

IRAQI LIBERATION?

TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY

Why this initiative?

In September 2005, Oxford Research Group hosted one of its regular Liddite Conversations, which bring together senior journalists with regional experts and analysts to deepen understanding of the root causes of global conflict and what needs to be done. The topic was the situation in Iraq. The meeting identified a chasm in public discourse, and the urgent need for a nuanced and informed debate. Participants agreed that it is time to move decisively beyond backward-looking discussions about who is to blame for current difficulties, and to place the new talk of Coalition troop withdrawal in the wider context of the needs of the people of Iraq and the broader Middle East. They also noted that an enormous amount of expertise was not informing current government policy.

How was the document produced?

In the weeks that followed, we drew together an expert high-level panel including senior British, Iraqi, Middle Eastern and American experts from the military, foreign service, the intelligence community and civil society. Paul Hilder synthesised a first draft out of conversations and correspondence with members of this panel. The draft was 'road-tested' at a day-long roundtable held in London on 24th November 2005. The report was revised in the light of panel member comments and published on 11th December 2005, in advance of the Iraqi elections of 15th December.

Although most of the specific ideas in the document originated from members of our expert panel, the responsibility for their expression and integration remains entirely ours. We did not seek to achieve full consensus between members of the panel, and differences of view remain. Panel members are not identified here by name, but we wish to publicly acknowledge the generosity and commitment with which they engaged in the process and freely offered their expertise and advice. All share with us a passionate and profound commitment to the emergence of a stable, secure and prosperous Iraq, governed by the Iraqi people for the Iraqi people, recognised and supported by all members of the international community.

How will the document be used?

The primary aim of this document is to stimulate a broad debate involving decision-makers, politicians, the media, and wider civil society. Although our primary focus is the UK, we hope that the ideas in this document may positively contribute to parallel debates taking place in the USA, in Iraq and elsewhere around the world. An electronic version of the document is freely downloadable from the Oxford Research Group website, and an Arabic translation is planned.

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Iraqi liberation?

Towards an integrated strategy

An Oxford Research Group discussion paper

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Foreword

The crisis in Iraq continues to burn. In spite of the best efforts of many, the violence does not subside. The UK must examine the extent to which Coalition forces, despite their mission to guarantee security, in fact contribute by their presence to the gathering instability. This report by Oxford Research Group probes that dilemma and sets out options for an alternative strategy.

On 15th December Iraqis will elect a new government, one that can serve for a full four-year term. Given support from honest brokers, Iraqis are in a position to take responsibility both for their own security and for a genuinely inclusive political process.

The United Nations mandate for Coalition forces is up for review in June 2006. Evidence is growing that the perception of occupation obstructs progress on security, governance, and even national reconciliation. The referendum on the constitution revealed stark divides between Iraq's communities, and tensions continue around key provisions on oil reserves and regional powers. But at their recent conference in Cairo, leaders from across the Iraqi spectrum signed a joint statement calling for a timetable for Coalition withdrawals, affirming a legitimate right to resistance, and rejecting terrorism.

Discussion of withdrawals is gathering pace in Washington. Yet the strategy for 'Victory in Iraq' just released by the US National Security Council fails to confront this key question. It is time for a full and frank debate in Britain about how best to respond to the Iraqi call, and to develop an exit strategy for the Coalition.

We are therefore glad to welcome this report, offering as it does fresh practical means for a transition. Any strategy will need to integrate considerations of military and human security, political legitimacy, economics and the contribution of other states.

Support for Iraq should not be cut off; rather, it needs to be reshaped. When the Coalition withdraws, the international community could offer Iraqis broader support to build a consensual national future in which security, prosperity and legitimacy can replace poverty and fear. But this will require firm commitments and responsible action on all sides. Let the debate begin.

HRH Prince El Hassan Bin Talal

Air Marshal The Lord Garden

General The Lord Ramsbotham

Summary

The debate on Iraq must not be confined to “stay the course” or “cut and run”. Both paths are perilous. If the Coalition remains for years, we risk strengthening the most radical elements of the insurgency and helping them reshape the region in their own interest. Yet withdrawal, if precipitate rather than carefully planned, could risk chaos or civil war.

Calls for a withdrawal timetable have come in recent weeks from the USA and the Iraqi national dialogue conference in Cairo. The Coalition’s current policy is to establish conditions which will make draw-down of forces possible. It is steadfastly refusing to set timetables, on the basis that they can be manipulated and taken advantage of by the enemy. But conditions, once set, are equally open to abuse – especially where a broadly-accepted popular story of illegitimate occupation helps the insurgency to thrive and unite.

The December 2005 elections and, as importantly, other parallel developments present fresh opportunities for an inclusive process in which Iraqi nationalists of all hues can share power, and achieve liberation from both the Saddamist past and the occupation. If they are to take these opportunities, we need to prepare a framework for major force withdrawals and a different regime during 2006. This will require clear commitments, a sense of momentum, and ownership on the part of leaders right across Iraqi society. The counter-insurgency needs to empower those advocating Iraqi liberation and to include some insurgency commanders, while marginalising the terrorist fringe.

The clearest way to separate Iraqi nationalists from the Zarqawi element will be to end the occupation providing them with common cause. Given its history, replacing the story of occupation with a narrative of Iraqi liberation will be near-impossible while the Coalition regime endures, although changes in strategy could improve matters. The broader world community needs to consider the implications of this, and explore replacing the Coalition mandate with a more international system of guarantees and support before the end of 2006.

The Coalition need find no dishonour in recognising that most Iraqis want an end to occupation, and that a fresh framework could support them better in future. Non-Coalition states need to consider both the credit they could win by helping to establish a more international regime, and the risks to global security if they do not. International support for Iraq should significantly change its profile, from a military-led approach to one in which strengthening civil society, legitimacy, human security and the economy are central. This will not result in short-term savings, but it could bring long-term dividends.

An integrated strategy is imperative to address the full range of challenges, civil and security, while giving all parties a stake in a new legitimate order. We propose seven elements for this strategy, each described in detail below. They are connected in a virtuous circle: progress on each front will facilitate progress on the others (see diagram on p.27).

*We need to
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Key recommendations

1 Build legitimacy in the Iraqi political process

- Answer calls for withdrawal with a framework which delivers rapid momentum toward change and the credible prospect of a post-Coalition order.
- Reach agreement among the communities on key constitutional provisions, in particular on the equitable distribution of future oil reserves.
- Establish a genuinely inclusive political process enabling a negotiated end to the nationalist insurgency.
- Empower locally legitimate leaderships to emerge and take control in the 'Sunni' areas – giving key insurgent elements a stake, making funds available, and experimenting with community-designed polls or referendums.

2 Support from honest brokers in the international community

- Consider appointing a heavyweight troika mission to lead on brokering with cultural affinities and connections to the communities, jointly endorsed by the UN, the Arab League and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.
- Develop a major UNAMI programme of Iraqi-led mediation and reconciliation right down to village level.

3 Iraqi assumption of security responsibilities and the counter-insurgency lead

- Cease major joint US-Iraqi operations in general, shifting to advisers, training, logistics, intelligence and counter-terrorism support.
- Move to a more Iraqi-led counter-insurgency strategy that can be implemented in a decentralised way through track II dialogue – 'include, incentivise, build and isolate' rather than 'clear, hold and build'.
- Establish a simple set of agreed minimum conditions of security, order and legitimacy with incentives and safeguards attached, which can be enforced by different local groups – in particular, majority-Sunni security forces for majority-Sunni areas.

