



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

1200 17th St., NW, Suite 200 Washington D.C. 20036-3011 202.457.1700 Fax 202.429.6063 Web Site www.usip.org

BACKGROUND MEMOS

IRAQ AND ITS NEIGHBORS:

Implications for U.S. Policy

November 17, 2004

On November 22-23, 2004, Egypt will host a major international conference on the future of Iraq. The meeting, at the Sinai resort of Sharm el Sheikh, is being organized at the request of the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG). This is the first time since the fall of Saddam Hussein that Iraq and its neighbors, together with the U.S. and other powers, will meet to discuss ways to strengthen cooperation.

Earlier this year, the United States Institute of Peace established a working group of leading experts to examine Iraq's relationships with its neighbors and the implications of these relations for U.S. policy. In late 2004, the Institute will publish a series of in-depth reports on each of Iraq's neighbors. In order to share some of the preliminary findings ahead of the Sharm meeting, the research team prepared these background memos. The views expressed in this document are entirely those of the authors, and not the positions of the Institute or any other organization to which the contributors are affiliated.

For further information, please contact Dr. Scott Lasensky, 202.429.3839.
slasensky@usip.org.

Henri Barkey

Turkey

Turkey and the US share basic goals in Iraq. They both would very much prefer to see Iraq remain united and not break up into numerous enclaves or states along ethnic and/or sectarian lines. They both would like a strong central government that is not only capable of bringing back political and economic stability, but that will also be robust enough to become a future counterweight to Iran in the region. They both do not want to see the emergence of any form of a fundamentalist state in Iraq. Where they differ is the extent to which they believe the Iraqi Kurds should be allowed to maintain their hard-won gains of autonomy and quasi-independence during the last decade. However, their relationship has been marred by misunderstandings and mistrust. This is primarily because of the lack of accord over future contingencies in Iraq.

Turkey, like every other country surrounding Iraq, has seen its interests upended by the conflict in that country. During the past three decades, turmoil in Iraq has been both a source of instability as well as opportunities for Ankara. Ever since the end of the Gulf War in 1991, Turkey has found itself more deeply involved in Iraqi affairs. Then, the establishment of the no-fly zone over northern Iraq enabling British and US aircraft operating out of the Turkish air base of Incirlik to routinely patrol the territory in defense of Iraqi Kurds made Ankara a permanent pillar of US containment policy of Saddam Hussein. However, it is the unpredictable set of events unleashed by the current war in Iraq that unnerves Turkish decision makers and publics alike. The current situation represents a conundrum for Ankara: because of its proximity to Iraq, it is propelled to act in Iraq in defense of its interests and simultaneously act with a great deal of caution and restraint for fear of further entangling itself in what appears to be a quicksand.

Turkey has four concrete sets of interests in Iraq: 1. The preservation of the geographical unity of Iraq and prevention of an independent Kurdish state. In conjunction with this, Ankara wants to deny the Kurds control over the city of Kirkuk under any domestic arrangement Iraqis come up with. 2) The protection of the Turcoman minority. 3) The elimination of the PKK, the Turkish Kurdish insurgent movement that has sought refuge in the northeast of Iraq following its defeat in 1999. 4) The creation of a prosperous (and hopefully democratic) non-fundamentalist Iraq willing to resume its trade relationship with Ankara.

What complicates Turkish attitudes and foreign policy making is the uneasy relationship between the ruling Justice and Development Party government in Ankara and the traditional secularist elites, military and civilian, that eye it with a great deal of suspicion and misgiving. At stake in Iraq are not just immediate Turkish interests, such as the stability of a neighboring state with vast oil riches, the presence of a Turkish speaking minority, the Turcomans, but also the very nature of the definition of the Kemalist state in Turkey. Primarily because the Kurdish minority in Iraq may, as a result of the overthrow of the Ba'ath order in Baghdad, end up with at least a robust autonomous state or even perhaps an independent state of their own, Ankara is particularly affected by the uncertainty in Iraq. Ankara fears the contagion effect on its own Kurdish minority from a potential independent or federal Kurdish state in Iraq's north. Still,

more sensitive is how the government and its powerful detractors within the state establishment will each approach the issue.

