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Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. It is an honor to appear before this Committee. I commend the role so many of you have played to focus attention on the need for a political and diplomatic strategy in Iraq. The lack of a meaningful U.S. strategy in this area continues to threaten the prospects for sustainable progress. If anything has become clear over the past five years in Iraq it is that a strong military strategy, underpinned with poorly conceived gestures at political reconciliation, will not result in Iraq becoming a peaceful and viable state.

The failure of American policy in Iraq presents us with an untenable situation. The withdrawal of American troops from Iraq will most likely result in an internal conflagration that could spill over borders, increase the threat of trans-national terrorism, send oil prices soaring further, and add to the number and anguish of 4.5 million Iraqi refugees and displaced people. Yet, keeping American troops in Iraq is an unsustainable stopgap in the absence of major progress toward a political settlement among Iraq’s competing and warring factions.

This is a critical moment for Congress to give the Administration the strongest possible impetus to undertake a focused diplomatic initiative with the United Nations and key international partners to seek a brokered political settlement in Iraq. Such an initiative must go beyond well-worn platitudes about the Administration’s commitment to diplomacy. It must focus on building a sustainable compromise among key Iraqi parties. It must recognize that the U.S. would benefit from a strong UN political role – if that role and its leadership are well structured. It must reflect the need to coordinate diplomatic activity and American military assets.

We must also be realistic. Although the chances for a diplomatic initiative producing a brokered political settlement are not high, it is still worth trying. The cost of trying is low. The gains from succeeding are huge. The fallout from failure is limited. The process of reviving an international diplomatic process on Iraq could help our friends and allies come to appreciate that they too have a stake in contributing to regional efforts to mitigate the spillover from war.

In this testimony, I would like to address the vulnerability that Iraq’s ongoing crisis presents for U.S. troops, key elements for a revised diplomatic strategy for Iraq, and critical issues that I hope this committee can inject into the policy debate.

**Fragile and Unsustainable Progress**

There is no doubt that General Petraeus will present an impressive array of statistics illustrating reductions of violence in Iraq when he testifies before Congress. All key indicators on insurgent attacks, bombings, and civilian and military fatalities demonstrate that violence is down, even if attacks and fatalities still remain unacceptably high. General Petraeus and the U.S. military deserve credit and praise for the ways in which they have carried out a new counter-insurgency strategy in Iraq.

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I would also predict that if most senior military officers were asked if this progress in security is viable without a political settlement in Iraq, their answer would be “no.” The reasons for that lie in the fragile underpinnings of the factors contributing to the reductions in violence. U.S. military spokespersons acknowledge that the military surge was necessary to reduce violence, but the surge alone was not enough. Sunni militias in Anbar and increasingly in other parts of the country decided that they hated Al Qaeda in Iraq more than the United States, and beginning in late 2006 they started cooperating with the U.S. military against Al Qaeda’s brutality. Now there are around 85,000 “concerned citizens” participating in this Sunni “Awakening.” They are paid by the U.S. military for contributions to local security. These payments have no doubt helped put food on the table for many families, and they may have also provided the cash they need to rearm.

Shi’a militias, particularly Muqtada al Sadr’s Mahdi Army, called a ceasefire against U.S. troops that generally held until late March. In part, the Shi’a ceasefire toward U.S. forces may reflect a calculated judgment to gauge the impact and capacity of surging U.S. forces. Meanwhile, Shi’a militias have confronted each other in Basra, with the Mahdi Army, the Badr Organization associated with the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), and Fadhila engaged in a struggle to control the resources and power in Iraq’s wealthiest city and region.

The Shi’a ceasefire toward the U.S. came apart, at least temporarily, in late March when the Iraqi Security Forces launched a campaign against what the Iraqi government deemed “outlaws” in Basra. Others argue that the Iraqi government used Iraqi forces to target Sadr’s Mahdi Army and take sides in favor of ISCI, which is reputed to have strong ties to Iran. Details are far from clear, but it is plausible that some Sadr followers retaliated against the U.S. compound in the Green Zone because the U.S. supports the Iraqi government and security forces, which are supporting Sadr’s pro-Iranian enemies in Basra. As of April 1, 2008, it appears that a new ceasefire may have been struck with Sadr, but the convoluted web of fighting and retaliation over the previous week underscored the fragility of the Shi’a ceasefire toward coalition forces.

