



IRAQ: THE COSTS TO OUR NATIONAL SECURITY

At its five-year anniversary, the Iraq War continues to make Americans less secure

The Iraq war has exacted a tremendous cost on America's national security. In the last five years, we have taken our eye off the ball in Afghanistan and Pakistan, allowing Al Qaeda to regenerate. Iran's influence across the Middle East has expanded dramatically. Our ability to work with allies has been badly damaged. Iraq has also put the State Department and our military under tremendous pressure and damaged our ability to meet other national security challenges.

In short, we have put all of our eggs in the Iraq basket while ignoring other key American interests. This cannot go on. It is time to begin drawing our forces out of Iraq and focusing on the other security threats facing this country.

AMERICA'S TERRORIST ENEMIES ARE GETTING STRONGER

Al Qaeda is getting stronger. The nation's 16 intelligence agencies agree that the war in Iraq has made Al Qaeda stronger by creating a recruiting tool and "cause celebre" for terrorists. [National Intelligence Assessment, [7/06](#).]

Al Qaeda has established a new and dangerous safe haven in northwest Pakistan. Edward Gistaro, the chief US intelligence analyst for international terrorism, told Congress that: "The primary concern is in Al Qaeda in South Asia organizing its own plots against the United States." The top leaders of the terrorist network, Gistaro added, are "able to exploit the comfort zone in the tribal areas" of Pakistan and Afghanistan and are "bringing people in to train for Western operations." [Boston Globe, [7/26/07](#)]

We're not winning the war on terror. 84% of foreign policy experts told an independent bipartisan survey that they do not think the United States is winning the war on terror. They overwhelmingly believe that Pakistan is the country most likely to transfer weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups, and from which an attack is most likely to originate. [Terrorism Index, [8/20/07](#)]

Afghanistan has been neglected and is now in danger of collapse. A bi-partisan panel headed by Ambassador Thomas Pickering and General James Jones found that "The United States and the international community have tried to win the struggle in Afghanistan with too few military forces and insufficient economic aid, and without a clear and consistent comprehensive strategy to fill the power vacuum outside Kabul and to counter the combined challenges of reconstituted Taliban and al-Qaeda forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan, a runaway opium economy, and the stark poverty faced by most Afghans." [Center for the Study of the Presidency, [1/30/08](#)]

IRAN HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST WINNER

Iran's rising power is going unchecked. Iran has “not only survived the U.S. onslaught but also managed to enhance Iran's influence in the region. Iran now lies at the center of the Middle East's major problems -- from the civil wars unfolding in Iraq and Lebanon to the security challenge of the Persian Gulf -- and it is hard to imagine any of them being resolved without Tehran's cooperation.” [Ray Takeyh, *Foreign Affairs*, [March/April 2007](#)]

Military officers think Iran or China were the big winners of the war. A recent survey of 3,400 military officers found that a majority thought that either China or Iran were the big winners of the war in Iraq. [Center for New American Security, [2/08](#)]

Iran has dramatically increased its influence in Iraq. “Many of the Shi'a political leaders, whom the United States has empowered, spent years in exile in Iran during Saddam Hussein's rule. They maintain close political ties with Tehran. To take just one example, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), which represents one of the two largest Shi'a political movements in Iraq, was originally formed in Iran. In addition, there is little doubt that Iran has contributed weapons and tactical guidance to some of the insurgent groups that have attacked American forces.” [Rand Beers, Testimony Before the Congressional Joint Economic Committee, [2/28/08](#).]

AMERICA'S ABILITY TO WORK WITH ALLIES HAS BEEN CONSTRAINED

Global respect for the United States is evaporating, even among our closest allies. Only 30 percent of Germans now have a positive view of the United States, down from 78 percent before Bush took office in January 2001. In Turkey, a Muslim democracy and NATO ally, only 9 percent now have a favorable view, down from 52 percent in late 2001. Most alarming is that just 51 percent of Britons – our partner in Iraq and our most reliable ally - now hold favorable views of the United States, down from 75 percent before the Iraq invasion. [IHT, [6/27/07](#). Pew Global Attitudes Project, [6/27/07](#). NYTimes, [2/07/08](#)]

Because of the Bush Administration's abrasive and dismissive treatment of our allies, the United States now faces dwindling support for its mission in Afghanistan. “Referring to American pressure on Germany, Peter Schmidt, a security analyst at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs in Berlin, said, “Partners in an alliance have to also understand the domestic debates in a partner country like Germany.” He added: “The Americans quite often show up in Europe and the President tells us, ‘Look I'll never get that through Congress.’ Something similar is happening here.” [NY Times, [2/07/08](#)]

Our image in the Muslim world is hurting our ability to fight Al Qaeda. In countries across the Muslim world from Pakistan to Morocco our image is so tainted that local politicians who work closely with the United States are viewed with suspicion or simply discredited, making it far more difficult for us to win the ideological struggle with Al Qaeda. [Rand Beers, Testimony Before the Congressional Joint Economic Committee, [2/28/08](#).]

AMERICA'S MILITARY IS OVERSTRETCHED AND MISUSED

Army Chief of Staff: Iraq is hurting the Army's ability to sustain itself and plan for future contingencies. Gen. George Casey stated that "The cumulative effects of the last six-plus years at war have left our Army out of balance, consumed by the current fight and unable to do the things we know we need to do to properly sustain our all-volunteer force and restore our flexibility for an uncertain future." [Reuters, [2/26/08](#)]

A survey of military officers found that 88% thought that war had stretched the military dangerously thin. 60% think that the U.S. military is weaker than it was five years ago. [Center for New American Security, [2/08](#)]

The U.S. military is overstretched, understaffed and under-equipped. "It will take years for the Army and Marine Corps to recover from what some officials privately have called a "death spiral," in which the ever more rapid pace of war-zone rotations has consumed 40 percent of their total gear, wearied troops and left no time to train to fight anything other than the insurgencies now at hand." "The combat readiness of the total Army (active units, the National Guard, and the Army Reserve) is in tatters... The simple fact is that the United States currently does not have enough troops who are ready and available for potential contingency missions in places like Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, or anywhere else..." [Lawrence Korb, Testimony Before House Armed Services Committee, [7/27/07](#). Washington Post, [3/19/07](#)]

Multiple deployments are taking a heavy toll on our troops. "More than a quarter of U.S. soldiers on their third or fourth tours in Iraq suffer mental health problems partly because troops are not getting enough time at home between deployments, the Army said... 'Soldiers are not resetting entirely before they get back into theater,' said Lt. Col. Paul Bliese, who led the Army's Mental Health Advisory Team survey for 2007." [Reuters, [3/06/08](#)]

AMERICA HAS FEWER DIPLOMATS TO DEAL WITH THE FALLOUT FROM THE IRAQ WAR

Iraq War is "doing long-term damage" to the State Department. "The war has placed deep strains on many of the 56,000 people who work around the world for the State Department. Some diplomats return home from the war with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Others say resources are being drained from posts elsewhere to cover the growing costs in Iraq. 'Without immediate increases of new recruits and money, Iraq could be doing long-term damage' to the State Department, says Robert Pearson, who was director general from 2003 to 2006 of the Foreign Service, the department's corps of professional diplomats." [USA Today, [5/2/07](#)]

The war has put tremendous personnel pressures on the State Department. In the fall of 2007, the State Department considered mandatory assignments to Iraq, unprecedented since the Vietnam War, causing a major uproar at State. Personnel shortfalls have meant that embassies worldwide are staffed at about 75 percent of authorized strength. [Washington Post, [11/15/07](#)]