Although adamantly opposed to Kurdish independence in Iraq, the Turkish elites feel powerless at the moment to influence events on the ground. The Turkish Kemalist elite has tied itself in knots by first marrying itself to the Iraqi Turcoman community and using them as a wedge with which it can justify a Turkish intervention in northern Iraq. Second, by making their strong opposition to the Iraqi Kurds' aspirations, they have also limited their own room to maneuver. Hence, any attempt by the government to seek a compromise in northern Iraq—most likely to stave off a worse eventuality—is likely to engender a domestic political crisis. Such a crisis could have spillover effects onto Turkey's path to EU membership.

The after-effects of the Iraq war, in combination with the uncertainty over northern Iraq, have the potential to seriously damage the Turkish-American relationship. By and large, Turks do not have much confidence in Washington's motives and intentions. The US administration's inability/unwillingness to do away with the remnants of the Turkish Kurdish insurgent group, the PKK, holed up in northeastern Iraq, has further strengthened these suspicions. Hence, the emergence of an independent Kurdistan in northern Iraq or the creation of an autonomous Iraqi Kurdish federal republic which also incorporates the oil-rich city of Kirkuk is likely to deepen the alienation of mainstream Turks.

From a US perspective, Turkish insistence on minimizing Kurdish aspirations in northern Iraq and its use of the Turcoman card hinders the quick resolution of an already difficult and troublesome transition to a final settlement of the Iraqi crisis. Although most of the hard feelings engendered in Washington by the March 1st, 2003 Turkish parliamentary vote denying US the ability to open up a second front against Iraq have dissipated, the US is still frustrated by Turkish suspicions of its motives.

This said, a peaceful outcome in northern Iraq and in Iraq in general require a combined cooperation of the US and Turkey. Both bring important assets to the table and suffer from significant vulnerabilities. Whereas Turkey represents a secure and dependable lifeline for Iraq in the form of access to Europe and pipelines to the Mediterranean, protracted instability in Iraq is likely to have an impact on Turkish internal stability. This is especially true if Turkish Kurds perceive that their brethren across the border end up on the losing side of an Iraqi civil war. The US needs its ally for power projection purposes, access to bases and also to help ensure stability in Iraq. Turkey was a lynchpin of US containment strategy of Saddam in the 1990s and in the future it is likely to remain a lynchpin for Iraqi stability provided it makes its peace with Iraqi Kurds.

Although the two sides are in general agreement as to their desired outcome in Iraq, what is at the heart of the misunderstandings and difficulties is the lack of accord over future contingencies. Irrespective of US intentions, the future of Iraq as a democratic and stable federal state remains a difficult, perhaps impossible, conclusion. Hence, what the US and Turkey have to carefully map out are their preferences and differences in the event Iraq enters a period of extended chaos, which may even lead to its breakup.

Critical to bridging the differences is how to approach the Kurdish and Turcoman populations. For the Iraqi Kurds, Turkey represents the pathway to Europe and the West. They have made it

plain that their preference is for as close an arrangement with Ankara as possible. A healthy, secular and robust Kurdish entity in northern Iraq also represents the best possible guarantee for Turcoman survivability in the event of a Sh'ia dominated Iraq intent on imposing a stricter version of Islamic rule than otherwise experienced in Iraq. In the short term, the Turks have to make sure that their Turcoman allies, specifically the Iraqi Turcoman Front, collaborates with the upcoming elections. The US, in return, needs to ensure that the Kurdish leadership moderates its discourse regarding Kirkuk to not antagonize Ankara unnecessarily. In the medium term, the key therefore is for the US to square the circle: provide for the makings of a three-way pact. While the Turks offer security guarantees to the Kurds, the Kurds do the same for the Turcomans. This will require meetings, preferably secret, between the Turks and Kurds under US auspices that will clearly lay out future arrangements. Given the multiplicity of channels and a history marked by a strong alliance relationship, the US and Turkey can work together to ensure a soft landing in northern Iraq in the event of a descent to chaos.

Phebe Marr

The Arab Gulf States

There is a high degree of convergence on aims and interests between the United States and the smaller Arab Gulf states on Iraq policy. These states fear, above all, prolonged chaos and instability in Iraq, which can spill over into their countries. In the short term, their greatest desire is for a restoration of order—even a return of “strongman” rule, (so long as it is benevolent and friendly to neighbors). There is also fear that a continuing “sunni” insurgency will strengthen radical Islamists at home and threaten their moderate, pro-Western rule. Hence, the US should be able to get support from these rulers for stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq and recognition of its new government as legitimate.