The combined development of strengthened Sunni militias and a Shi’a ceasefire would normally seem unimaginable. It has been possible because both Sunni and Shi’a have seen a strong U.S. force presence as a balancing factor that, for now, serves each of their interests. Putting aside the current conflict in Basra, one can argue that better security has facilitated incremental political progress: an improved 2008 budget, an Amnesty Law that (unsurprisingly) militia leaders support, some reversal of the de-Baathification laws, legislation to authorize provincial elections in October, and signs of improved governance in some provinces.

One must see this narrow base of political progress against a wider backdrop. There is still no understanding of the core political issues dividing Iraqi society: federal-regional relations, long-term revenue allocation, disarmament and demobilization of militias, the inclusion of former Baathists in senior political positions, and protection of minority rights. We have already seen in the past month the fragility of the situation in the Kurdish

areas and the potential for Turkish incursions. Iran's role also remains a point of debate, but there is no question that Iran can be disruptive when it wants to. Iraqi Security Forces have improved, but they still cannot carry out operations effectively on their own. The Iraqi police have not succeeded in enforcing the rule of law.

If U.S. forces are taken away from this equation, the results are predictable: an upsurge in violence, possibly at even greater levels than seen in the past given the regrouping of Sunni militias that have still not accepted a Shi'a-dominated national government. Yet to leave U.S. forces in the midst of this quagmire is also irresponsible if efforts are not made to address the fundamental political issues that drive the Iraqis to war.

On this matter, there should be no partisan divide in the United States: there must be focused and urgent attention to negotiating a political settlement in Iraq, where Iraq's neighbors will at least agree to honor the settlement, if not support it. President Bush has made clear that force levels are not dropping significantly during his term. The process of implementing a diplomatic strategy focused on the future of Iraqi politics must start now, when the U.S. force presence can enhance diplomatic leverage. It will take time and other partners, as I will discuss shortly. The diplomatic options must be set up for the next U.S. President to expeditiously demonstrate a new course that is nonpartisan and can be accepted internationally.

The argument for a brokered settlement in Iraq has a strong foundation in international experience. Civil wars in Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor, Congo, Sudan, Haiti, South Africa, and Northern Ireland have all demonstrated that peace cannot be achieved without a political agreement among the warring parties. Military force can help induce a political settlement or create space to implement it, but force alone cannot sustain peace. Even when parties reach agreements, they often fail – and it could very well be the case that Iraqis are simply not “done fighting.” Shiias may still believe they can “win.” Sunnis are committed to making sure that Shi'a do not. Militias may be so splintered that it is difficult for any actor to rein them in, or for any group of leaders to speak credibly on behalf of the sectarian groups they claim to represent.

If a settlement is not reached, the spillover from Iraq could threaten the entire region. The refugee crisis could become a new source of instability, as major refugee flows have in virtually every other part of the world. Insurgents would likely cross borders seeking support, recruits and perhaps to widen conflict. Neighbors would likely be drawn further into backing sectarian brethren. Wider instability would help Al Qaeda franchises gain stronger holds in the region, including the potential for further destabilization in Lebanon. A referendum in Kirkuk and signs of Kurdish nationalism could risk Turkey acting again in Kurdistan. All these factors would create greater instability around Israel. And beyond the region, the risks to energy production and transit would likely manifest themselves in yet higher prices – radically so if there are real disruptions to supply when there is virtually no spare short-term oil production capacity outside of the Gulf.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of international oil supply options, see the 10 August 2007 International Energy Association Oil Market Report (<http://omrpublic.iea.org/archiveresults.asp?formsection=full+issue&formdate=2007&Submit=Submit>), especially pp. 18-27. The

## **A New Diplomatic Strategy**

All of these factors make peace in Iraq a long shot. Yet that should not stop serious attempts at reconciliation. U.S. efforts, however, must match the complexity of the task.

