Scenarios for the Future of Iraq and the Role of Europe: How Will Europe Engage?

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Introduction

America's decision five years ago to go to war against Iraq split the European Union. The wartime coalition included the United Kingdom and Poland, which have been joined at one point or another in the post-war period by troops from Romania, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Hungary and Portugal (Sharp and Blanchard 2005). An absolute majority of the European Union has thus participated in the coalition, but major European countries such as France and Germany, as well as 10 other EU members, have stayed out of the military effort.

The European Union has been more unequivocal about civilian reconstruction efforts. Europe as a whole has joined in cancelling 80 percent of Iraq's official and commercial debt and pledged a total of about \$3 billion in assistance, including both European Commission and bilateral efforts (Bowen 2008: 135; GAO 2007). But this substantial sum is a far smaller percentage of the total Iraq reconstruction assistance, upwards of \$60 billion in U.S. and international contributions (Bowen 2008: 15), than Europe has contributed in many other post-conflict situations. Furthermore, much of the European contribution to Iraq has been channeled through the United Nations and the World Bank. Even in many countries that have participated in the coalition, domestic politics have weighed heavily against direct European involvement in Iraq, especially since sectarian violence flared in 2005. With the security situation in Iraq dicey, Europeans have not been keen to engage in ways that require a strong on-theground presence.

That may be changing. France's new president has signaled not only a general interest in kissing and making up with the United States, but also a specific interest in contributing to post-war stability and reconstruction in Iraq (BBC 2007). Germany's chancellor has made a concerted effort to erase the memory of her predecessor's frictions with the Bush administration. The security situation in Iraq has improved markedly over the past year, with Sunni tribesmen taking up the fight against al-Qaeda in Iraq, U.S. forces not only surging but also adopting a more effective counterinsurgency strategy, and Shia extremists deciding to stand down, at least temporarily.

The ultimate outcome of these positive developments is still unclear: this could be the beginning of a new phase in which Iraqis resort more to politics and less to violence in sorting out their differences, or it could be a period of calm before emboldened Sunni tribesmen take on refreshed Shia militias in a renewed civil war with traumatic regional implications.

In this chapter, we will consider the implications of these two scenarios—they might be called "Continued Improvement" and "Descent into Chaos"—for American and European interests in Iraq and possible policy options for Europe as it seeks to protect its interests there. In either scenario, stronger European engagement seems desirable, though the precise shape it would take clearly depends on which scenario comes to pass.

American Interests and Options in Iraq

It is important to be clear about the United States' vital interests and options in Iraq, which will have echoes and repercussions in Europe. An expert group convened at the United States Institute of Peace over the past year has defined U.S. vital interests as follows:

- 1. Prevent Iraq from becoming a haven or platform for international terrorists;
- 2. Restore U.S. credibility, prestige and capacity to act worldwide;
- 3. Improve regional stability;
- 4. Limit and redirect Iranian influence;
- 5. Maintain an independent Iraq as a single state.

Much as it might like to see Iraq as a reliable supplier of oil to the world market and an importer of U.S.-supplied goods and services as well as a functional democracy, the group did not regard those objectives as vital, i.e., worth expending additional American lives and treasure (Serwer 2007).

The United States' military options in trying to protect these vital interests are limited. The surge of U.S. troops in 2007 could not be sustained without politically difficult decisions on deployment time and frequency. President Bush has decided that the numbers will return to the pre-surge level (about 130,000) by July 2008. That level can be maintained, but only by imposing significant burdens on the U.S. Army and Marine Corps and running high costs to maintain and replace worn out equipment. At the same time, the rate of an orderly U.S. troop withdrawal is also limited, to about one brigade combat team (BCT) per month (Serwer 2007). This means that there will likely be at least 100,000—and more likely close to 130,000 in light of recent remarks by Defense Secretary Robert Gates and General David Petraeus (Shanker 2008)—U.S. troops still in Iraq when the new president is inaugurated in January 2009.

At that point, one can reasonably expect any new president to conduct an assessment of what to do. None of the major candidates at this point favors a quick, unconditional withdrawal from Iraq (one major and two minor candidates who did on the left, John Edwards, Bill Richardson and Dennis Kucinich, have dropped out, and one minor candidate on the right, Ron Paul, never garnered many votes during primary elections). On the right, John McCain has indicated that he would maintain existing troop levels for an indefinite period, until Iraq can ensure its own internal security. On the left, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama have argued for an orderly drawdown of U.S. troops and limits on their role.

