

Testimony  
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Up until April, the situation in Iraq seemed evenly balanced between the bad news of the insurgency and some good news on the political and economic fronts. But the events since then have delivered a crushing blow to our credibility. I believe we are a crisis situation which needs rapid attention and strong nerves. Policy makers must seriously address three broad future-oriented questions.

1. Are these set-backs decisive--a critical turning point which has so affected US credibility in Iraq--and the world--that it can no longer take the lead in rebuilding Iraq? If so, how fast should it turn over to others? In what areas? And to whom--

2. As we turn over greater authority to Iraqis, what are the minimal US interests that must be satisfied?

3. What potential outcomes are likely in Iraq--over the medium to long term  
What is the worst case and how do we prevent it? What is the most realistic best case and how do we encourage it?

I cannot answer these questions definitely, but will try to make a few suggestions on the first two and deal in more detail on the third question which is more in my area of expertise.

A point of No Return?

On the first question: Does the current crisis represent a point of no return? I would caution the following.

\* Don't panic. Take the long view. We should not be misled or sidetracked by all these instant polls which show that Iraqis want us out now. All indications are that Iraqis show intense and increasing dislike of occupation--entirely predictable--but also fear a precipitous pull out of our forces. Iraqis want better management of the transition --not a "cut and run" policy. The Iraq project is a long distance race; not a spectacular high jump.

\* Turn off the TV. Listen to Iraqis on the ground in Iraq in developing intelligence and assessments. They may give you a different view. A number of private conversations I have recently had with Iraqis living in the Gulf --admittedly in April--greatly surprised me. They were more optimistic about Iraq's future than I was.

\* The US should remember it faces a long historical and cultural pattern in Iraqi

thinking. Many, indeed most Iraqis are almost schizophrenic in their attitude to outside influences. On the one hand, they have a strong streak of nationalism and a desire for independence. Under Saddam, most Iraqis were isolated from the outside and had little experience of cooperation with outside powers. But, most Iraqis also want what America and the West have to offer--economic prosperity; openness to the outside and a modern future. To move in this direction, to rebuild their lives and their futures, they will need to cooperate with outsiders, especially the US. They will also have to pay the price of taking more responsibility for their future and not just complaining and looking to others.

## 2. US. Aims and interests.

The US also has a problem of incompatible aims: turning an occupation into liberation. The US claims it wants democracy in Iraq. At the same time, the US has some well known interests and objectives it wants in the region. But what if a freely elected Iraqi government does not agree? We need to think through, publicly, what our minimal aims and interests are in Iraq. In broad terms, my list would include three:

A state free of terrorism

A state free of weapons of mass destruction

A government, if not friendly, at least not hostile to the US and Israel

I would make clear we have no long term designs on

Military bases

Control over oil

This does not preclude trying for more maximalist aims, working with Iraqis on the building blocks for a stable, prosperous, democratic regime--with a heavy dose of realism. In doing so, we need to lower our expectations--and theirs.

## 3. Future Scenarios:

What are some realistic scenarios? Worst case? Best case? How do we prevent the former; encourage the latter

Iraq is now engaged in two profound and wrenching struggles. One is an identity crisis. The Ba'th defined what it meant to be an Iraqi for over three decades. That definition has been destroyed. A new one is now in gestation. The key question here is whether there is an overarching Iraqi identity, and if so, what is its basis? I believe there is, but it has been badly battered and needs to be nurtured.

Iraq is also engaged in a divisive but critical power struggle. This struggle encompasses ethnic and sectarian groups, but also political parties with differing outlooks and orientations and individuals with patronage networks. Right now these groups are focused on the US and the IGC which it has selected. But if our presence is removed, they will focus on one another.

These struggles will not be resolved easily. If they take place peaceably, we will

have democracy. But if not, we will have civil conflict. These will erode the fragile authority of the central government--and the state, creating my definition of the worst case scenario--a failed state.

In my written testimony I have looked at the three main ethnic and sectarian communities in Iraq--Arab sunnis, Arab shi'ah and Kurds and the multiple divisions within their communities and well as political groupings within them. I can only touch on these briefly here. Suffice it to say, that none of these communities is homogeneous. . . This pattern shows a mosaic of groups, not clear cut ethnic and sectarian fragmentation.