Even if the path to stability is uncertain, what should be clear is that the current American strategy for reconciliation – setting benchmarks and demanding that a failed Iraqi state achieve them – will not succeed. As of March 2008, over one quarter of Iraq's Cabinet seats are vacant or only nominally filled. The state cannot perform basic functions such as maintaining law and order. It is unrealistic to expect Iraq to fix itself through a sequential process of passing laws and holding elections and referendums. Issues such as oil revenues, federal-regional relations, and the question of de-Baathification are interrelated. It is unrealistic to expect warring parties to settle on part of this equation without understanding the outcomes on related issues. Local reconciliation in some provinces where security has improved is indeed important, but at some point that needs to translate into a willingness to accept and support a national government, which is certainly not yet the case among Sunni militias in Anbar.

Regional diplomatic efforts have not had the strategic focus to advance prospects for a settlement, nor is it likely that they could without massive work. Regional meetings in Istanbul, Baghdad, and Sharm el Sheik did not have a clear goal of supporting an Iraqi settlement or an agenda to sustain it. The International Compact for Iraq (ICI) is a framework for assistance conditioned on policy actions by Iraq, similar in spirit to the conditionality packages developed for the former Soviet states in the 1990s. In the short-term, the ICI is a self-defining mechanism for stalemate as Iraq cannot realistically meet the conditions. Visits by Secretaries Rice and Gates intended to encourage the Gulf states to support Iraq will produce little concrete action as long as “support” suggests bolstering what is perceived as Shi'a dominance in Iraq. Moreover, simply convening regional actors without a strategic agenda could complicate serious negotiations among Iraqis, as each regional player may seek to advance its parochial interests. To move forward with a realistic agenda for peace in Iraq, regional gatherings would need a clear focus around a defined agenda, which to date is non-existent.

A new approach is needed. It should be led by the UN. But in order for the UN to even consider such a role, the United States must make clear that it welcomes UN involvement and that it will coordinate military action to support the diplomatic process. All Iraqi parties that are not associated with Al Qaeda in Iraq should be given a voice in the process. To succeed, regional actors would have to endorse a political settlement, or agree at a minimum not to undermine it. If an agreement is reached, it will require

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Saudis continue to have the largest spare capacity at about 2 million barrels per day (mbd). Russia is producing far above historical trends and is seen to have little spare capacity. Neither Nigeria nor Iraq are reliable fallbacks for oil. A disruption or perceived disruption in Gulf oil production or transit, with few ready alternatives, could produce sharp price hikes and fuel international speculation.

international troops and oversight to implement it.<sup>2</sup> Political agreements to end civil wars require massive preparation and negotiation. They do not spontaneously generate.

To be effective, the UN must also be mindful of its shortcomings, and member states must take seriously that they constitute the UN. Members of the Security Council must place international imperative over political bickering. Given widespread anti-American sentiments, some countries will be content to see the United States continually bogged down in a protracted and humiliating quagmire. China and Russia could play a constructive role in advocating for the UN to seek a viable place in Iraq, if they act on their interests in a stable Middle East and international energy markets. All member states have to put behind them the controversies of the Oil for Food program, drawing lessons on corruption and transparency from past management mistakes.

UN Security Council Resolution 1770, passed on August 10, 2007, provides the necessary mandate to seek political reconciliation in Iraq. Implementing this mandate will require unequivocal political backing, careful calibration of expectations, and skilled diplomacy. To undertake this task, the UN needs a special team and a flexible mandate. It cannot be business as usual. The lead negotiator should report to the Secretary General, and must be empowered to engage regional and international actors directly. The team should include individuals who know Iraq, and who can liaise effectively and credibly with key external constituencies such as the United States, the EU, the permanent members of the Security Council, and the Gulf states.

Running such a political process is as much art as science. It will require engaging all the key actors in Iraq, all the neighboring states, and all the major external actors (the US, EU, others in the P5, major donors and potential troop contributors). The following are some of the critical strategic considerations.

- *Core elements.* Any agreement will likely revolve around a “five plus one” agenda: federal-regional relations; sharing oil revenues; political inclusion (redressing the de-Baathification issue); disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of militias; and minority rights. Even under a minimalist federal government arrangement, Sunnis will need assurance of a role in an equitable allocation of oil revenues. Minority rights are key to protecting those who do not succumb to sectarian pressures to move. Demobilization of militias will be needed for the state to regain control over the use of force. The Kurds will insist on retaining regional autonomy. The “plus one” is the timing of a referendum on Kirkuk, which is guaranteed by the constitution but could trigger pressures for Kurdish independence and draw Turkey and Iran into the conflict. Because these issues are so interconnected they should be negotiated as a package rather than sequentially, in order to maximize options for viable compromises.