There are also differences among the candidates on how to handle the civilian side of stabilization and reconstruction in Iraq. The Democrats appear to favor a more conditional approach: the U.S. commitment will depend in part on whether the Iraqis make progress on national dialogue and reconciliation. The Republicans, including the Bush administration, would like to see such progress but are unwilling to condition the U.S. commitment on meeting particular benchmarks.

European Interests and Options

Europe can reasonably be assumed to share the goal of preventing Iraq from becoming a haven or platform for international terrorists who may well target Paris or London more readily than Washington or New York, though Europeans generally seem to believe the risk is low. While at least some Europeans might want to see the return of U.S. credibility, prestige and capacity to act worldwide, that would not be a European vital interest. Regional stability, however, is an interest Europe shares with the United States, as is limiting and redirecting Iranian influence, though Europeans might rather see themselves as encouraging Iranian moderation and avoiding provocations. Maintenance of an independent Iraq as a single state would be of considerable importance to Europe, if only because a Turkey unhappy with Kurdistan's moves toward independence will be a problem on the EU's southeastern flank.

Does Europe have other interests in Iraq? European commercial interests in energy supplies from Iraq and sales to Iraq are at least as strong as the analogous U.S. interests. In addition, Europe is seeing significantly more Iraqi refugees than the United States, now totaling well over 100,000 and possibly continuing to rise (UNHCR 2007). This imposes a burden on social services, especially as many European countries will not accept them for permanent resettlement. It also risks social and cultural strains in a Europe already nervous about its rapidly growing Muslim population. Maintaining stability in Iraq would certainly seem to be a strongly felt European interest.

We leave it to Europeans to decide which of these various interests are vital, but list them more or less in order of American-imagined priority:

- 1. Prevent Iraq from becoming a haven or platform for international terrorists;
- 2. Improve regional stability;
- 3. Maintain an independent Iraq as a single, stable state;
- 4. End the outflow of Iraqi refugees and enable the return of a significant number;
- 5. Moderate Iranian influence;
- 6. Restore Iraq as an energy supplier and importer of European goods and services.

While European and U.S. commercial interests could put the two on a competitive course, there is little inherent conflict between European interests and those outlined for the United States, and considerable overlap. While Europeans and Americans can be expected to disagree on how strongly to press for democracy or how strongly to press Iran to reduce its support for Shia militias in Iraq, the broad outlines of what the United States and the European Union want in Iraq are virtually identical: a single, stable state that harbors no international terrorists, does not threaten its neighbours or export large numbers of people, supplies oil to the world market and imports goods and services.

This apparent synergy between U.S. and European interests looking forward does not mean that Europeans and Americans will find themselves in agreement on everything. Iraq is broken. Many Europeans blame the United States. A clear majority in Europe believes the war in Iraq was not justified (Kohut 2005: 27) and believes that European countries should not bear the burden of fixing the problem (Kohut 2004: 13). Few European politicians want to risk their reputations arguing for efforts to help the U.S. in Iraq, and European public opinion is decidedly unfriendly to any effort to engage directly there. But for those who want to look forward to improved security conditions, there is reason to believe that Iraq can become a shared enterprise, albeit with the major burdens for security and civilian reconstruction falling to the United States.

The question, as one European reader of a draft of this paper commented, is not so much if Europe will engage but how it will engage: it can either continue to contribute in a piecemeal fashion (with the pieces adding up to a substantial slice, but one with little political impact), or it can engage with a clearer overall vision of Iraq, the region and the European Union's value added. The latter is likely to yield a much better return on the European taxpayer's investment.

What If Things Get Better?

In our first scenario (Continued Improvement), security continues to improve in Iraq, though gradually and with many ups and downs. As conditions become more permissive, what can Europe do?