4 Coalition force withdrawals

- Publish a transparent 'contract' between Iraq, the UN and the Coalition, circumscribing the latter's role, clarifying US and UK intentions, and codifying Iraqi oversight.
- Rapidly agree and implement a framework for force withdrawals to erode the narrative of occupation: milestone-driven, conditions-responsive, pursued in a decentralised fashion, and ultimately to be complete.

5 Economic development and diversification

- Retender key no-bid contracts competitively and encourage normal company operations and neighbours' engagement, while suspending decision on long-term production sharing agreements until the security premium falls.
- Crack down on the corruption around oil revenues and reach an interim agreement enabling substantial funds to be distributed to local authorities, giving Sunni province leaders a stake in raising production levels.
- Agree a moratorium on or forgiveness of all debt and reparations burdens and establish substantial compensation and reconciliation funds.
- Create employment for a temporary stabilisation period through a massive programme of Iraqi-led rebuilding and redevelopment.

6 Rebuilding human security

- Systematically train any international forces remaining in the country to show respect for Iraqi culture and sovereignty.
- Pay compensation now for civilian deaths, injuries and destroyed property, and take measures to prevent tens of thousands of people being left in limbo in prisons or displaced from their homes by security operations.
- Support and provide training for civil society organisations and establish Centres of Listening and Documentation with UNAMI assistance across Iraq.

7 International security guarantees and footprint

- Begin discussions between Iraq and UN members on a post-Coalition system of international security guarantees to be agreed by all Iraqi communities, potentially including a rapid response capability and a medium-sized 'human security' stabilisation presence.
- Establish a legitimate international mandate for any bases remaining in Iraq instead of US control, potentially including Iraqi civilian monitoring.
- Take steps toward more far-reaching regional dialogue that can include Iran.

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Introduction

- 1 The public debate on Iraq is sliding toward polarisation between advocates of “stay the course” or “cut and run”. There are in fact four options being discussed for the Coalition presence after the December elections:
 - withdraw immediately,
 - stay for the long run, until the Iraqi government requests us to leave,
 - establish conditions which would enable a Coalition withdrawal and seek to bring them about, or
 - agree a timetable for drawing down the majority of forces.
- 2 The Coalition is presently operating according to a conditions-based strategy, and has rejected timetables because they might give the appearance of a victory for the terrorists. But the endlessly deferred hope of stabilising the security situation in the Sunni provinces has proved an enduring block to progress on delivering more stable conditions. American troops in particular have proved a useful enemy whose presence excites grievances, disrupts the bedding-down of locally legitimate order in the Sunni Triangle, and helps contribute to a rich environment for training in urban combat and terrorist logistics, as well as driving recruitment supply lines across the wider region.
- 3 A minority in the insurgency whose goal is transnational revolution rather than the Sunni national interest has a strong stake in the Coalition remaining. It is essential to recognise this fact, and the way fundamental divisions over legitimacy in the Coalition’s Iraq have undermined progress and cohesion. A proper understanding of these obstacles is notably absent from the strategy for ‘Victory in Iraq’ just published by the US National Security Council. What is needed instead is a genuinely integrated strategy which recognises both the priority of a broad-based, inclusive and legitimate Iraqi political process, and the positive contribution withdrawals can make to that.
- 4 The problem from the start with the Coalition approach was the overwhelming emphasis it placed on achieving military victory: first over Saddam, then over the insurgency. This strategy ignored the reality that success can only occur with the support of the majority of people from all communities, and that military action can play only a supporting role in winning such support. The need for Iraqi politics and confidence to be renewed from within was sorely neglected, as were integral considerations of economy, livelihood, neighbours and broader regional stability. Nor does the broader international community escape a critique of irresponsibility.
- 5 A strategy involving all the key actors and addressing the full range of challenges is required. We are trapped in a vicious circle where legitimate governance and economic prospects are dependent on stabilising the security situation, and vice versa. A truly integrated civil and security programme should operate on the principle of concurrent lines of operation, preventing the strategy from being held hostage in any one area, but aiming to give all the parties a stake in the process and to shift the overall story on the key questions of legitimacy, honour and order.
- 6 Drawdown of forces looks politically inevitable in the next couple of years, and may come sooner than is thought. If mishandled, it could contribute to a situation of escalating chaos or even civil war in Iraq. Such a situation would threaten global stability and put every country in danger. Accordingly, every country needs to take on its share of the task. International support for Iraq may not fall in terms of overall cost. It should perhaps even increase. But its character has decisively to change.

Success can only occur with the support of a majority from all communities, and military action can play only a supporting role

The state of iraq today

- 7 In a private Ministry of Defence (MoD) poll of August 2005, 82% of Iraqis said they were “strongly opposed” to the presence of Coalition troops, 72% did not have confidence in them, 67% felt less secure because of their presence, and less than 1% believed they were responsible for any improvement in security. Most worryingly, 45% believed attacks on British and American troops are justified. These figures would be flattered by the inclusion of the Kurdish areas, where the Coalition enjoys considerable support.
- 8 This data demonstrates that what provisional legitimacy the Coalition regime may have enjoyed on the ground is at best expiring. A further difficulty is that, as the referendum showed, the Sunni community is overwhelmingly opposed to key tenets of the constitution drafted largely by Shia and Kurdish leaders. Many also believe that the vote was stolen by ballot-stuffing in Nineveh province, and are expressing scepticism about the political process. Their show of will has won a Constitutional Review Commission to be held in 2006, but the legislature will have the final say. There is therefore at present no nationally accepted future, and the elections scheduled for December 15th look unlikely immediately to deliver one.
- 9 The new electoral system means a more pluralistic range of forces can be represented in the Iraqi legislature, but the United Iraqi Alliance’s ‘Shia list’ is still expected to win the largest number of seats. Iyad Allawi’s national list may do well, and Sadrists and Fadhile look likely to participate fully in December, as will some elite and local parties in the Sunni-majority areas. Yet key Sunni nationalist constituencies have still not made their move. They remain close to the insurgency, and unwilling to appear as collaborators under a regime of occupation. The Shia and Kurds are building a system of regional governance and security forces in which the Sunnis thus far have little stake.
- 10 After several false starts, Iraqi security capabilities appear at last to be gaining in strength and independence. But most of these forces cannot on balance be characterised as truly national or multiethnic (and those few that can often identify more closely with the US military than with their own society). The special police battalions are largely Shia-dominated. The militias in whose questionable hands much of the security order in Kurdish and Shia-majority areas rests have substantially penetrated official Iraqi forces, as have the insurgents. Police and military uniforms are increasingly used in sectarian killings. The discovery of the prison and torture centre in the Baghdad neighbourhood of Jadriyah may be the tip of the iceberg.
- 11 The security situation in general is chaotic and intelligence is insufficient. The Shia and Kurdish heartlands now appear largely quiet. Attacks and confrontations are concentrated in the Sunni triangle and multi-ethnic cities like Mosul and Baghdad. The insurgency is strongest in the western provinces, where a ‘liberated zone’ was recently declared. US-Iraqi counterinsurgency operations of increasing sophistication, learning a few lessons from Fallujah, have dismantled terrorist platforms in al-Anbar province. This has temporarily retarded insurgent operational capabilities, if not recruitment, in the run-up to elections; but civilian casualties continue to be high and tens of thousands are being displaced from their homes.
- 12 The ‘Zarqawite’ revolutionary elements of the insurgency draw on an eclectic range of origins and influences, and can no longer be considered simply Salafist. They are drawing on the ideas of Ho Chi Minh and Che Guevara to craft a modern project of scorched-earth revolution aimed at defeating the West and shaping a new world order. The tactical alliance between the majority of nationalist and Islamist insurgents and this minority of more radical, ‘revolutionary’ forces (as yet no more than 10% of the insurgency) depends crucially on the popular perception that Iraq remains occupied by the Coalition. The National Security Council’s

argument in 'Victory in Iraq' that "the insurgency can only win if we surrender" is therefore misleadingly narrow, because it mistakes the enemy's goal. Rather than proximate military victory on the terrain of Iraq, the revolutionaries aim to win hearts and minds on the wider stage, and to use the continuing conflict to spread their struggle to the region and the world in its terms. Tensions are already emerging between Sunni nationalists and the Zarqawi alignment over the possibility of a political path. However, Coalition attempts to clear and control Sunni areas open up fertile ground for the revolutionary idea to be refined and gather strength and recruits. There is therefore a strong argument for complete withdrawal to end the occupation, break that alliance and free the nationalists to crush the revolutionaries.