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<sup>2</sup> Carlos Pascual and Kenneth M. Pollack, “The Critical Battles: Political Reconciliation and Reconstruction in Iraq,” *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 3, Summer 2007.

- *Five-Year Truce.* The focus should be agreement on a five-year truce – provisions that can create sufficient confidence to stop the fighting – with the option to extend the timeframe annually. At this point animosities are too sharp to expect that the parties can negotiate permanent solutions to the core agenda. Also, developments over the coming years may produce better options than those can be developed in just a few months.
- *Iraqi Positions.* As a condition for participating in the negotiation process, Iraqi political parties and militia leaders will need to condemn the role of Al Qaeda in Iraq and agree to cooperate against it. The UN negotiator must have leeway on whom to consult. As seen in the current U.S. military experience, that may entail militias that once attacked American forces.<sup>3</sup> The UN Representative will likely need to meet separately with the Iraqi actors, mapping out their positions against the “five plus one” agenda in order to determine if there are potential deals to be made that also respect core substantive objectives. That may lead to small group meetings among parties to test potential alliances.
- *Regional Players.* Along with surveying Iraqis, the neighboring states should be engaged on the core agenda. Again, these meetings should start separately to mitigate the inevitable posturing and gamesmanship that occurs when competing actors are in the same room. From these meetings, the UN representative will need to determine which outside actors have useful leverage, with whom, and issues where potential spoilers need to be isolated or neutralized.
- *Support team.* Iraqi and regional consultations will need a dedicated expert support team to provide guidance on issues ranging from the commercial viability of revenue sharing arrangements on oil, to international experience on legal and constitutional arrangements. The UN will need to organize experts available in real time to support the negotiation process. It will also need to develop public information strategies, using local and regional television and radio, to explain the UN role and mitigate attempts at disinformation from Al Qaeda and other potential spoilers.
- *Brokering an Agreement.* Eventually a judgment will need to be made on whether to try for a major meeting to broker an agreement – like the Bonn Agreement for Afghanistan or the Dayton Accords for Bosnia. The meeting must be a carefully orchestrated process of negotiating among an inner circle of key Iraqis while engaging (separately and in a more limited way) a wider contact group of the neighboring states. The U.S. will need to sustain constant bilateral diplomacy throughout this process, coordinating every step of the way with the UN

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas E. Ricks, “Deals in Iraq Make Friends of Enemies,” *Washington Post*, 20 July 2007. Available:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/19/AR2007071902432.html?nav=emailpage>; accessed: 9 August 2007.

Representative. The Bonn Agreement exemplified such coordination, with the UN Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi running the core meetings, and U.S. Special Envoys Jim Dobbins and Zalmay Khalilzad engaging the external actors.

The desire for a political agreement should not result in accepting any settlement. The UN representative, the negotiating team, and key partners in the negotiations will need to determine if the commitments are genuine, adequate, and sufficiently encompassing of the key players to be viable. The initial peace agreement for Darfur in April 2006, for example, was stillborn because it did not involve all key rebel factions. In 1999, the Rambouillet negotiations on Kosovo were called off because the Serbs would not consider viable compromises on Kosovar autonomy.

Strong coordination is critical between diplomacy and military action to control potential spoilers. U.S. forces must continue during this period to prevent and respond swiftly to insurgent attacks. The Iraqi Government must say publicly and unequivocally that it supports the peace process. Similar support must be gained from Sunni, Shi'a and Kurds for the process, even if they cannot pre-commit to the outcomes. Every step must be taken to isolate insurgents in their opposition to seeking a settlement, making it more difficult for them to find shelter among Iraqis.