Over the long term some divergence may emerge, and that will vary from state to state. In countries with a substantial shi’ah population (Kuwait/one third; Bahrain/a majority) there is uneasiness over the possibility of a shi’ah majority government in Iraq that could galvanize local shi’ah communities into making greater demands on the ruling structure. Others fear the emergence of a real democratic process in Iraq, in which the population determines the constitution and leaders are actually changed through elections, but this is viewed as unlikely or, at best a distant prospect. A precipitous withdrawal of US troops is not desired; but neither is a long occupation that has increasing domestic repercussions. Hence, stabilization is the main desiderata, a policy aim consonant with that of the US, and one on which we should get support.

While the rulers and governments in these states can be counted on to support US efforts in Iraq, they face pressures from their own populations in the opposite direction. Vocal elites (academics, media commentators, intelligentsia) are increasingly anti-American, opposed to the “occupation” of Iraq, and increasingly susceptible to propaganda from Islamists. This propaganda has been generating recruits from some Gulf States—even Kuwait—for the insurgency. These pressures vary from state to state. They are weakest in Kuwait—still grateful for its own liberation in 1991 and with most at stake in a stable Iraq—and greater in Bahrain where a more open political system has produced a genuine opposition. But it is in Qatar where this dichotomy has come to the fore in the phenomenon of al-Jazeera. Dominated by journalists of the Arab nationalist—and more recently—Islamist persuasion, al-Jazeera’s broadcasting on Iraq has made life difficult for the new Iraqi regime and the US. It has also led to some tensions between the US and Qatari governments on how to deal with it. The dilemma is that the US cannot appear to be calling for “democracy” in the Arab world, and at the same time, asking for censorship of TV.

Kuwait:

Each of these smaller Gulf states has its own particularities with respect to Iraq policy but Kuwait is a special case, because of its recent painful history with Iraq and because it is the only one of these small states to border Iraq. There are still lingering problems on both sides from the 1990 Iraqi invasion. On the Iraqi side there is unhappiness over the border adjustment; some irredentist sentiments of Kuwait as a whole, and resentment over Kuwait's prosperity achieved,

in Iraq's view, at the expense of Iraq's sacrifices in war. On the Kuwaiti side there is deep fear of a revitalized military in Iraq and memories of a brutal occupation; looting of Kuwait's wealth (not all of which has been returned) and the 605 POWs not accounted for. It will take time and much effort to return some trust to relations. The most important unfinished business, however, is payment of the debt acquired during the Iran-Iraq war (estimated at \$17 billion) and claims owed to Kuwaiti companies and government for damages from the 1990 invasion (estimated at \$69 billion). However, both regimes have made real attempts to mend fences and turn a new leaf. Kuwait has recognized the new government and reestablished diplomatic relations; it will open a new embassy in Baghdad as soon as security conditions permit. Prime Minister Ayad Allawi and President Ghazi al-Yawar have both made official visits to Kuwait. Yawar referred to the Iraqi invasion as a “mishap in history” that would not recur, and asked for help in reconstruction. Indeed, many Kuwaiti businessmen are eager to engage in reconstruction efforts, especially those in the south, which can strengthen ties between the two borders, and revive the port of Basra.

U.S. Policy Steps

The US should build on the high coincidence of interests—particularly in the short term—between the US and the smaller Gulf states with regard to Iraq policy. These Gulf countries, most of which are rich and currently enjoying an oil boom, could be encouraged to do more, especially financially.

- These Gulf states could be more forthcoming on funding for education, especially the training of professors and educators outside of Iraq and providing undergraduate scholarships (including to some of the American institutions being set up in the area).
- Kuwait could be persuaded to be more forthcoming on forgiving its debt and reducing reparations. In return, the US should help persuade the Iraqi government to respond with guarantees and assurances on the border issue and burying any future “claim to Kuwait”.
- The US should be encouraging appropriate business ventures and foreign investment from the Gulf states in Iraq especially those that help with unemployment. This should be done within a legal commercial framework that avoids the kind of story that appeared lately in the press of “price gauging” by a Kuwaiti company doing business with American firms in Iraq.
- To deal with the opposition factor, the US could encourage Gulf governments to do more to clamp down on funding, travel and recruiting of people for the opposition in Iraq. Most important on this score is adopting an effective strategy to deal with al-Jazeera and its reporting on Iraq. (It is recognized that this is a broader public diplomacy issue.) Censorship and revocation of journalistic privileges have been applied in Iraq, but this is not a long-term solution, and it will backfire as the US attempts to encourage more democratic reforms in the Gulf. A better direction is to give al-Jazeera more and better competition—especially in broadcasting inside Iraq. With respect to Qatar, a strategy that insists on better, more professional journalistic standards; finding ways (preferably through international organizations) to apply them and holding al-Jazeera accountable to them; and “embarrassing” al-Jazeera’s journalists into better performance (they put considerable stock in their professional reputations) might have better effect than pressuring for censorship.