- 13** Yet the situation is complicated by the simmering possibility of Sunni-Shia conflict. Key elements in Iraqi's Shia and Sunni leaderships are leaning in the direction of internecine confrontation, and initial skirmishes have already begun under cover of the occupation. Many Sunnis believe that the Shia leadership is using US troops under the guise of counter-insurgency as an ally and proxy in this conflict. Sunni jihadists are already coming from far and wide to join the fight against a Shia government. Matters threaten to degenerate further toward civil war and provide grounds for a renewal of the alliance between nationalists and revolutionaries. The Kurds could take the opportunity of any collapse to move further toward independence. The disputed oil town of Kirkuk, long-quiet, is seeing growing tension.
- 14** While some have seized upon civil strife as a fresh rationale for the Coalition to remain, its presence may thus far have obstructed inclusion and acted as an umbrella under which the shadow civil war could gather pace. The appetite of ordinary citizens for peaceful co-existence now appears strong. But without an effective process of national dialogue, power-sharing and reconciliation and a framework of shared economic interests, the communal leaderships appear far from compromise.
- 15** The MoD survey reported that 71% of Iraqis still rarely get safe clean water, 47% never have enough electricity, 70% say their sewerage system rarely works and 40% of southern Iraqis are now unemployed. It further suggests that those Iraqis who form the most fertile ground for the insurgency are young men who have recently been unsuccessful in seeking work. Killing Americans has become a good job paid in dollars by the day. Electricity supplies are bumping along around pre-war levels and demand has surged, meaning that most Iraqis experience a real terms reduction in availability. The insurgency continues to be effective in hampering oil production, which according to recent reports is at a ten-year low. But significant amounts of oil are still being produced and world prices are high. Too much of the proceeds are not reaching the Iraqi people, in part because funds remain stuck with the central administration, in part because contracts were awarded without competition on unfavourable terms, but perhaps mainly because large amounts appear to be being skimmed off by incumbent Iraqi officials seeking to provide for their uncertain future (some members of Iraq's Integrity Committee estimate losses at up to 70% of oil revenues). Corruption, violence and organised crime are rife across the board, although the police are starting to tackle it in some places.
- 16** There are perhaps a million Iraqis who have taken refuge in Jordan and Syria. Jordan is helping to train troops but, with the Amman bombings, has fallen victim to the first spilling of the revolutionary insurgency across the border. Saudi Arabia and others have thus far contributed little to helping to stabilise Iraq. The state of relations between the Coalition and both Iran and Syria continues to be tense. The interests of both these states are affected closely by what happens in Iraq, and they are aware that some still see Iraq as a staging post for pressure,

even strikes on them. Powerful factions in each are presently facilitating the insurgency (albeit in a distributed way which involves supporting a portfolio of groups extending right into the government).

17 The situation is therefore a complex one which has in several regards become more difficult since 2003. This paper offers some first ideas toward an integrated strategy for stabilising Iraq during 2006 and 2007. We begin in the next chapter by assessing the options which exist for the security regime and the extent to which the story of occupation could change. We then go on to sketch ideas for an integrated strategy, which are divided into seven elements:

- Building legitimacy in the Iraqi political process
- Support from honest brokers in the international community
- Iraqi assumption of security responsibility and the counter-insurgency lead
- Coalition force withdrawals
- Economic development and diversification
- Rebuilding human security in Iraq
- International security guarantees and footprint

Rather than military victory in Iraq, the revolutionaries aim to win hearts and minds on the wider stage

The security regime: ending the occupation

- 18** The conditions of possibility for any strategy on Iraq are set by the prevailing security regime, which determines the public narrative about who holds power and whose violence is legitimate. Regardless of the legal niceties, most Iraqis still believe that Iraq is occupied by the Coalition. They believe furthermore that the occupation rests on illegitimate foundations and that some Coalition goals are illegitimate. This makes the present Coalition security regime unsustainable beyond the December elections.
- 19** The table overleaf sets out three options for how the security regime in Iraq could change. The first is a more sensitive version of the Coalition order, a more or less straight-line development of present policy trajectories. Coalition troops would be dispersed into civil-military teams and their overall numbers reduced, with Iraqis taking on yet more responsibility. The counter-insurgency strategy would focus on co-opting nationalists and establishing locally legitimate orders. The media story would be one of withdrawals and gradual handover in response to requests from a new and more assertive Iraqi government and religious leaders. Fears about long-term hegemony over the country might be assuaged. A timetable might or might not be revealed in public. Any 'modified Coalition' regime would however still find it near-impossible to beat the deeply-ingrained story of US-UK occupation. The insurgency could intensify to take advantage as troops were withdrawn, making the regime unstable and requiring another change of strategy.
- 20** The second option would require a break in the order, major or total US withdrawal to mark a clear end to occupation, and the Coalition handing over in choreographed transition to a system of international guarantees and support with the sign-up of all Iraqi and regional players. This would require Europeans, the UN, neighbours and the wider global community finally to step up. The political will and operational planning necessary for such a system are not yet in place, so this option is not yet practicable. But if it were scoped out in more detail and proved possible, it could be the only way for the occupation to be ended while still enabling large-scale international support to be channelled into stabilisation and reconstruction.
- 21** The third alternative is rapid and total withdrawal and handover to Iraqis, while coordinating with neighbours and making it clear that it is now down to them to protect their interests in regional stability. It is difficult to imagine this option being chosen at present given US policy, but a variety of factors make it not impossible that a political tipping point could be reached. Creating stability and preventing civil war would then rest entirely on the shoulders of Iraq's leaders and neighbours.
- 22** These options could be considered not in parallel, but in sequence. A modified Coalition regime may be the best achievable in the next few months. France and Russia have required the Coalition's mandate to be reviewed in June 2006. Once the shape of the new Iraqi leadership becomes clear in the December elections, dialogue could begin not only about Coalition withdrawals, but also about the possibility of a rapid end of occupation and transition to a system of international security guarantees, financial support and stabilisation presence to support Iraqi nation-building. Presences could then be finally withdrawn as Iraq achieves a basic level of stability and cohesion. The more detailed proposals in the following sections could generally be pursued under any of these regimes, although in some cases we have included options, and overall success is likely to depend on the overall picture.