For Republicans, the hardest point to accept in this strategy is this: if Iraqis are given the chance to broker a political settlement and reject it, then this eclipses the rationale to keep American troops in Iraq. U.S. forces cannot fix Iraq for them. We would need to tell Iraqis clearly that if they do not take this opportunity, we will withdraw and reposition U.S. forces to control the spillover from Iraq. For Democrats the point of discomfort comes with success. If a settlement can be reached, then Iraqis will need sustained international support in order to implement it. A UN-brokered settlement increases the prospects to diversify the international military presence, but the core military effort would still have to be borne by the United States.

If attempts at a settlement fail, this diplomatic initiative is still worth the effort. As argued earlier, Europe, China, Japan, Russia and India all have a stake in stability in the Middle East and the Gulf. They should have an incentive to invest in regional stability. A focused diplomatic effort, led by the UN, could begin the process of re-engaging these countries and seeking their support to control the spillover of war into the region, as well as to address the plight of refugees. Without such an initiative that can change the diplomatic dynamics around Iraq, the military costs of containment will fall on the United States, as well as the people in the surrounding countries who would feel the direct impacts of a return to an intensified Iraqi conflict.

### **Key Issues for the Congress**

To date, the debate on Iraq has focused on the role of the U.S. military – whether to continue to fight for a decisive outcome or to withdraw from a seemingly irresolvable quagmire. Military force must factor into any future strategy in Iraq, but America's fixation on the military has obscured both attention to and pressure for a diplomatic

process than can help produce a sustainable payoff for the lost lives and trillions of dollars that the United States will eventually invest in Iraq.

Congressional hearings next week are a chance to put into central focus the need for a diplomatic strategy that can take Iraq toward a political settlement. The Bush Administration has already signaled that it will not shift its strategy in Iraq. That clearly ties the hands of the Congress. However, it does not prevent the Congress from sustaining pressure for diplomatic action in order to give the next American President a chance to take the actions, ignored by this Administration, to at least create the prospect for a political settlement in Iraq. In that spirit, I offer the following 10 questions as a contribution to framing the interrelationship between political process and military action in Iraq, and the role that the United States and the internal community might play.

1. Can a U.S. military presence in Iraq, of whatever size, produce sustainable results without a political settlement?
2. What are the critical issues that must be addressed together to achieve a sustainable political outcome in Iraq? The Administration has already highlighted federal-regional relations, revenue sharing, minority rights, and the status of militias. What is the best way to achieve an understanding across these issues?
3. Is the Iraqi government, parliament, or any Iraqi group or political party capable of leading and conducting a political process that could produce a political settlement that secures a truce among Iraq's competing and warring factions?
4. What are your expectations for Kirkuk, and how will developments there play into the fragile status between Turkey and Kurdish areas?
5. Will provincial elections in October increase the prospects for stability by giving a chance to more credible leaders, or will they sharpen political and ethnic competition in the provinces?
6. What are prospects for and limits of political reconciliation at a provincial level as long as there is disarray in national politics? How far can the bottom up process go and how can it be used more constructively?
7. How significantly has Iraqi military capacity expanded? Can Iraqi forces substitute for U.S. forces to sustain the relative balance among Sunni militias and between Sunni and Shi'a militias seen since the surge?
8. Can Iraqi police enforce any semblance of a rule of law in Iraq, or is order still largely dependent on U.S. or Iraqi military forces?
9. What are the implications for U.S. military strategy, tactics and force levels taking into account these political factors and the status of Iraqi capabilities?



10. What is the Administration's strategy to mobilize a focused diplomatic initiative that can put before Iraqis clear options for a brokered political settlement?

### **Conclusion**

Realities on the ground in Iraq and in American and international politics will shift rapidly and affect the nature of what can be done in Iraq. American policy has thus far failed in dealing with the complex nature of security, political and economic challenges in Iraq. This failure has created new threats: risks of a wider sectarian conflict in the region between Sunni and Shi'a, an emboldened Iran, a network of Al Qaeda franchises operating throughout the Middle East and North Africa, ungoverned spaces in Iraq that can become bases for exporting trans-national terrorism, and instability and lack of resiliency in international oil markets. These threats are regional and global. They call for multilateral engagement that the United Nations can lead. Yet there should be no illusions about simple success.