Geoffrey Kemp

Iran

Without satisfactory working relationships between Washington, Tehran, and Baghdad, the future stability of the new Iraqi regime will be in doubt. Iran has immediate influence on Iraqi politics as a result of history, geography, ethnicity and religious ties. Hundreds of thousands of Iranians are living in Iraq, and enter across borders that are fairly open. Evidence of Iranian support for violent activity against the coalition forces and the interim Iraqi government is strong, however the situation could be much worse if relations with Tehran deteriorate. Iran has some common interest with the US and Iraqi government: it does not want to see chaos in the country similar to what happened in Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s. It would prefer a friendly – as distinct from hostile – neighbor. On the other hand, Tehran's mullahs are nervous about a strong, pro-Western government that could offer base rights to American forces and that could eventually establish diplomatic relations with Israel. The conservative mullahs are more ambivalent about the emergence of a strong Shiite dominated government in Baghdad. The complexities of the Shiite religion suggest that there would be rivalry between the clerical establishments with Iraq's powerful centers in Najaf and Kabala, providing alternative sources of theological discourses to Qum.

The long historic ties and hostilities between Iran, Iraq, and the US help to explain Iran's determination to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. Following the overthrow of the Shah in 1979, Iran focused its efforts on exporting the Islamic revolution. Iraq, threatened by the prospect of Iran's domination in the region, initiated a preemptive attack and a long, complex war ensued. The trauma of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war both in terms of the nature of casualties and the isolation Iran found itself in, have had a profound impact on contemporary Iranian psyche. The fear of isolation has made the successive Iranian governments determined to achieve autarchy. The complexities of Iranian-Iraqi Shiite relations further increase Iran's involvement and influence in Iraq.

While there was great cooperation between Iran and the US over the war in Afghanistan and the removal of the Taliban regime, Iran has voiced opposition to the war in Iraq and there is evidence that the regime has attempted to stymie US efforts. Iran had a strategic advantage to assisting with the overthrow of the radical Sunni Taliban because of the threat their neighboring presence poses on the Shiite Islamic Republic. The same incentive does not exist in Iraq, where they benefited economically and politically from Saddam's containment through sanctions. Even though Iran fears the presence of the US and a strong democratic state in the region, it does not wish for civil war either. An internal war between Shiite, Sunnis, Kurds and Turks would force Iran to intervene. The establishment of a Kurdish state poses its own internal implication to Iran.

Cooperation with Iran over the stability of Iraq has been shadowed by negotiations over nuclear proliferation among the US, EU, IAEA and Iran. Iran's recent refusal to halt its nuclear ambitions has created a great deal of tension, as well as discussion of a more militaristic approach in the place of stagnant diplomacy. Yet in the long run, the US and Iran have a similar need for regional stability. As long as the US grants Iran a modicum of legitimacy in the

international arena, economic incentives, and a guarantee that attempts will not be made to overthrow the current regime, Iran might find the incentive to cooperate over Iraq. This requires the delicate and simultaneous coordination of two planes of negotiations: stability in Iraq and nuclear proliferation.

Iran and Iraq are both important energy producers. This makes them competitive yet at the same time, they have common interests in reaching a stable region that assures them access to world markets for their products. In the next months, the delicate situation in Iraq will be parallel by a brewing crisis between Iran and the US over Iran's nuclear weapons program. If the US is unable to resolve this to its satisfaction through the international negotiations of the IAEA and the EU, then talks for alternative, preemptive unilateral measures may continue. The problem is that this would be resisted intensely by the Iranians who have the capacity to create problems for the US in Iraq. Thus the future of the Iranian nuclear program and the stability of Iraq are to some extent intertwined. For this reason, the US must work diligently for a more diplomatic solution to the nuclear crisis, and this can only be done if there is a common agreed agenda with the EU, which allows no room for dissent that Iran can exploit. It will be the test of the new administration to reach this consensus early on.