The Arab sunnis have never identified on a sectarian basis; they are best understood as the WASPs of Iraq, a political elite. As is well known, they are the main losers in the change of regime, mainly because of the extent to which they have been Ba'thized. But the community has many differences which shape their views.

Many of the sunnis in the so-called triangle come from small towns; they have strong tribal and clan ties; are generally more traditional and conservative and many have imbibed strong Arab nationalist sentiments. These groups will be the most difficult to integrate into the new Iraq.

In recent years a new spirit of fundamentalist Islam has grown among sunnis in Iraq, coming from elements of the Muslim Brotherhood and from the Salifi movement (often called Wahhabis). This has added a fundamentalist Islamic identity to the mix.

However there is another broad category of Arab sunnis who are urban and inhabit large, mixed cities like Baghdad, Mosul and Basra. They form the backbone of Iraq's educated middle class; most are secular and many were educated abroad. Some may be nationalist in orientation but others are sitting on the fence and need to be integrated into the new order.

The main problem of the sunnis is Bathism and a pattern of political entitlement, not a sectarian identity.

The Kurds will be the most difficult to reintegrate into a new Iraq for well known reasons, including self-rule for the past 13 years. But it is far from impossible. Kurds have played an important role in Iraq in the past and they can again. Indeed, they are doing so today. However the Kurds themselves are far less homogeneous than they appear. The two Kurdish parties have deep historical divisions between them. Although both are now cooperating, neither has dissolved their separate governments. There are other limits to Kurdish demands for semi-independence. Iraq's neighbors will not tolerate it and will meddle in domestic politics in the north. The Kurdish militias cannot control their borders; they will need US forces to protect them--permanently. The PKK is nested all along the northern border with Turkey. Worse, in PUK territory the PUK lost control of its border with Iraq near Halbja which came under the control of a radical Islamic group, Ansar al-Islam, an affiliate of al-Qa'ida which is now causing us so much trouble. The Kurds cannot create a flourishing, independent economy without control over oil

resources. And the Kurds have their own ethnic minorities--Turkman, Christians--who do not want to be absorbed into a truncated mini-state in the north. Lastly there are Kurdish tribal groups, some of whom have been working closely with us, who offer a more flexible approach to integration in the new Iraq.

The shi'ah population is not homogeneous either. At least a third is thoroughly secular, and has lost much of its sectarian identity. Many of these joined secular parties, especially the Communist and even the Ba'th Party. Another portion of the community is moderately religious. This group would follow shi'ah religious clerics on religious matters but not necessarily on politics. Only a minority of shi'ah favor more radical shi'ah leadership, like Muqtada al-Sadr, who espouses a clerically led state. Two political groups represent portions of the shi'ah community and both are currently cooperating with the US in the IGC. One is the Da'wah Party, whose representative, Ibrahim al-Ja'fari is said to be one of the most popular leaders in Iraq. The second is SCIRI, which had, and probably still has, strong influence from Iran. Both parties have disavowed the Iranian policy of clerical rule and espoused democracy, but it is not clear how firm that commitment is; both will push for more, rather than less, Islamic law in Iraq. More important than the parties is shi'ah clerical leadership, but this is far from uniform. Competition among such families, including the Sadrs, the Hakims and the Khuis, has been acute, including violence. Clerics also differ on interpretations of scripture and the role of clerics in the state. Lastly, shi'ah, especially in rural areas, have strong tribal affiliations which undercut shi'ah identity. In any future government of Iraq in which shi'ah gain a majority, it is not clear which of the shi'ah elements will predominate. Nor is there any indication of separatism among either the shi'ah or the Arab sunnis. The shi'ah consider themselves Iraqi and Arab, as well as shi'ah and want to dominate government in all of Iraq.

### Outcomes:

Under these circumstances, what outcomes can be expected in Iraq over the next five years or so? Let me deal first with the worst-case scenario-- a break down of the Iraqi state and its national institutions to a point beyond which they could not be reconstituted. This process is underway, but it is by no means irreparable; we want to prevent it from reaching such a point. A number of pundits and analysts have recently advanced the notion that Iraq might break-up into three component parts--a Kurdish north, an Arab sunni or mixed center, and a shi'ah south; they pose a potential "civil war" among these groups--Kurds vs. Arabs; shi'ah versus sunnis. Some are even asking whether the Iraqi state--or Iraqi identity--has already disappeared and we should be thinking about managing a separation--as in the former Yugoslavia.