Future options for the security regime and mandate in Iraq	Present regime of Coalition plus	Future regime still based on Coalition	Outlines of post-Coalition	Full Iraqi security regime
Description of regime and mandate	Nominally full Iraqi sovereignty. Coalition with temporary UN mandate, in the lead on security and providing majority of forces (over 170,000 troops). Iraqi capabilities gradually increasing, primarily in Shia and Kurdish units and militias. Popular perception that Iraq continues to be occupied.	Nominally full Iraqi sovereignty. Coalition with temporary UN mandate (to be reviewed in June & Dec. 2006). Security in Shia and Kurdish regions enforced primarily by de facto regional forces. Much of coalition presence restructured on PRT model: aim to reduce forces by circa half. Coalition-led counter-insurgency strategy in Sunni areas. Popular perceptions of occupation still unlikely to be overcome.	Coalition mandate ended. Public transition to new Iraqi-international regime. Full Iraqi sovereignty. Treaty of security guarantees with UN mandate, endorsed by neighbours and Iraqi communities. International stabilisation presence subject to Iraqi law, drawing on European and southern contributors. US bilateral support for counter-terrorism, and continuing presence e.g. in Gulf. Iraqi security substantially decentralised, but attempts to rebuild multiethnic national army. Popular perceptions of occupation could be overcome.	Full Iraqi sovereignty. Possibly, treaties with and support from neighbours. Full coalition withdrawal and no international security presence. Possible US bilateral support. Iraqi security essentially decentralised. Occupation unquestionably ended.
Guarantees against civil war and destabilisation	Coalition forces and bases.	Coalition forces, strengthening Iraqi national army, national dialogue (but shadow war involving militias and terrorists could escalate). Enduring US bases near oilfields.	Treaty including trigger for international action and provision for rapid response force, supplemented by substantial US presence in Gulf states, Kurdish areas or offshore. International regime for bases. National dialogue and strengthening of Iraqi national army.	Process of national dialogue and politics, much power decentralised to cities/ provinces/ regions, Iraqi national army (albeit likely divided along communal lines), pressure and incentives from neighbours and international community.
Stabilisation and reconstruction operations	Little emphasis: coalition military and contractors.	Greater emphasis: coalition civil-military provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs), working with Iraqis and NGOs.	Main focus: international stabilisation presence (40,000 troops plus 40,000 civilians?) structured into provincial teams designed on human security principles, working in full partnership with Iraqis and NGOs.	Some international civilian and NGO support, with Iraqis in lead and providing security.
Counter-insurgency	Little or no differentiation between counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism. Both led by Coalition forces with increasing Iraqi support and involvement in the Sunni provinces. Local security control in many Shia and Kurdish areas.	Local leaders and Iraqi government working with support from Coalition PRTs to create safe areas under legitimate leadership with local security forces and functioning economy. Seeking to co-opt nationalist elements of insurgency into Sunni political process, and to separate the terrorists from their base.	Local Iraqis supported by international stabilisation presence establish legitimate security order area by area. Occasional bilateral US support for Iraqi government if needed to proscribe safe havens for terrorism. Possibility of international forces becoming new target for terrorists and/or insurgents.	Dialogue and incorporation into political process. Possibility of national/Shia counter-insurgency raids or campaigns in Sunni areas and destabilisation if political strategy not sufficient or advocates of civil strife win out.
Counter-terrorism		Coalition and Iraqi special forces and intelligence services.	Iraqi, neighbouring and international special forces and intelligence services.	Iraqi and neighbouring special forces and intelligence services.
Policing, anti-corruption and organised crime investigation	Iraqi police and militias.	Iraqi police and militias, with increasing support from PRTs.	Iraqi police and serious crime units, with international training and support.	Iraqi police/militias, mostly regional or local.
Green Zone	Iraqi government and US embassy co-located in hardened Green Zone	US embassy relocated outside Green Zone to alternative hardened site, and majority of staff posted to provincial operations.	US embassy relocated outside Green Zone, which is gradually reduced in size and opened up for Iraqis; international presence distributed in Baghdad and the provinces.	Green Zone used exclusively for Iraqi government, dismantled, or overthrown by revolution.

Seven elements for Iraqi liberation

1. Building legitimacy in the political process

The real challenge is to draw in core nationalist elements of the insurgency

Building a legitimate and inclusive national process is the most fundamental challenge Iraq faces. Victory over the insurgency is not even only a secondary goal; it is a fundamentally misconceived one. The aim should rather be to split the insurgency and bring the bulk of it into inclusive consociational politics, enabling a negotiated end to the insurgency.¹ The first opportunity for this element of the strategy is the *December 2005 election*, but a continuing lack of mainstream Sunni involvement still threatens to undermine its success. Tribal and non-confessional leadership has its role to play. Yet the Muslim Scholars' Council and associated bodies refuse participation until a timetable for withdrawal is set. If the nationalist majority of the insurgency is to be brought into politics it may also be necessary to lift the *taboo on post-Ba'athist alignments*, in part by changing the blanket de-Baathification strategy to a transitional justice process focused on specific criminal acts. After *signals on withdrawal and the credible prospect of a post-Coalition order* are given, channels could be opened with *key insurgency commanders* to offer them a stake in the new security order.

- 24 Around the time of the elections, civic and religious leaders including Ayatollah Sistani could lead *coordinated demands for a programme of Coalition withdrawals*, which could then be taken up by the new government. If withdrawals are to take place, it is best that they come in response to requests from the Iraqi government. After the elections, a further step with huge symbolic significance could be to *relocate the US embassy outside the Green Zone* to an alternative hardened site. It is presently co-located and conflated with the Iraqi government, undermining the legitimacy of 'Green Zone politicians' at the same time as it guarantees their security. Clearly, careful assessment of the costs, benefits and implications of such a step would be necessary. International personnel are currently extremely vulnerable outside the Green Zone. But their vulnerability is in ratio to Iraqi perceptions of occupation. A transformation of the Green Zone from fortified symbol of occupation to epicentre of Iraqi national revival would likely be worth the effort.
- 25 The constitution's provision for *regional autonomy and decentralised security forces* may threaten a slide from federalism toward fracture. A strong national role with respect to security and oil revenues will be essential if Iraq is to hold together. Yet the central state has not had a monopoly of force since Saddam Hussein's day. It may be possible for the de facto situation to be turned to advantage, and for decentralised force to work more in the national interest of Iraq. It seems probable that the national Sunni leadership elected in December will lack full popular legitimacy, and there is little appetite yet for a Sunni rump region. But if power were available to them, *more rooted local leaderships could emerge and take control* in the urban population centres and rural tribal reaches of Anbar, Nineveh, Salahaddin and Mosul. It is therefore critical that local administrations move beyond their CPA-established status to achieve *full recognition and powers as a legitimate tier of government*, and that significant funds are made available to them.
- 26 Such a process could offer the Sunni community the opportunity to take responsibility for their own security forces and governance, perhaps with *support from the Arab world* in particular, rather than being policed by Shi'ite militias. The tribal Desert Protection Force in Anbar province and the emergence of more grassroots slates (for instance in Ramadi) are two signals that such an approach may be possible. But the real challenge is to draw in core nationalist elements of the insurgency, rather than pursuing a kind of 'Village Leagues' co-option programme. If this local ownership is to emerge, the Coalition and Iraq's national government may first need to draw back from some of the areas concerned, with all the risks that entails.

1. Given today's divides, if Iraq is to achieve a minimum level of stability and national unity, it will need a more consociational basis. Consociationalism is the political practice of reconciling major communal divides by institutionalising consultations between leaders of each social group. Examples include Lebanon (where it was the basis of the anti-colonial strategy), Switzerland, Belgium, India and Northern Ireland. The challenge in Iraq is to use consociationalism without reinforcing divisions which have in part artificially arisen between Sunni, Shia and Kurd, and while holding open the possibility of national cross-community politics.