Scott Lasensky

Jordan

Unlike the 1990-91 Gulf crisis, Jordan has made a firm decision to cooperate with the U.S. over Iraq. Despite the Kingdom's public opposition to the 2003 war, Jordan has proved a reliable partner. Amman has a major stake in the future stability and territorial integrity of Iraq and in the success of U.S. actions there. In terms of core objectives – a stable and unified Iraq; free and democratic; an Iraq that does not threaten its neighbors; with a free market, vibrant civil society and institutional safeguards to protect minority rights – the U.S. and Jordan are in full agreement.

But there have been trade-offs. Political space has been severely constrained and reform efforts have slowed down. Also, the closer Jordan works with the U.S. on Iraq (coupled with relative U.S. disengagement on Arab-Israeli diplomacy), the less Amman is able to get out in front on the peace process. But the most alarming trade-off has been a widening credibility gap between the governing elite and the governed. Jordanians are quick to assert that the war in Iraq has united the Jordanian opposition as never before. These trade-offs, especially the credibility gap at home, do not sit well with long-term U.S. interests.

What accounts for Jordan's continuing alignment with the U.S. over Iraq?

There are five inter-related factors at play. First, Jordan has an over-arching strategic interest to stand with the U.S. Second, Jordanian leaders are unwilling to bear the regional costs of sitting out, as in 1990-91, when Amman alienated GCC states and was weakened in relation to its neighbors. Third, there is the Palestinian dimension and Jordan's hope (since diminished) that cooperation with the U.S. on Iraq would lead to more engagement by Washington. Fourth, the U.S. put together an effective inducements package that provided political cover, reassured leaders, and allowed the country to off-set real costs associated with the war against Iraq. Fifth, Jordan has a positive material stake in a post-Saddam setting. All things considered, said former Jordanian Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher recently, "we haven't done too bad." Despite the instability brought on by war, Jordan has been able to maintain extremely high growth rates (5-7%).

How has Jordan contributed?

Jordan has given an important, though modest boost to the twin projects of reconstruction and stabilization in Iraq. The Kingdom has cooperated with Washington with the staging of U.S. forces, training for Iraqi security personnel, tight border controls, and robust intelligence sharing. In addition, government officials, aid workers, contractors, and businesspeople – Iraqi and non-Iraqi – can attest to Jordan's critical role as a safe, efficient and cost-effective "gateway." By air, land and sea, the Jordanian gateway remains invaluable – more so in recent weeks as the security situation in Iraq has deteriorated.

Close cooperation on Iraq does not mean the U.S. and Jordan see eye to eye. There continues to be divergence on a range of Iraq-related issues – and over the Palestinian question, which factors into Jordanian decision-making on Iraq. A number of these disagreements will likely surface at

the Sharm el Sheikh conference, including the scheduling and format for Iraqi elections, the position of Sunnis and on-going U.S. military operations. Beyond the Sharm meeting, it is a safe bet that Jordanian leaders will continue to object to certain U.S. positions and actions.

Jordan is adamantly opposed to suggestions that elections be staggered, or that Sunni areas be left out initially. Moreover, the overall position of Sunnis remains a sensitive issue in Jordan – not just because of historical or cultural ties, but also because it was the Sunni elite under Saddam that maintained extensive business ties with Jordanians in the 80's and 90's. Together with the intense suspicion in Jordan toward Iran and Iranian-style Shiite political activity, divergence with the U.S. could grow – particularly if the “strong man” option continues to gain popularity. (Jordan will prefer a Sunni, the U.S. may not). Still, as American officials have come to learn over the past 18 months, policy disagreements with Jordan are manageable. Moreover, the U.S. also has much to gain from paying greater heed to Jordan's counsel Chalabi being the obvious example.

But make no mistake, the overarching theme is “convergence.” As the U.S. heads into the Sharm el Sheikh conference it will find that Jordan shares similar priorities. Border security is just one example. Jordan's concerns about poor safeguards on the Syrian and Saudi borders coincide with Washington's. Should Iraq and its neighbors seek to institutionalize the Sharm el Sheikh forum and turn it into an on-going mechanism for consultation between the neighbors, Jordan could serve as a convenient and reliable host.

