egypt. As a NATO ally, it already serves as a key role in helping stabilize the region, participating in the U.N.-led peacekeeping force in Lebanon. A sustainable approach to stability in the region also requires a more inclusive regional approach to security that includes our European allies.

SMARTLY TARGETED RULE OF LAW ASSISTANCE TO REDUCE AND ELIMINATE SECURITY VACUUMS

The proliferation of security vacuums throughout parts of the Middle East in the past seven years has harmed core national security interests of the United States, opening the door for extremist groups to exploit lawlessness and instability. A prime example is the Gaza Strip, where militant gangs connected to major Palestinian factions such as Hamas and Fatah have taken advantage of the disorder to intimidate and kill Palestinians.

The regional fallout from our occupation of Iraq is another case in point. President Bush and his right-wing allies argued that getting rid of Saddam Hussein in Iraq would inspire democratic revolutions throughout the Middle East, yet the chaos that Iraq fell into actually inspired a backlash against democratic ideals. As a Syrian human rights activist recently said about his own stalled struggle for greater freedom in Syria:

“What happened in Iraq makes the entire region afraid. People don’t want to risk occupation, chaos, and sectarian bloodshed. And the Syrian regime is playing on those fears. It was natural for the regime to be strengthened by the catastrophe in Iraq.”⁹²

It is against U.S. interests to see the security vacuums in the Middle East continue to grow, but at the same time the United States should not fall back into its more traditional

approach of blindly supporting autocratic regimes in the Middle East. Instead, the United States should work with partners in the international community to develop more tailored and nuanced strategies aimed at boosting the strength of local police and security services with oversight from legitimate governing authorities—ones that do not espouse violence against other states as a means for political change.

Law and order serves as the basic foundation for peace and democracy in the Middle East. The lack of focus on helping actors in the region build governing institutions has allowed chaos to spread throughout the region.

The United States also needs to step up these efforts and look to build and strengthen practical voices and approaches on the ground, showing tangible results to the Palestinian people. This is as important as setting out a political horizon. Ultimately, this will start laying the foundation for a safer and more stable Palestinian state that can offer opportunity and hope to its people and act as a neighbor that strengthens Israel's standing and security.

CONCLUSION

Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the United States failed to focus on its primary national security interests in the Middle East—destroying global terrorist networks such as Al Qaeda and eliminating the conditions that allow them to thrive. The strategy set by the Bush administration instead strengthened Al Qaeda, inspired ever more adherents to the jihadist cause, and set back decades of prior bipartisan efforts to bring peace to the Middle East.

The Center for American Progress early on recognized these disastrous strategic blunders, publishing in 2005 a Strategic Redeployment proposal that today is part and parcel of every credible plan to cope with our nation's costly entanglement in Iraq. Now, the Center presents a new Strategic Reset plan that responds to the rapid fragmentation of the Iraqi national government by shifting our military and diplomatic efforts to contain and manage the chaos in that country as we redeploy our armed forces out of Iraq by the end of 2008.

In this paper we presented four simultaneous steps the United States must take to reset our strategic interests in the Middle East:

- Accept the Reality of Iraq's Fragmentation
- Implement a Phased Military Redeployment from Iraq in One Year
- Initiate Regional Security and Diplomatic Initiatives to Contain and Resolve Iraq's Conflicts
- Develop a Realistic Strategy to Resolve the Arab-Israeli Conflict and Stabilize the Broader Middle East

Our plan focuses on resetting U.S. power to counter the threat posed by global terrorist networks in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the Middle East. And our plan includes concrete steps to bring stability, over time, to the entire region.