- 27 To be effective, a legitimacy strategy needs to listen to people on the ground from the different communities, to establish what is fuelling the conflict and what would need to happen for the violence to stop, and then to bring these energies into the political process. While one approach might be track II dialogue with key leaders, a more public tactic might be to encourage independently audited *consensus-designed polls or referendums on key issues* for Mosul, Ramadi and other areas, including what local security and political regime would be legitimate. Questions would be designed by a consensus group involving the full range of local stakeholders, from the insurgency and civil society organisations to government supporters, and then put to the population with the understanding that they would lead to action. Such processes seldom yield the wheel to the most extreme groups, and can help bring fractured societies together.
- 28 The high referendum turnout in the Sunni areas should not conceal their overwhelming vote against the constitution, which fell only tens of thousands short of a blocking minority. This expression of their collective will needs to be recognised and lead to change. If it is ignored the outcome will be further retreat from national dialogue into sectarian conflict, and the broader strategy of political legitimacy will fail. Iraq's national leadership should reflect on how to *change constitutional provisions* which together represent an existential threat to Sunni interests and honour. For instance, *future as well as current oil reserves must be shared fairly*; placing them at the disposal of regional governments is to invite schism. The prospect of a single Shia super-region of nine provinces could be ruled out by capping the size of regions; otherwise, the Shias will have to find another way of guaranteeing Sunni interests. Iraqis need help to work through these issues. The decisions must finally be theirs to make, but this is one area where *a US role in applying pressure to Shia and Kurdish leaders* behind the scenes may continue to be important.

2. Support from honest brokers in the international community

- 29 At present the Coalition is getting in the way of rather than supporting honest dialogue among Iraqi factions. As a party to the present complex asymmetrical conflict, it interposes between the other parties as enemy, friend, judge, jury, executioner and victim all at once. To the extent that the US ambassador to Iraq could ever play a constructive mediating role, that role is fast disappearing. However, internal dialogue is at the same time increasingly vital.
- 30 Iraqi leaders need *more neutral facilitators and mediators*. There are a variety of candidates. The Arab League is working toward a national dialogue process and a conference of reconciliation. Individual Arab states – Egypt and Saudi Arabia in particular – could make this process more of a reality by reinforcing their presences, *working day-to-day* with Iraqi officials and factions including the insurgency, and bringing the lessons of the *Taif agreement* over Lebanon to the next dialogue conference scheduled for February 2006. The UN remains chary of deeper involvement in Iraq, but UNAMI's renewed mandate stressed a role in assisting Iraqi national dialogue, and proposals for it to become more involved in *mediation and reconciliation right down to village level* should be pursued in parallel with a longer-term programme of international support for institution-building and transitional justice. Civil society and interfaith organisations also have a part to play. Consultations in Mecca should be considered.
- 31 Even the international organisations mentioned above are to some extent tarnished – the League by its apathy and perceived support for Saddam, the UN by the sanctions regime. Organisations with less of a history, such as the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, might be able to assist. The UN could consider whether a *heavyweight special representative or troika* with cultural affinities and connections to the different communities, jointly endorsed by the League and the OIC, could be best equipped to take the lead on brokering.

3. Iraqi assumption of security responsibilities and the counter-insurgency lead

- 32** As suggested above, Iraqi force development is starting to make progress. Perhaps twenty-four to thirty battalions are now capable of operating with substantial if not complete independence. Iraqi forces have taken over primary security responsibility for Najaf, Karbala, Baghdad and other population centres, indeed for most of the Shia and Kurdish areas. As indicated above, the difficulties are that these forces do not include enough Sunnis to bring order to Sunni areas, and that Kurdish and Shia militias are playing a key role in the overall security system.
- 33** The problem is not a lack of men with arms who know how to use them, but the fragmentation of these capabilities among a range of local and factional actors. It has been left too late to rely solely on a strong central army. Another problem is the moral hazard involved in the US lead and frontline involvement in counter-insurgency operations. Put simply, this creates perverse incentives for Shia leaders to retain the US presence, provide it with partial intelligence and seek to take advantage of its capabilities in a shadow civil war.
- 34** Counter-insurgency is about winning on the territory of the mind. Security capabilities are essential but secondary to finding a winning idea. At present, the idea that is winning the territory of the mind and uniting 'Zarqawi' with Sunni nationalists and the Iraqi population is "end the occupation". Some hope can be discerned in the fact that this may also be a goal of the US. The idea which Iraqi nationalists are carrying forward now, and which the Coalition has an interest in entering into dialogue with and encouraging, is one of *Iraqi liberation* – liberation both from the dishonour, savagery and bondage of Saddam's rule, and from that of the occupation. This principle could unite Iraqis and marginalise the revolutionaries. It will make it considerably easier to identify and remove irredentist leaders. But it will demand a Coalition commitment to end the occupation swiftly.
- 35** Given its problems with inclusion, the Iraqi government may not be able to conduct a successful centrally-planned counter-insurgency in the Sunni areas. Instead, a national framework is required that can be implemented in a more decentralised way through track II dialogue, helping to *empower Iraqi nationalists* in the Sunni, Shia and Kurdish leaderships. The strategy would then shift from 'clear, hold and build' to 'include, incentivise, build and isolate' prioritising dialogue, inclusion, reintegration, economic incentives and finally counter-terrorism. Political and civil affairs work, policing and human intelligence are the key tools for effective counter-insurgency.
- 36** The animus in Baghdad and Washington against establishing majority Sunni police forces for majority Sunni areas should be reversed. *Locally legitimate security orders* need to be established, ones in which *nationalist insurgency commanders can take a stake*. This might involve establishing a simple set of *agreed minimum conditions*, of security, order and legitimacy, including the proscription of terrorists, which can then be enforced by a variety of different groups with incentives and safeguards attached. *International brokering and support* could be valuable in this process. *Decentralised finances* could be made available to democratically supported and legitimate local leaderships, almost regardless of their origins. An environment needs to be created in the next two years for a programme of disarmament, demilitarisation and in particular reintegration to finally be effective with respect to militias. European and other states should provide significant support and training to *help professionalise and restructure police forces*.
- 37** *Major joint US-Iraqi operations should in general cease*, even if small adviser presences remain attached to Iraqi units and logistical support is provided. The Iraqi national army also needs to be supported better with intelligence and materiel such as helicopters and communications platforms, in particular for multiethnic battalions. The Iraqi government and local leaderships may continue to require *training, logistics, intelligence and counter-terrorism support*, which should however move to a *bilateral rather than Coalition basis*.

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4. Coalition force withdrawals

The overall programme of Coalition withdrawals must be substantive and sustain momentum if it is to provide credible foundations for a new story

A strong possibility exists that the immediate removal of all Coalition forces from Iraq could unleash a more desperate state of chaos. Long-term guarantees of some kind might be necessary to prevent civil war. However, even those Coalition forces presently confined to bases and travelling by road or helicopter act effectively as a lightning rod. It will be impossible to build lasting security without legitimacy, but legitimacy among nationalist constituencies will depend on the certainty of withdrawals (and on the reasonable expectation of a total end to the Coalition presence).

This context must be understood before we consider the strategy of *civil-military provincial reconstruction teams* presently being developed for Coalition counter-insurgency, informed partly by experience in Afghanistan. Such teams may be able to contribute constructively to an international stabilisation strategy, but if they involve US soldiers under the Coalition mandate, they will be more vulnerable to terrorist or insurgent attack than under the present posture.