Over the short term, in order to maintain close cooperation the U.S. should continue to address Jordan's economic and security needs, and also continue to approach other key regional actors to do the same – especially on energy security. As Jordan looks for further supplemental aid, seeks to recover its Iraqi debt and tries to obtain new weapons systems (like the AMRAAM system), the U.S. should be forthcoming, but also selective since there is little prospect that the Kingdom will change its present course on Iraq. Moreover, these inducements could also be deployed to minimize some of the trade-offs outlined above.

Over the long-term, if the situation in Iraq stabilizes, energy prices fall and Jordan's economy continues to grow, some assistance to Jordan (now at an all-time high) could be curtailed. But this would likely be constrained by priorities in other areas—Arab-Israeli, counter-terrorism, democracy promotion—that, taken together, are likely to necessitate high levels of U.S. assistance for some time to come.

Whether or not the U.S. failed to develop an adequate strategy to deal with the neighbors before the war, or if these differences were simply unavoidable given conflicting interests and ambitions, the reality today is that Washington recognizes it needs greater cooperation from the neighbors if the situation in Iraq is to improve. Relying on the smaller neighbors, like Jordan and Kuwait, is far from sufficient. For its part, Jordan will remain a steadfast partner in efforts to improve cooperation among Iraq's neighbors. Its interests in doing so are strong, although its ability to influence events in Iraq – not to mention the policies of neighboring states – remains modest.

U.S. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO JORDAN * **

Year	Economic Aid	Military Aid	Total
1991	35	20	55.0
1992	30	20	50.0
1993	5	9	14.0
1994	9	9	18.0
1995	7.2	7.3	14.5
1996	7.2	200	207.2
1997	112.2	30	142.2
1998	150	75	225.0
1999	200	120	320.0
2000	200	225	425.0
2001	150	75	225.0
2002	250	100	350.0
2003	950	604	1554.0
2004	350	206	556.0

*in millions of U.S. dollars

** source: Congressional Research Service

Joseph McMillan*

Saudi Arabia

From the evening of August 6, 1990, when King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud agreed to Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney's request to deploy American troops to Saudi Arabia in the wake of Iraq's conquest of Kuwait, the Kingdom has been the United States' key Arab partner in confronting the problems of international instability emanating from Iraq. Over the ensuing decade and more, however, the demands associated with containing Iraq and Saddam Hussein began to place unprecedented strains on the historic U.S.-Saudi relationship, strains that erupted into the open after 9/11 and in the run-up to the American invasion of Iraq that began on March 19, 2003.

The abnormal situation that bounds Saudi Arabia to the United States in having to face a common threat from Iraq has now given way to a more normal situation in which the two countries interests and approaches toward Iraq will converge or diverge depending on the issue concerned. Riyadh's policy toward Baghdad over the next several years will probably be dominated by four key concerns about the future of Iraq: domestic stability, foreign meddling, oil production policy, and Iraq's political evolution (especially the role of the Shi'a.) Of these, far and away the most important is stability.

Even if Iraq achieves a stable, legitimate government, it would still be a mistake to foresee relations between the two countries as trouble-free. Ever since the emergence of the Saudi and Iraqi states in the wake of World War I, relations between the two have been problematic. The post-Saddam period promises to be another era of bilateral difficulties:

- Differences over oil policy will serve as an obvious point of contention. Iraq's logical oil policy will be to maximize near-term revenues to fund reconstruction, while Saudi Arabia will continue to seek to preserve long-term demand.
- While the Saudi government says it can live with any peaceful, stable Iraqi government, no matter how it is run domestically, it must be assumed that successful democratization in Iraq would have some effect on the Kingdom's own political institutions, if only by influencing popular expectations. The Saudis, however, do not fundamentally believe that democracy can succeed in Iraq, expecting instead that the country will ultimately end up with a strongman.
- How significant a part religious differences play in the bilateral dynamic will depend on what factions dominate the Shi'a majority in Iraq, how Saudi Shi'ites respond to the empowerment of their coreligionists to the north, and whether Saudi Arabia's reflexive support of Wahhabi propaganda ends up extending to the Sunni Arabs of Iraq. Reports that substantial numbers of Saudi jihadists are among those violently opposing the interim Iraqi government in Fallujah and elsewhere set an ominous tone for the future.