Background Basics: Key Middle East Countries

Saudi Arabia

- A monarchy ruled by the al-Saud family, the birthplace of Islam, and home to Islam's two holiest cities, Saudi Arabia has one-fourth of the world's proven oil reserves and is the largest U.S. export market in the Middle East.
- The September 11th attacks were a wake-up call for the Saudi government—15 of the 19 hijackers were from Saudi Arabia. In the six years since those attacks, Saudi Arabia has taken measures to crack down on charities linked to terrorist activities and arrested hundreds of suspects affiliated with Al Qaeda. Saudi Arabia suffered from a series of terror attacks in 2003 and 2004.
- A mostly Sunni country with a Shi'a minority, Saudi Arabia has grown increasingly concerned about Iran's regional assertiveness and has taken steps to check Iran's growing influence in Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, and other parts of the Middle East.
- Saudi Arabia officially opposed the 2003 U.S.-led war in Iraq but allowed its territory to be used as a base for U.S. military operations. Saudi Arabia has offered minimal support for Iraq's reconstruction and worries about the Shi'a-dominated Iraqi government. Saudi King Abdullah recently criticized the U.S. military presence as an "illegitimate occupation." Some Saudis have warned that Saudi Arabia might intervene on behalf of Iraq's Sunni minorities, something that may already be occurring through financial support to Iraq's Sunnis from private Saudi citizens.

Egypt

- President Hosni Mubarak has ruled Egypt for more than a quarter century since Anwar Sadat's assassination in 1981. On paper a democracy

with an elected assembly, Egypt's government has a dominant executive branch with strong backing from the military and intelligence services. The most populous country in the Arab Middle East, Egypt has been a regional force for decades.

- Egypt has experienced waves of terrorist attacks throughout the past two decades, with the government responding to a series of terrorist attacks in the 1990s with a tough crackdown. In recent years, Egypt has seen a number of attacks at tourist locations on its Sinai Peninsula. Many top Al Qaeda leaders, including second in command Ayman Zawahiri, are from Egypt.
- Egypt was the first Arab country to sign a peace agreement with Israel. Since signing the agreement in 1979, Egypt has received more than \$50 billion of assistance from the United States, with an annual average of more than \$1 billion military assistance and \$800 million in economic assistance. Egypt has served as a key mediator between Palestinian factions over the past decade.
- A mostly Sunni country, Egypt has criticized the U.S. war in Iraq but has warned against a rapid withdrawal of U.S. troops.

Israel

- Israel was established in 1948 after decades of efforts to establish a country as a homeland for Jews. A parliamentary democracy, Israel has more than six million citizens, three-quarters of whom are Jewish; one-fifth are Arab.
- Since its founding, Israel has faced several conflicts with its neighbors, including wars in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973, as well as numerous attacks from terrorist organizations operating in neighboring countries and the Palestinian territories. The 1948 war, which began with the invasion of neighbor-

ing Arab states, resulted in a 50 percent increase in Israeli territory. After the 1967 war, Israel retained control of the Sinai Peninsula, which was returned to Egypt in 1982, the Golan Heights of Syria, the Gaza Strip, all of Jerusalem, and the West Bank, which was controlled by Jordan before 1967. Israel withdrew its military forces from the Gaza Strip in 2005. The Golan Heights, Jerusalem, and most parts of the West Bank remain under Israeli control, though their final status remains unresolved.

- Israel is a top U.S. ally and commitment to Israel's security has been a cornerstone of U.S. Middle East policy since Israel's founding in 1948.

The Palestinians

- The Palestinians are a people with origins in the territory of the western part of the former British Mandate Palestine, an area controlled by Britain from 1920 to 1948. About four million Palestinians live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and there are about 1.3 million Arabs of Palestinian origin who are citizens of Israel. Another estimated five million Palestinians live in other countries as refugees or citizens, with the largest presence in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.
- In 1974, the Arab League recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," and the PLO is the entity that has signed interim peace agreements with Israel throughout the 1990s.
- As a result of 1993 Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO, the Palestinian Authority was established in 1994 with governing authority over parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- Since 1988, the United States has worked with a range of Palestinian leaders in an effort to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

- In 2006, after the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas won a majority in Palestinian Legislative Council elections and thus gained control of the of the Palestinian Authority government—though not the presidency, which remained with Fatah leader and PLO Chairman Mahmoud Abbas.
- In June 2007, Hamas seized military control of the Gaza Strip, prompting president Abbas to declare a state of emergency and form a new government based in the West Bank, where Fatah still exercises political control. Hamas rejected the new government as illegitimate.