Europe took an arms-length approach to assistance in Iraq in 2003 and 2004, with most funds channeled through the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, a joint effort of the World Bank and the United Nations (DFID 2004; EC 2008). 2005 and 2006 were difficult years for civilians in Iraq, as sectarian warfare raged and the security situation deteriorated sharply. 2007 saw significant security improvements, in particular toward the end of the year, and a small shift of European efforts toward bilateral programs (DFID 2004; EC 2007). At the same time, the international community as a whole has shifted its emphasis from physical reconstruction, rehabilitation and equipment—now largely in the hands of the Iraqis, whose oil revenue gives them substantial resources—to capacity-building, i.e., training Iraqis to run their own country (ICD 2007: 5).

This is the EU's forte. Its most important export product is not Airbus but rather teaching candidates for membership how to run their countries according to the 80,000 pages of the acquis communautaire—in other words, state-building, which is precisely what Iraq needs. In the past 35 years, the EU has managed to bring more or less into compliance with its norms 21 countries—all Europeans, but with extraordinarily varied linguistic, cultural and historical antecedents. Iraq is no European country—the Saddam Hussein regime used random government-sponsored violence to cow its population into submission and prevent the development of its previously thriving civil society. No one would want to impose the acquis communautaire on a Middle Eastern country with an Arabic- and Kurdish-speaking population. But the experience that the EU has acquired in mentoring other countries is precisely what Iraq needs.

Some Europeans are already busy on this front. The European Union and the United Kingdom, two large donors, have made capacity-building a particular priority. So far, the largest slice of EU committed funds has supported governance and democracy programs (approximately \$337 million), with education, science and cultural programs receiving the second largest amount (approximately \$117 million) (ICD 2007: 19). The European Union has been a major contributor to U.N. projects that support Iraq's political process. Among its bilateral projects are ones that reform and enhance Iraq's capacity in rule of law and public financial management (EC 2007).

The United Kingdom has so far pledged approximately \$650 mil-

lion to Iraq reconstruction efforts, committing the majority of its funds to bilateral projects and disbursing them in particular to projects focusing on governance and democracy development (approximately \$127 million), including voter education and the creation of independent television and radio stations (ICD 2007: 16; DFID 2004). The British Department for International Development (DFID) provides expert assistance to Iraqi national and provincial governments to help build capacity to provide basic services and security. This assistance goes to bodies such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Electricity, the Prime Minister's Office, the Council of Ministers Secretariat, and southern Iraqi Provincial Councils (DFID 2004).

Unfortunately, these efforts are not as focused as they might be on the most pressing security and governance problem Iraq faces: the Interior Ministry. Three years after Saddam Hussein fell, the Interior Ministry was in the hands of a Shia sectarian who used it to strengthen his co-religionists. That has changed: a new minister has replaced large numbers of police commanders and is trying to build a professional ministry. He is aided mainly by U.S. military officers not well-suited to mentoring a civilian ministry. While some have police experience, these well-meaning and professional officers, supplemented by Justice Department and State Department officials as well as contractors, lack one vital characteristic: careers in an Interior Ministry, which the United States lacks (since it lacks a national police force—the FBI is not a national police force and reports to the Justice Department).

Here is one area where Europe could make an enormous difference. It is already undertaking certain efforts in this area: DFID has a mentoring mission in the Ministry of Interior, the Italian Carabinieri are providing training to the national police, the European Union is providing both high-ranking police and judicial training through its EUJUST-Lex program, and Germany is providing both explosive ordnance disposal training in Germany and Jordan and military training in the UAE (DFID 2004; Council of the EU 2008; German Federal Government 2008; Greene 2007). These efforts add, but only marginally, to U.S. police training efforts—an approach Europe has adopted in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Instead, in permissive security conditions, the European Union could adopt the Interior Ministry, undertaking a major effort to men-

tor and train its officials and ensure that the police are nonsectarian right down to the neighbourhood level (where it is most important). This would be a high added-value task for which the EU is uniquely equipped and experienced, having done more or less the same job in Bosnia in recent years. The risks are significant—embedding in the Iraqi Interior Ministry requires a great deal of courage and wisdom. But 200 Europeans prepared to move into the ministry and give it the close, hands-on attention it needs would make an enormous difference. The Americans should largely be moved out, freeing them for other tasks for which they are better suited.