* Joseph McMillan is senior research fellow at the National Defense University's Institute for National Strategic Studies. The views expressed are his own and do not necessarily reflect those of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.

In the near term, the U.S. and Saudi perspectives on Iraq will be quite similar, with both countries tightly focused on the restoration of peace and order. Beyond that, however, there is ample room for divergence. Saudi Arabia values its ties to Washington, but its ability to cooperate will be limited by regional and domestic pressures. Its attention will frequently be distracted by the bumps and potholes on its own developmental path. Ensuring that Saudi Arabia is a force for stability in the Gulf rather than a source of disruption will be a continuing challenge for American diplomacy.

Geoffrey Kemp

Syria

Syria's stakes in the outcome of the Iraq War are high. Recent conditions in the Middle East, starting with the sanctions of the 1990s and ending with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, were ideal for Damascus. Syria benefited economically from buying cheap Iraqi oil and its security was enhanced by a weak, non-threatening Iraq. While Assad's stance against the war suggests that he would take pleasure in a US failure in Iraq, Assad has no interest in chaos and civil strife in his neighboring state. Syria has a vested interest in the stability of Iraq for continuing economic relations and preventing an influx of refugees and insurgents into its country. At the same time, a democratic, stable, pro-US Iraq would challenge Syria's role as a key player in the region and in the Israeli peace process, while a strong US presence in the Middle East would eventually force Syria to initiate destabilizing economic and political reforms.

Domestic politics and internal vulnerabilities dictate Syrian foreign policy. These politics include balancing the interest groups and fragile coalitions that keep Assad's presidency alive. Syria's economic and political structures further explain the susceptibility of the Syrian regime to the demands of both domestic group and the US. By sponsoring militant groups such as Hezbollah, the secular regime gains Islamic credibility. A weak economy with no prospects of oil revenues has created socioeconomic conditions that generate pressure to reform the economy. A weak bureaucracy with no administrative capacity has cemented a process of fragmentation and created strong local leaders, who need to be "bought" by the regime. Lastly, Assad must regularly answer to military leaders within his own party. Since these groups are primarily anti-US and anti-Zionist, appeasing them derails progress with the US.

The Syrian regime's relations with its immediate neighbors are plagued by hostilities. Israel, Turkey, Jordan, and Egypt have become disaffected by Syria's regional ambitions and support of factionalized rebel organizations. This leaves Syria toying with the idea of regional cooperation with Lebanon and Iran under a unified anti-Zionist and anti-West platform. Iraq's value to Syria is greater as a result of this ambition because of its location. However, by measuring Syria's military, economic and diplomatic strength it becomes clear that the prospect of Syria successfully influencing its neighbors and carrying out its ambitions is unlikely. Syria has an outdated, Soviet-bought military and no funds to modernize it. Its only calling cards are its presence in Lebanon, security of the border, and close relations with Islamic fundamentalist organizations.

Relations and dialogue between the US and Syria over terrorism, the Middle East, and Iraq have witnessed a turbulent period. In the wake of September 11, President Bashar al-Assad found himself and his regime walking a tightrope between cooperating with the US and maintaining the identity as a tough, independent Arab leader that he had assiduously forged. Assad took steps toward cooperating with the US by supplying the administration with crucial intelligence on Al-Qaeda. At the same time, the rhetoric of the Syrian regime was anti-US, culminating in a strong opposition to the war in Iraq. This dialogue has demonstrated inconsistencies in rhetoric as Assad attempts to appease both the US and his supporters. Yet despite Syrian ambitions and vulnerabilities, both the US and Syria have a vested interest in returning stability to Iraq,

maintaining Syria's status as a key player in the regional power game, and promoting improved economic relations.

Since the ending of the Cold War, the US has opted for quiet cooperation instead of confronting Syria overtly. While Bashar al-Assad frequently oversteps the implicit boundaries of this relationship by voicing anti-US and anti-Zionist rhetoric, the US administration has shown little interest in overthrowing the Syrian regime or threatening it with military actions. Absent a greater push for dialogue and the threat of consequences from the US, Syria will remain a strong presence in Lebanese affairs, turn a blind eye to security issues on the Syrian-Iraqi border, and continue its sponsorship of Hezbollah. If success for the US in Iraq appears more plausible, cooperation on Syria's part will most likely occur. In the meantime, a stalemate in Iraq allows Syria to continue to vacillate in an attempt to appease both the internal and external forces that are pulling on Assad's vulnerable regime.