We should consider designing and sticking to a *framework for significant force withdrawals to erode the narrative of occupation*. Such a framework would be driven by specific targets or milestones, while designed to respond to conditions and to be implemented in a substantially decentralised way. It could lead toward complete withdrawal of forces, or require all communities in Iraq to approve those remaining. Meanwhile, a *transparent 'contract'* should be published by Iraq, the UN and the Coalition, circumscribing the role of the latter, clarifying US and UK intentions, and codifying Iraqi oversight. Withdrawals should be staged to *respond to requests* from legitimate Iraqi leaders, and *coordinated through backchannel talks*. Coalition forces should leave behind the goal of military victory over the insurgents and replace it with the political goal of a legitimate and inclusive process of Iraqi national politics. The yardstick for restoring the normal monopoly of force to Iraqi authorities should not be whether terrorism will stop (it will not for the foreseeable future), but whether the odds are strongly in favour of the country holding itself together, while being able steadily to de-legitimise the irredentist revolutionaries and close down their room for manoeuvre. This could be presented by the Coalition as success.

- 41 Designed appropriately as part of the wider political strategy, force withdrawals could contribute to stabilisation as much as or more than force presence. Setting a timetable for withdrawal tends to give hostages to fortune and to the enemy, who can then do their best to disrupt the situation and appear to have 'chased them out'. Accordingly consideration of varying conditions should be included in the framework, and any targets or milestones might not be made public. But to remain is also to give hostages. If the political strategy is conducted appropriately, Sunni nationalists could start to stabilise their areas themselves.
- 42 A variety of kinds of 'withdrawal' could be included in such a framework. One could still go much further to *remove visible presences*, or *withdraw troops to base*. But invisible occupation is in some ways easier to mobilise against, because it brings no obvious benefit and invites conspiracy theories. Withdrawal to base is also an unstable condition, as we have seen recently in Iraq and before during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. It leads to pressure to make punishment raids, which are conducted on the basis of much poorer intelligence thanks to the withdrawal. It also tends to increase tension with the host government.
- 43 We could take more effective steps by *considerably reducing overall troop numbers*; by *changing the role or status of any forces remaining*; and by *redeploying US troops* to the Kurdish zone or Gulf states if consented to, or even shipboard, where they could play more of a guarantor role (a similar measure was useful in the Balkans). In some cases withdrawals could be tied to a small symbolic victory.

- 44 The British forces in the south are still training forces, assisting in reconstruction and providing security guarantees. Yet all these things could be done differently as part of an integrated strategy. The British could *cease any presence in population centres and on the roads and disengage from the shadow skirmishing with Iran*. (The deep state in Iran will face a much greater challenge in garnering influence in southern Iraq if we get out of the way and leave the tussle to the Arab Shia.) By the middle of 2006, the British could have *withdrawn the majority of their forces* from the south, leaving behind only trainers or a symbolic force as part of a new system of security guarantees.
- 45 The overall programme of Coalition withdrawals must be substantive and *sustain its momentum* if it is to provide credible foundations for a new story in Iraq. Clear milestones should be set. For instance a *private goal of half or more of US forces being withdrawn from theatre by mid-2006* could be set. These milestones should be considered to *guide operational demands*, reconsidered on the basis of a *new lean-back posture*. US troops remaining in theatre as guarantors at that point could be redeployed as a *nearby ready reserve*. The only other US forces remaining in Sunni areas at this point could be trainers and special forces supporting Iraqis against al-Qaida. By 2007 at the latest, the transition to a post-Coalition framework could be largely complete.
- 46 To allay Iraqi fears, the US and Iraqi governments should make it clear that the four bases under construction near major oilfields are not intended to be staffed by permanent US military presences. They should either be handed over to Iraq's national government or used as part of an international system of security guarantees. This will require plans for the enduring US footprint in the Middle East to be reconfigured. That presence may even require a more multilateral basis of consent in future through regional dialogue forums, as with NATO in Europe during the Cold War.

5. Economic development and diversification

- 47 There is a symbiotic relationship between the failure to bring security and the failure to improve basic services and economic opportunities, each feeding the other. Any viable strategy for economic reconstruction in Iraq will require at least six planks:
 - a eliminating corruption on oil revenues
 - b the reopening of key CPA contracts for tender
 - c greater engagement by neighbours – in particular on the oil industry
 - d full and final forgiveness of debt and reparation burdens
 - e sustained effort to improve basic services; and
 - f a massive multinational programme of investment, involving the World Bank and neighbours and including substantial diversification programmes.
- 48 *Security improvements* are clearly a condition of possibility for significant economic revival, which the level of risk and uncertainty is presently obstructing. Conditions are said to be such as to make normal company operations impossible, justifying massive security premiums. However, as contractors' obligations are transferred to the Iraqi government, the latter is rightly questioning these premiums. At minimum, in parts of Iraq where greater stability is possible (including some Kurdish and Shia areas), *normal company operations should be encouraged*, and the new Iraqi government could *retender key CPA or IGC-let contracts on a competitive basis*, exerting pressure on non-performance clauses or naming and shaming in other cases.

The policy of directing contracts to friends (some being paid in full despite non-delivery of services) was economically and politically very bad practice, and should be reversed.

- 49 The Iraqi government and those supporting it need as a matter of urgency to crack down on corruption around oil revenues. The oil production and pipeline system is still heavily compromised by security challenges and investment has not taken place, but should *a fair share of funds begin flowing to Sunni local authorities* and security regimes, the level of threat could fall. *Special aid* could be offered by Arab states to Sunni-majority provinces which become more stable. Internal agreements on the 'division of spoils' have been effective recently in Sudan and elsewhere. Fuel price subsidies (presently around a third of the national budget) could perhaps be transferred into *direct transfers or petrol vouchers*, and the change presented as sharing Iraq's oil wealth with its people.
- 50 As part of a broader Arab programme of engagement, Saudi Arabia and other countries in the Gulf could offer *to invest finance and expertise in the revival of the Iraqi oil industry*. Iraq would however be well-advised to avoid signing unfavourable production-sharing agreements on oilfield development at this point in time. Such agreements should be submitted to public scrutiny alongside other options on an economic basis, and only be considered at a time when they will not have enormous security premiums built into them for the long term. It could be worth building on recent pipeline and energy projects to develop *a major economic development partnership with Iran* in oil and other sectors, as a way to give that country a clear stake in Iraqi stability, although without compromising economic interests. The Gulf Cooperation Council and others should rapidly move toward *a free trade zone* with Iraq.
- 51 Broad *regional investment and aid programmes* could be brought forward quietly, targeted more on *diversification* of the economic base, with support from the World Bank and the wider international community. Finally, it should be made clear that an Iraqi national unity government will be *free of debt and reparation burdens* – Iraq is still paying \$1.3 billion annually in reparations. While the Paris Club forgiveness is proceeding apace, the Gulf Arab countries should commit to *forgive the 1980s debt/grants*.
- 52 As Coalition forces make huge savings through troop reductions, a significant part should be provided in aid as *direct budgetary support for Iraqi national & local government*, and to create *compensation and reconciliation funds*, all of which should involve Iraqis centrally in funding decisions. The International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq has received \$1.25bn of over \$8bn pledged at Madrid in October 2003. Remaining donors should *clarify their willingness to make good their pledges*, but could condition this on the end of the Coalition regime.
- 53 The new Iraqi government and its international supporters could make *employment creation* a primary focus to tackle poverty, crime and insurgency at its roots for a temporary stabilisation period. Rather than being given work of little value, labour could be targeted to a massive programme of Iraqi-led rebuilding and development, involving small businesses and non-profit vehicles as well as people on the government payroll. If the situation stabilises over the next two years, *institutional reforms to encourage the private sector* can be brought forward.

It should be made clear that an Iraqi national unity government will be free of debt and reparation burdens

6. Rebuilding human security

“Most of the generals and politicians did not think through the consequences of compelling American soldiers with no knowledge of Arabic or Arab culture to implement intrusive measures inside an Islamic society. We arrested people in front of their families, dragging them away in handcuffs with bags over their heads, and then provided no information to the families of those we incarcerated. In the end, our soldiers killed, maimed and incarcerated thousands of Arabs, 90 percent of whom were not the enemy. But they are now.”