Another area in which Europe's experience would help is on the political front. The improved security situation has unfrozen Iraq's previously deadlocked political scene, allowing for fluidity that manifests itself in shifting alliances and political formations. The Kurdish/Shia alliance that wrote the constitution and forms the backbone of Prime Minister Nouri Maliki's parliamentary majority is fraying. The Sunni tribes are trying to organize "awakenings" not only in Anbar but also in Diyala, Baghdad and the south. While most political parties are still defined by sect, there are serious efforts underway to create alternatives to the Kurdish/Shia alliance, including a nationalist Shia/Sunni front (Serwer and al-Rahim 2008).

At the same time, it is difficult for politicians to produce results because of distrust and continuing fundamental disagreements on constitutional issues: how should power be distributed between the central government and the regions (only one of which, Kurdistan, exists at present) and between the central government and the provinces (governorates in Iraqi terminology)? What should the relationship between Iraqi minorities and "co-nationals" in neighbouring states be? What is the proper role of neighbouring countries in Iraq, and how can they contribute to stability?

This is a situation that calls for European political skills. The United Nations has been successful in keeping a lid on the Kirkuk powder keg—Kurds and Sunni Arabs have negotiated a delay in the referendum to decide Kirkuk's status to mid-2008 (and likely beyond) (Serwer and al-Rahim 2008). With the clearer and heftier mandate of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1770, the United Nations needs now to take on the weightier constitutional issues, in addition to

organizing provincial elections within six months of passage of the necessary legislation.

The U.N. Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is led by a European and could use stronger European backing. In more permissive conditions, this might include several hundred more staff to beef up the current several hundred. Particularly important is the deployment of U.N. staff outside Baghdad, to help at the provincial and local levels with political engagement and to prepare for provincial elections, scheduled to occur by October 1, 2008. It might also be possible for the European Union to establish more Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), as European coalition partners have done in Afghanistan.

For the political reconciliation process in Iraq to be successful, it will need the backing of the entire international community, including Iraq's neighbours (USIP 2008). Several have been less than fully cooperative. Saudi Arabia harbors continuing suspicions of Prime Minister Maliki in particular and the Shia-dominated government as a whole (McMillan 2006). Iran, while not doing its worst, has pumped money, weapons and agents into southern Iraq, apparently spreading its bets among the several Shia factions in an effort to guarantee a win, one way or the other (Serwer 2008). While European sway with both the Saudis and the Iranians is limited, a united U.S./ EU stance would carry weight with both. European influence is also important in restraining Turkey from again intervening forcefully against Kurdish guerillas operating from northern Iraq. European assistance to Jordan and Syria in managing the burden of Iraqi refugees is vital, as is European help in the process of returning displaced people and refugees to their homes, conditions permitting.

How would the United States react to a more aggressive, focused European effort in Iraq? There is sure to be resistance—there are some in Washington who would not want European competition in Iraq, or who simply do not believe the EU has much value added to offer. Overtures by Europeans to engage with the Interior Ministry have been rebuffed in the past. But the overall reaction under current conditions could be positive, especially if renewed European efforts were presented as a coherent package intended to reinforce coalition efforts at stabilization. Under improving security conditions, such a package might look something like this:

- 1. Enhance the United Nation's capacity: add 300 staff;
- 2. Create European PRTs: another 200 staff, plus security and logistics:
- 3. Mentor the Interior Ministry: 200 experienced Interior officials;
- 4. Beef up diplomacy with Iraq's neighbours;
- 5. Increase assistance to Syria and Jordan for refugees and to Iraq for returns.

Such a package would not be cheap—a back of the envelope calculation for items 1-4 would put the price tag at a couple of billion euros, plus the price of additional refugee assistance. Nor would it be without risk, even if security conditions become more permissive. It will be a long time before Americans and Europeans can walk the streets of Baghdad, Mosul or Basra safely. But Americans already go to work in Iraqi ministries every day—there is no reason why Europeans could not do likewise, provided they adopt appropriate security precautions. Europe would need a substantially increased on-the-ground diplomatic and Commission presence in Baghdad to execute a program like the one outlined here, but the effort and presence required would be commensurate with European interests.

What If Things Get Worse?

There are many ways in which things could "go south" in Iraq: a premature U.S. withdrawal, renewed sectarian fighting, troublemaking by neighbours, collapse of the Iraqi state, a Kurdish move toward independence, violence to protest the creation of a nine-province southern region or to undermine it once it has been created, a strongman takeover of the Baghdad government that precipitates widespread violence. What can and should the United States and Europe do if things go wrong?