Henri J. Barkey is the Bernard L. and Bertha F. Cohen Professor and Chair of the International Relations Department at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He served as a member of the U.S. State Department Policy Planning Staff (1998-2000) working primarily on issues related to the Middle East, the Eastern Mediterranean and intelligence. He has authored, co-authored and edited four books, the most recent being Turkey's Kurdish question (with Graham Fuller). Among some of his most recent scholarly articles are "the United States, Turkey, and Human Rights Policy," "the Endless Pursuit: Improving US-Turkish Relations," in Morton Abramowitz (ed.) *Friends in Need: Turkey and the United States after September 11* (New York, the Century Foundation, 2003), and "Cyprus: the Predictable Crisis," *The National Interest* 66 (Winter 2001/2) with Phillip H. Gordon. In sum, Dr. Barkey is one of America's foremost experts on Turkish politics and its role in the broader Middle East.

Phebe Marr, an Arabist and a leading specialist on Iraq, has lived and worked in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon and has traveled extensively in the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and East Asia. Marr received a B.A. in international relations with honors from Barnard College, an M.A. in Middle East studies from Radcliffe Graduate School, and a Ph.D. in history and Middle East studies from Harvard University (1967). She served as a research analyst for the Arabian American Oil Company (1960-62) in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, and as chair of the Near East and North Africa program at the Foreign Service Institute (1963-66). She has been a fellow of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard and an associate professor of Middle East history at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, as well as at California State University, Stanislaus. She was a senior fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University, retiring from the U.S. government in 1997. In 1998 and 1999 she was a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars in Washington, D.C. Dr. Marr is on the editorial board of the *Middle East Journal* and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Middle East Institute. She is currently updating her book, *The Modern History of Iraq*, to be published by Westview Press.

Geoffrey Kemp is the Director of Regional Strategic Programs at the Nixon Center. He received his Ph.D. in political science at M.I.T. and his M.A. and B.A. degrees from Oxford University. He served in the White House during the first Reagan administration and was Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and Senior Director for Near East and South Asian Affairs on the National Security Council Staff.

Prior to his current position, he was a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace where he was Director of the Middle East Arms Control Project. In the 1970s he worked in the Defense Department in the Policy Planning and Program Analysis and Evaluation Offices and made major contributions to studies on U.S. security policy and options for Southwest Asia. In 1976, while working for the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, he prepared a widely publicized report on U.S. Military Sales to Iran. His most recent publication is "Stopping the Iranian Bomb" which appeared in the Summer 2003 edition of *The National Interest*.

Scott Lasensky is a Middle East Specialist in the Institute's Research and Studies Program, where he focuses on issues relating to U.S. foreign policy towards the region. He has lectured and written extensively on the Arab-Israeli conflict and America's role in the Middle East, and is the author of the forthcoming book *Paying for Peace: America, the Middle East Peace Process and the Limits of Foreign Aid*.

Lasensky has been a visiting assistant professor of international relations at Mount Holyoke College, and a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York and the Brookings Institution. He is a frequent commentator on BBC, CNN, Fox News, NPR and other major media outlets, and has been published widely. Lasensky is a Magna Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa graduate of University of California, Los Angeles, and earned his Ph.D. in international relations at Brandeis University.

Joseph McMillan is a senior research fellow at the National Defense University's Institute for National Strategic Studies, focusing on issues related to terrorism, the greater Middle East, and South Asia. He has been associated with NDU since August 2001, first as a visiting research fellow at INSS and later as academic chairman of the Near East-South Asia Center for Strategic Studies.

Prior to joining NDU, Mr. McMillan served in a series of civilian positions in the Department of Defense, beginning in 1978 as a program analyst in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and including assignments in the Defense Logistics Agency, the Defense Security Assistance Agency, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He has more than 15 years of experience dealing with regional defense and security issues affecting the Persian Gulf, Levant, South Asia, North Africa, and the former Soviet Union. In 1997 he was named Principal Director for Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The following year he was promoted to the Senior Executive Service and appointed Principal Director for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs.