Col. Douglas A. Macgregor (ret.), *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 19 December 2004

- 54 Humiliation has played an explosive role in igniting Iraqi resistance. Any international forces remaining in the country must be *systematically trained to show respect for Iraqi culture and sovereignty*. This means the immediate training of all troops in Iraq, not only in awareness of customs and religious sensitivities and in learning at least the basics of the language, but also in understanding why respect is so important. At key moments it can save lives in ways that guns cannot. The US officer who ordered his men to ‘take a knee’ in an explosive encounter with enraged civilians in Najaf was an example. This tactic might no longer be counted on to work in the face of a more organised insurgency, but the principle of respect on which it was based can.
- 55 An *Iraqi-led reconstruction movement* involving both state and civil society actors, with state and non-governmental support from the international community, is now pressing. Investment in *basic infrastructure, social services and education* are long overdue. *Civil society organisations and professional associations* in Iraq need support to enable people to move from victimhood to taking shared responsibility in their society. Such organisations will by definition be working at the grassroots, and could be supported now to run training courses in non-violence, citizenship, non-governmental organisation and civil society. The *Iraqi media* should also be supported and trained in conflict-sensitive reporting, and held to account by an independent Iraqi media watchdog.
- 56 An immediate measure that would lessen bitterness and reduce terror would be for the Coalition and Iraqi government to *pay compensation now* for deaths and injuries to civilians, and for destroyed property. In places like Fallujah, more substantial funds are needed immediately for a *massive re-building programme*. Fallujan residents report that most citizens have still not been compensated for the destruction of their homes and are living in tents. A re-building programme would create jobs and help restore respect and dignity.
- 57 *Centres of Listening and Documentation* could be set up with UN assistance across Iraq. The existing Centre operating successfully in Kirkuk could be used as a model: it combines the healing effect of listening with the active process of documenting grievances (3,500 to date) and liaises with regional and local authorities, achieving redress in some cases. Activities could include:
 - *Documenting severe abuse and violations of human rights* such as vigilante killings, torture, rape, disappeared relatives and unlawful arrest, in order to organise, redress and, ultimately, establish some form of restorative justice.
 - *Assessing damage and injury caused by Coalition forces*, making restitution, and taking legal and disciplinary action in public.
 - *Deep listening* to local people’s needs and grievances, leading to support for what they want and feel able to do. When large numbers of people have endured horror, it becomes important to create space in which they can humanise their relationships and move beyond demonisation. This should include listening carefully to the demands of community leaders, and finding out what conditions would help stop the violence.

- 58 In order to build dialogue in Iraq, as indicated above, significant numbers of Iraqi mediators will need to be supported both at the grassroots and at national level. Non-state actors could provide training or support in conflict resolution to relevant parties including village elders, citizens, politicians, religious leaders, professionals, the military and others.
- 59 The destabilising effect on the wider population of holding thousands or tens of thousands of Iraqis in administrative detention should not be underestimated. Prisoners are entitled to *proper judicial process, or to be freed*. Likewise, when tens of thousands of Iraqis are *displaced by US-Iraqi operations and remain homeless* for weeks, months or years, the conditions make stability near-impossible and provide rich pickings for the terrorist networks. Priority should be placed on *compensating and rehousing* those who have lost their homes through Coalition or Iraqi action, and on *changing the rules of engagement* to minimise such events.
- 60 Traumas experienced by victims of atrocity need attention and, if possible, healing. One way in which this can be provided simply and effectively is through careful listening at *trauma counselling centres*, whereby an independent witness or witnesses gives the traumatised person their full attention for as long as necessary, allowing them to discharge their fear, grief and anger. Organisations such as the Red Cross, Medecins sans Frontieres, and the Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture could help. In Croatia in the midst of the war, a small group of citizens set up the Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights in Osijek. It has now grown into one of the largest citizen-led peace-building organisations in the Balkans, with over 300 active members going in ‘peace teams’ to towns and villages. The Citizens’ Liaison Centre in Kirkuk has been effectively staffed by Iraqis trained for the job and protected by locally chosen security guards.
- 61 In development work worldwide it is now commonly accepted that women are *effective agents of change*. In Iraq, where women constitute 62 per cent of the adult population and represent a vast underused resource for peace-building, this role will require encouragement, support and training by the new Iraqi government. For example, two-thirds of Iraq’s teachers are women, but have yet to receive funding promised to support initiatives for post-conflict reconstruction and capacity-building. A national education process is needed to inform women of their rights and responsibilities, to raise awareness among men of the value of including women in every walk of life – including politics – and to expand training programmes preparing women to assume key posts. A significant number of *women should be trained for police and investigation services* – both for regular duties and to address rising violence against women in public places and in the home.
- 62 Finally, a *nuanced approach to transitional justice* must be taken, including a re-examination of the de-Baathification policy. We are not yet in a post-conflict situation and the focus must be on stabilising the situation. But compensation packages need to be put in place now. Furthermore, the lies, suspicion and betrayals that have infested Iraqi life for decades will erupt again if not addressed. This needs to be done at an appropriate point in public and in a safe and controlled environment. *Truth and reconciliation processes* can expose the egregious acts and systematic violations of the past, establish accurate and detailed records of them, and could involve *restorative justice* in place of conventional punishment.

A rebuilding programme would create jobs and help restore respect and dignity

7. International security guarantees and footprint

- 63** Iraq may need a system of internationally supported guarantees arrangements if it is to ward off civil war, WMD proliferation, border instability and other crises in this pivotal area of the Middle East. However, we need to recognise that an extended presence of multinational forces under the banner of the present Coalition is likely to contribute toward the destabilisation of the country in measure at least equal to their capabilities to contain that destabilisation. We may need to construct security guarantees on broader and more appropriate foundations for a sovereign Iraq. Its neighbours in the region and the wider international community could all have a constructive role to play.
- 64** Six building blocks could be combined in a system of international security arrangements to help stabilise Iraq in the coming years:
- a** Security guarantees including an international observer presence, triggers for action and a rapid response capability.
 - b** An acceptable international regime for the bases presently being constructed, putting them primarily at the service of the system of security guarantees.
 - c** A 'guard force' for the UN and reconstruction efforts, possibly extending to a human security or stabilisation presence configured on a basis of full civil-military partnership.
 - d** Formal (re)assumption by Iraq of all relevant international commitments on non-possession and non-acquisition of WMD.
 - e** Dialogue between Iraq and its neighbours on border regimes and other security issues.
 - f** The Iraqi government taking joint ownership of this system of guarantees on a basis of consociational sovereignty.
- 65** The security guarantees could be designed principally to prevent civil war, large-scale infiltration or terrorism, but modelled partly on those used for the Sinai peninsula or the Golan heights. They could include *lines or non-militarised zones* agreed among the parties, a *trigger for international action* if attempts are made to change the line by force, *international monitoring and observer presences*, and an agreement by contributing countries to assemble a *rapid response force* if the guarantees are broken, alongside a commitment by neighbouring countries to *facilitate and stage transit*.
- 66** Facilities within Iraq should be kept in an appropriate condition for these guarantees to be capable of implementation. This provides a possible alternative role for the four bases presently being constructed by the US near major oilfields. A *legitimate mandate for these bases* could be constructed between the Iraqi government and the UN, potentially even involving the EU, NATO or the Arab League, with a concept of 'host nation support' under which international financial support could be provided to complete and maintain these bases. A system of *Iraqi civilian monitoring* of them might even be possible.
- 67** Exclusive US use of these bases will prove destabilising to Iraqi politics and US interests. A '*lilypad*' model is now more appropriate, even if it throws some of the burden of hosting US forces in the region back on the Gulf Arab states or shipboard. A continuing US presence in the Kurdish region might also provide some security guarantees to Turkey, though Kurds would do well to consider carefully the effect any such presence might have on internal stability and relations with neighbours.
- 68** As Coalition troops withdraw there are also strong arguments for the introduction of a *medium-sized multinational stabilisation* force with UN mandate to protect reconstruction efforts, conduct monitoring and assist Iraqi forces in stabilisation (though not to initiate attacks on insurgents). Contributing countries could include European states which were not involved in the Coalition or have withdrawn from it, as well as developing countries such as India and Muslim states. ISAF and the provincial reconstruction teams in Afghanistan provide a better model for such a force than for the existing Coalition. If used, such a model should however be further developed in the direction of full *civil-military partnership*, including better common logistics and an equality