The answer to this question should be a resounding "no". Our government is officially on record as supporting the territorial integrity of Iraq. The overwhelming majority of Iraqis do not want their state divided. Moreover, Iraq is not likely to "break-up" into three distinct ethnic and sectarian parts with clear boundaries between them.. As indicated above, too many areas in Iraq, particularly in the geographic frontiers between these communities, are mixed; the most mixed sector of Iraq is the Baghdad province

which contains a third of Iraq's population. Unscrambling these areas in any divide would be a nightmare. Nor is there yet any evidence of ethnic and sectarian warfare on the ground in Iraq. Kurds are not fighting Arabs; shi'ah are not fighting sunnis. On the contrary. In the face of increasing violence and extraordinary provocation--including alleged attempts to incite civil war-- Iraq's communal leaders have shown clear awareness of this threat; a firm commitment to avoid it; and considerable discipline in reining in their constituents.

The more plausible scenario for a "failed state" is a "break-down", with a weak and fragile central government, unable to exercise control over the country. Developing indigenous national leadership with some degree of legitimacy in the aftermath of Saddam's dictatorship has been a major problem of the transition, not likely to be easily solved. The result has been something of a vacuum at the center. Without an Iraqi army or police force, local militias are taking root. This is not yet "warlordism" but it could begin to resemble it. In any ensuing struggle for power, it is these groups, led by extremists, who may engage in fighting several different "civil wars" which would destroy the potential for building up a new government at the center.

What would be a good scenario that is realistic and achievable? That is more difficult to predict because it depends on Iraqi desires; their willingness to compromise, and their ability to get beyond a zero-sum game. Any such scenario will undoubtedly take 5 to 10 years to produce, but one can speculate on its outlines. It would provide the mechanism (a constitution; an election) to create and strengthen a central government that would be 1) representative of most Iraqis and 2) able to govern. This will involve wrenching compromises between Kurds and Arabs and among those who want more and those who want less religion in daily life. To reach this state, we should be encouraging negotiations and alliances between and among the various factions and groups and an open political process which is underway. Who will dominate this government and how power will be distributed is up to the Iraqis to decide. But it is not impossible that something better will, eventually come out of this process. We just cannot predict exactly what it will be.

How do we make this happen? Our ability to "change" Iraq is limited But we can encourage this outcome.

1. We need to change the subject, and stop talking about civil war; division of Iraq, and shi'ah, sunnis, and Kurds. These identities are realities but it would be best to downplay them. The same is true for tribalism. For the moment, we may need to work with these groups to achieve security, but over the long term we should hold out a vision of a more modern Iraq which I believe has broad appeal in Iraq.

2. I believe there is an Iraqi identity, espoused by a silent majority of Iraqis. We can begin by working with groups who are committed to this identity and a new Iraq. We should identify areas where pluralism is working and expand these areas of peace and cooperation.

3. The US and the coalition should be focusing on economic development and prosperity among Iraqis--including the development of a small and medium sized business class; jobs for the lower classes and the poor and protection for workers. At the middle level, things have improved for educated professionals who are working and have more money. We need to strengthen this trend.

4. Our strategy should be to support, strengthen and rebuild Iraq's middle class. While this class has been greatly weakened, it is still present in Iraq. It should be the backbone of the new Iraqi state. This middle class can be nourished by outside the Iraqi-American community from outside; by funds which help businessmen, and by contacts which strengthen educated professionals. The middle class in Iraq has always been the repository of modernism; secularism; and national identity. If this class is strengthened, in time it will mitigate tendencies toward ethnic and sectarian separatism; tribalism; and Islamic traditionalism .It is also the mainstay of democratic society.

5. The US should continue opening Iraqi society to the outside, encouraging professionals, businessmen and others to participate in the international economy and society..

6. Lastly, the US should be encouraging civic and political groups in Iraq which cut across--rather than reinforce--ethnic, sectarian and tribal lines. Iraq has a long tradition, in its urban, educated community of doing this. We need to strengthen it. The middle class has lost its voice. We need to help them regain it.