A political agreement to end the war is not an end point, but a milestone on a course to sustainable peace. From there, the complexity of implementing the agreement takes hold. It will be a long-term proposition. International forces stayed in Bosnia for over a decade, they are still in Kosovo, and even in resource-rich countries such as Russia and Ukraine that went through massive transitions without wars, it took almost a decade to halt their economic declines after the collapse of communism. The international community must recognize that it will take a decade of sustained peace for Iraq to become stable and prosperous.

That timeframe alone underscores why any single nation, even the United States, cannot unilaterally support Iraq onto a path of prosperity. The demands on personnel and resources are too great to be sustained credibly by one international actor. The strains on our military and Foreign Service personnel serving in Iraq demonstrate that the current strategy is not sustainable. If the international community does not have a role in brokering peace, there will be less incentive to contribute seriously to the expensive and time-consuming process of building a viable state.

The United Nations should consider a peace-building role in Iraq only if there is a binding political settlement, which is accepted by the main sectarian groups in Iraq (with clear indication that militia leaders will follow political leaders) and endorsed by Iraq's neighbors. Without such an agreement, attempts at peace-building will result in unsustainable half measures constrained by violence and will not make a meaningful difference to most Iraqis. The UN will fare no better than the United States. Without a political agreement, the UN should limit its role in Iraq to humanitarian relief.

To maximize the next U.S. President's chances to advance a political settlement in Iraq, the process needs to begin to explore the prospects now. It should be made clear to Iraqis and the international community that if the Iraqis will not take advantage of a credible multilateral process to reach a political compromise, then American troops cannot make a sustainable difference in Iraq and will be withdrawn. What should not be forgotten under any circumstance is that diplomatic and military strategies must reinforce each other as

part of a coherent policy. In Iraq, the United States seems to have forgotten the meaning of proactive diplomacy to achieve peace.

The limits of unilateralism also apply to containing the spillover from war in Iraq if it is not possible to broker, at this point, a political compact among the parties. The United States should encourage a UN role in diplomacy to get commitments from Iraq's neighbors not to fuel the Iraq civil war with money and weapons, and by implication exacerbate the foundations for international terrorism. Perhaps other nations, not from the Middle East, could contribute troops or observers to control the spillover. An even broader lesson is that the disruption of diplomatic ties with perceived enemies only hampers our capacity when we have no choice but to find common ground. At present the very question of a dialogue with Iran has become an issue, when the real focus should be on the substance of such a dialogue.

America's image around the world has reached an all time low. The Pew Global Attitude Project Survey Report from June 2006 showed that the United States military presence in Iraq is seen by most nations as a greater threat to world peace and security than Iran.<sup>4</sup> The Pew Global Attitude Project Survey Report released on June 27, 2007 showed that, in nearly all countries surveyed, more people view China's influence positively than make the same assessment of U.S. influence."<sup>5</sup> World Public Opinion 2007, a report published by the Chicago Council on Foreign Affairs and WorldPublicOpinion.org, shows that "In 10 out of 15 countries, the most common view is that the United States cannot be trusted to 'act responsibly in the world.'"<sup>6</sup> The United Nations cannot solve these problems for the United States. But the next American President may well find that engaging seriously in multilateral fora, investing in rebuilding the United Nations, respecting and abiding by international law, and resorting to unilateral action only under imminent threats could restore respect for the United States and American leadership. In Iraq, American advocacy for UN political and humanitarian leadership may not only help the United States in Iraq, it may begin to give credence to a reawakening of American diplomacy and international engagement.

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4 *America's Image Slips, But Allies Share. U.S. Concerns Over Iran, Hamas*, Pew Global Attitudes Project, Survey Report, 13 June 2006, p.3. Available: <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=252>; accessed: 9 August 2007.

5 *Global Unease with Major World Powers*, Pew Global Attitudes Project, Survey Report, 27 June 2007, p.44. Available: <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=256>; accessed: 9 August 2007.

6 *World Public Opinion 2007*, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs and WorldPublicOpinion.org, 25 June 2007, p.30. Available: [http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/UserFiles/File/POS%20Topline%20Reports/WPO\\_07%20full%20report.pdf](http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/UserFiles/File/POS%20Topline%20Reports/WPO_07%20full%20report.pdf); accessed: 9 August 2007.