Whatever the precipitating factor, one can imagine that this scenario would include a sharp decline in Iraqi oil production and export as well as deteriorating economic conditions, sectarian cleansing in Baghdad, Mosul and other mixed areas, far larger numbers of displaced people and refugees, exploitation of the situation by al-Qaeda or other international terrorists, radicalization of neighbouring popu-

lations and possibly intervention within Iraq by one or more neighbouring countries (Byman and Pollack 2007). If unable to quell the violence, coalition forces would presumably pull out of population centers to large bases outside Iraq's main cities, and possibly out of Iraq entirely (Byman and Pollack 2007: 35–37). European and U.S. vital interests would remain the same, but rather than trying to achieve them by building effective state institutions, we would have to turn to a containment strategy.

Containment would require above all a robust regional strategy, one that keeps some coalition troops in Iraq or in the region to strike against international terrorists, dissuades intervention by neighbours, increases the capacity of Iraqis to manage their own sectarian and ethnic strains and provides ample support to those willing to absorb large numbers of refugees (Byman and Pollack 2007: 29, 37–44). The United States is unlikely to be fully effective in bringing Iran and Syria around to a containment strategy, and it will even have difficulty restraining Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

The EU could contribute significantly to these efforts, especially with respect to Turkey and Syria. Turkey's European ambitions are an important constraint on its reaction to Kurdish guerrilla provocations. While Syria's relations with the EU are strained over the Hariri investigation, the Union could help provide the kind of assistance Syria would need to deal with increased numbers of Iraqi refugees.

Iran is the toughest of the neighbours to deal with, but in the event of a breakdown in Iraq its role will be crucial. Iran would have real concerns: about a flood of refugees, about exacerbated ethnic tensions within Iran and about the export of arms and extremists from Iraq. If Tehran chooses to manage these problems by a de facto takeover of authority in southern Iraq, putting in place its surrogates and ensuring that Iraq's southern oil fields are run for its benefit (Byman and Pollack 2007: 16–18), both European and U.S. interests will be severely damaged and Iran's potential for troublemaking throughout the Middle East will be vastly enhanced.

It therefore behooves Americans and Europeans to encourage Tehran to manage its concerns in other ways. Assistance in dealing with refugees would be important. So too would be restraining Iraq's Sunni neighbours from arming and equipping Sunni militias (Byman and Pollack 2007: 17, 42), which in this scenario would be a bad

idea in any event. The United States should also avoid encouraging restiveness among Iran's ethnic minorities. Spreading chaos is not likely to be good for either Europe or the United States, much as some in the U.S. administration seem anxious to use ethnic minorities to challenge Iran's mullahs.

Iran is particularly difficult to manage because of the nuclear issue. There is a very broad political consensus in the United States that Iran should not be allowed to obtain nuclear weapons. Sanctions are the most promising avenue if military action is to be avoided. But pressing for sanctions against Iran if Iraq collapses into chaos could provoke Tehran into the kind of troublemaking in Iraq that we would like to avoid. In fact, some of Iran's troublemaking in Iraq so far may have been undertaken in response to efforts to push for sanctions (Kemp 2005: 13–16; Serwer 2007).

There may be little choice but to postpone increased sanctions against Iran, which is already happening, while making it clear that Europe and the United States remain committed to preventing Tehran from obtaining nuclear weapons. A chaotic Iraq would demand first priority, at least for a time. Once some semblance of order has been restored, Europe and the United States can return to the nuclear proliferation issue and deal with it on its merits (Kemp 2005: 13–16; Serwer 2007).

The aftermath of a collapse in Iraq would also require U.S. and European attention. Sooner or later, order will be restored, possibly with Iraq split into three or more states, or with a strongman in Baghdad. The strongman scenario is hard to picture: some measure of democracy in Iraq is not so much a choice as a necessity, since neither Kurds nor Shia will accept re-imposition of a Baghdad-based dictatorship, even one led by one of their own (and in that event, the other group would be highly resistant).