Jordan

- Jordan is a constitutional monarchy with a limited parliamentary government. Ruled by King Abdullah II, Jordan is situated between Iraq to its east and Israel and the Palestinian territories to its west.
- Jordan has cooperated closely with U.S. officials in tackling the threat posed by global terrorist groups. In 2006, Jordanian intelligence was pivotal in the killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq.
- Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994, making it the second Arab country to formally recognize Israel. Jordan has a sizable Palestinian population, with some estimates saying that at least half of Jordan's citizens are of Palestinian origin. In the past year, King Abdullah has become a vocal advocate for the Arab Peace Initiative.
- King Abdullah has expressed concerns about a "Shi'a crescent" in the Middle East. Jordan has assisted with the training of selected Iraqi police units.

Background Basics: Key Middle East Countries

Turkey

- Turkey is a Muslim-majority parliamentary democracy with a secular system of government. A member of NATO since 1952, Turkey has served as the alliance's eastern anchor. In 1999, Turkey became a candidate for membership in the European Union.
- Turkey is a pivotal country in the region, bordering Iran, Syria, and Iraq. Turkey has cooperated closely with Israel on military training and exercises.
- Turkey opposed the 2003 Iraq war and expressed strong concerns about a push by Iraqi Kurds for greater autonomy, fearing that it would inspire secessionist Kurdish movements operating in eastern Turkey.
- Turkey was a pivotal player in establishing regional conferences of Iraq's neighbors, hosting the first meeting in 2003 before the start of the Iraq war.

Iran

- Iran is ruled by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, chosen to serve for life by a clerical body named the Assembly of Experts. The Supreme Leader heads Iran's armed forces and appoints the judiciary and other key bodies. Iran

has presidential and parliamentary elections with all candidates vetted for allegiance to the ruling theocracy by a Council of Guardians.

- Iran has become increasingly assertive in the region after the 2003 Iraq war and the 2005 election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. It continues to support terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and offers assistance to Iraqi militias.
- The world's largest Shi'a-majority country, Iran's nuclear research program has become a serious global security concern, with the United Nations passing two Security Council resolutions in the past year aimed at halting Iran's unregulated nuclear research.
- The United States has not had official ties with Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution. At times, the United States has quietly cooperated with Iran on Afghanistan, and in 2007, it began modest diplomatic contacts to discuss Iraq. The overall relationship remains tense, however, with the United States and Iran conducting military operations in the Gulf.

Syria

- Syria is a one-party state ruled by President Bashar al-Assad, who holds powers to issue laws,

declare wars, and appoint the government and military.

- Syria has allowed several terrorist organizations, including Palestinian terrorist groups and Hezbollah, to use its territory as a base. At certain points after the September 11th attacks, Syria and the United States cooperated in apprehending and detaining suspected members of Al Qaeda affiliates.
- After a more than 15-year presence in Lebanon following the Taif Accords that ended Lebanon's civil war, Syrian forces departed in 2005 after popular protests against Syrian involvement erupted in the wake of the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. In May 2007, after a lengthy investigation, the United Nations established an international tribunal to try suspects in Hariri's murder, which has been widely blamed on Syrian elements.
- A Sunni majority country ruled by an Alawite minority, Syria has close ties with Iran and receives significant economic investment and support from Iran.
- Syria has allowed its territory to serve as a transit point for insurgent and terrorist groups operating in Iraq, and former members of Saddam Hussein's Baath party have operated out of Syria.

Lebanon

- Lebanon is a parliamentary democracy with a system of government that divides power among Sunni Muslims, Shi'a Muslims, and Christians. An estimated 60 percent of Lebanese are Muslim, and another 40 percent are Christian.
- Internally divided, Lebanon has suffered from numerous conflicts in the past three decades, including a civil war from 1975 to 1990. Last summer, Hezbollah kidnapped Israeli soldiers, resulting in a conflict that led to thousands of casualties and extensive damage to Lebanon's infrastructure.
- In 2005, former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri was assassinated, triggering a series of popular demonstrations and civic actions known as the Cedar Revolution that ultimately led to the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon in April 2005.
- Since the end of last year's conflict, the Lebanese government, backed by the United States, has been paralyzed by protests from the Shi'a opposition led by Hezbollah.

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