A three-state Iraq seems more likely, and highly problematic as well. A secular, independent Kurdistan may be objectively more attractive from the Turkish perspective than a unified Iraqi theocracy, but it would still rouse Turkey's worst fears about restiveness in its own Kurdish population. The EU would be key to restraining Turkey vis-à-vis an independent Kurdistan.

If a southern "Shiastan" is not to be captured by Iran and used to extend Tehran's influence throughout the Middle East, Europe and the United States will need to provide extensive support, despite theocratic tendencies and the inevitable ambiguities about the extent of Iranian influence. The U.S. has overcome its hesitations in dealing with the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq (Iraq's largest, Iranian-backed political party); it would need to show similar wisdom in dealing with a Shiastan likely to be dominated by ISCI and the likes of Moqtada al-Sadr, whose nativist rhetoric is ironically closer to what the United States and Europe would like to hear.

Conclusions

The United States and Europe not only share common values relevant to the situation in Iraq but also several common interests. These are necessary but not sufficient conditions for cooperation. What is needed in addition is to make Iraq a joint enterprise: a project to which both contribute and on which they share decision-making. This is difficult in Iraq because of the bitter history of disagreement over the initial intervention. The U.S. is not going to surrender overall control over the international intervention in Iraq, and it is likely to hold tight to even small pieces of the puzzle.

This obstacle is not insurmountable. Europe and the United States were at odds over Bosnia for four years before they came to agreement on the NATO bombing that led to the end of the war. Even at the Dayton peace talks, friction was far more evident than cooperation. But slowly, "Dayton implementation" became a joint enterprise, one in which Europe played a vital role through leadership of the civilian implementation bureaucracy, training and vetting of the Bosnian police, and provision of 85 percent of the peacekeeping troops (Berger 2001). Something similar happened in Kosovo: the NATO/Yugoslavia war—precipitated under U.S. leadership—ended with a U.N. protectorate, one in which Europe again played a key role in leading the U.N. effort, administering the economic sphere and monitoring the police.

Neither Afghanistan nor Iraq is yet a joint enterprise. In Afghanistan, division of the military forces into distinct U.S. and NATO structures, as well as the less than fully unified civilian effort, has made cooperation difficult. Reluctant Europeans feel they did not sign up

for the kind of war that is proving necessary in the southern border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan (AP 2008).

The situation in Iraq is in some respects more amenable. The coalition forces are clearly under U.S. command, and the United Nations—partly due to new-found U.S. enthusiasm—has recently received a beefed-up mandate (U.N. Security Council 2007). The U.S. is acutely aware that it needs help. New European military forces are neither expected nor needed. The main need for European contributions is on the political and diplomatic fronts, where the United Nations shares the lead. Much as European publics dislike the war in Iraq, contributions to the United Nations should be relatively uncontroversial.

Europeans hope the new U.S. president who takes office on January 20, 2009, will abandon what they regard as President Bush's unilateralism and turn toward a more consultative and multilateral approach to foreign and security policy. That may happen, but it will not be productive unless Europe responds positively to the initiative. This is particularly important in Afghanistan and Iraq, which will be major priorities for the new U.S. administration. A President McCain or Obama will be looking for increased European contributions. In Afghanistan, this is likely to mean more European troops. In Iraq, it is more likely to mean European civilians to help in the peacebuilding process as the United States draws down its forces, assuming that conditions continue to improve and become more or less permissive.

If instead the United States is forced to abandon its state-building project in Iraq in favor of containment, allowing Iraq to break down (if not up), Europe will need to help out. This would be mainly a diplomatic effort with a major humanitarian dimension—not too much to ask of a continent that prides itself on diplomacy and humanitarianism. Coordination on this contingency sooner rather than later would be wise—better to be prepared than to be surprised.

The time has come for the European Union and the United States to recognize that, under either scenario, Iraq will require over the next five years a degree of consultation and burden-sharing not seen in the last five years. It is well past time that Washington, Brussels and European capitals sat down to take stock and divvy up the enormous responsibilities ahead. Even before the U.S. elections in November, or quickly thereafter, Brussels and Washington should

launch a concerted effort to design a comprehensive package of European initiatives and American responses on Iraq, to be presented in January 2009 to the new U.S. president. Getting ahead of the curve, rather than remaining bogged down in past disagreements, would be a major step forward.

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