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of status, numbers and access to resources, which could be informed by recent EU proposals for 'human security forces'.

Fears of weapons of mass destruction played a key role in triggering the Coalition's overthrow of the Saddam regime, and the destabilising impact of Iraqi capabilities in this area has not altered given the proximity of Israel, Iran and Turkey. The wider international community may need to engage in *direct dialogue on WMD policies* and capabilities with the Iraqi regime, rather than relying on the US to take the lead. Before the end of 2006 the new Iraqi government ought to make declarations about compliance with the NPT, with the chemical weapons and biological weapons treaties and with *all current international obligations* (including UN Security Council Resolution 1540); to engage with the question of IAEA inspections if any facilities are still in existence; to seek *broad international help* in improving domestic standards of nuclear, chemical and bio-safety and in retraining former weapons experts and scientists; and to align itself with the Arab policy on a *WMD-free zone for the Middle East*.

- 70 UNSC 1540 called on all governments to improve security around nuclear, biological and chemical materiel. Iraq could begin a *dialogue with its neighbours* on these points, working against smuggling through intelligence and customs co-operation, documenting nuclear technologies and implementing export control and nuclear safety provisions. Experience with the former Soviet Union shows that EU countries could make a significant contribution in terms of competences and financial support, and some Gulf states are already trying to help with the conversion of dangerous competences.
- 71 Such a process, including encouragement of bilateral Iraq-Iran contacts, might also provide building blocks toward *more regional dialogue*. Despite repeated local and outside initiatives, the building of cooperative security systems for the greater Middle East has always stumbled on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the special position of Iran and other causes for distrust and long-term enmity. The bottom-line shared interest in not letting Iraq become either a renewed tyranny or a black hole could provide a new base for cautious experiment, starting from the Gulf region outwards. Issues on which to build might include (a) minimum levels of cooperation against new threats, not just WMD; (b) confidence and security building measures, including transparency measures and hotlines, covering the activities of conventional forces and border authorities and an understanding on the range of permitted measures against terrorism; and (c) free trade and economic cooperation.
- 72 Forums for *more far-reaching and less instrumental dialogue*, involving states, civil societies and religious leaders across the region and ensuring that a full range of voices are heard, could also be explored. Such schemes need to be locally owned. They are likely to die or be distorted at birth if they exclude a priori, or seem to be directed against, neighbours presently in the West's black books.
- 73 Any security guarantees for Iraq need to be developed in inclusive dialogue with its national and local leaderships. Their legitimacy and Iraq's self-confidence could be reinforced if it were to take ownership of these measures itself, on a basis of *consociational sovereignty*. This would mean two things: firstly, Iraq has full sovereignty over its own territory and requests international security guarantees, which it considers are in its own interests, but which may be altered by agreement in future; secondly, Iraq agrees that it can propose changes to this regime only on a consociational basis, requiring majorities in every region. Two things are essential for progress in Iraq: to change the narrative from occupation to Iraqi liberation, and to stabilise conditions on the ground. All camps must be brought into the political process. Hope, independence and honour are all necessary conditions for Iraqis to take full responsibility and start to build a new legitimate order. Civil society and economic activity need support and investment, for these will be key pillars of that order. Fundamental to success will be a co-ordinated mix of measures to increase human security in the round, including its physical, political, economic and psychological elements.

Conclusions: Progress in Iraq and the wider region

- 74** Two things are essential for progress in Iraq: to change the narrative from occupation to Iraqi liberation, and to stabilise conditions on the ground. All camps must be brought into the political process. Hope, independence and honour are all necessary conditions for Iraqis to take full responsibility and start to build a new legitimate order. Civil society and economic activity need support and investment, for these will be key pillars of that order. Fundamental to success will be a co-ordinated mix of measures to increase human security in the round, including its physical, political, economic and psychological elements.
- 75** The Coalition should develop a framework for withdrawals combining milestones with conditions, which the Iraqi government and its allies could use to employ a distributed strategy of track II dialogue and incentives to channel counter-insurgency towards a negotiated political process. Regional players need to be assisted to become more help than hindrance, and the wider international community must consider how it could take on greater responsibility. Given the situation both in terms of positions and conditions on the ground, the integrated strategy sketched here will require great political will and strategic investments, as well as substantial financial resources. But it will be no more costly or exacting than the effort thus far, and has a considerably better chance of success than the approach recently outlined in the US National Security Council's 'Victory in Iraq'.
- 76** The possibility of stability and progress in Iraq is intimately connected to other regional issues. Should progress be made toward a political horizon in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, positive effects will unquestionably be felt in Iraq and beyond. Should the paradigm remain one of containment and management, the extent to which the Holy Land confrontation destabilises the situation in the wider region and vice versa will only grow. While the basics of free movement between and within the territories and air, sea and land access continue to be a priority, international policy must shift to encourage the political turn in Hamas, to clarify the acceptable principles of final status, and to drive momentum – whether phased or comprehensive – toward a viable two-state resolution of territorial and other grievances.
- 77** Progress in Iraq will also be substantially influenced by Western-Iranian and Western-Syrian relations, and the reverse is likewise true. Withdrawals from Iraq or the establishment of a more international regime would reduce Iran's threat perception significantly while enabling Iraqis to take clear responsibility for their bilateral relations. Economic and security partnerships and wider regional dialogue, for instance in the Gulf, are actively to be encouraged. The empowerment of the US ambassador in Iraq to open limited talks with Iran should be further built on. The present environment of hostility is only serving to strengthen Iran's hardliners and encouraging them to meddle over the border. Iraq cannot be seen as a jumping-off point for land attacks on either Iran or Syria. The achievement of Iraqi liberation and stability is likely to demand much greater independence from the USA than is presently enjoyed across much of the region.

The possibility of stability and progress in Iraq is intimately connected to other regional issues

Recommendations to the actors

Near-term: December 2005 to June 2006

A number of the recommendations presented in this report relate to late 2006 and beyond. The following actions are recommended to the parties in the near term (the six months between the December 2005 elections and the June 2006 review of the UN mandate). Numbers in square brackets refer to the paragraph number in the main text.

IRAQI CIVIC, RELIGIOUS AND NATIONALIST LEADERS

Take up the Cairo statement and organise demonstrations calling on Coalition and government to set a timetable for the end of occupation [24]

Respond positively to any substantive programme of withdrawals [45]

Call on wider international community to become more involved in supporting Iraq in future [50, 52, 60, 68]

NEW IRAQI GOVERNMENT

Commit fully to a process of national dialogue and reconciliation [23-28]

Take up the Cairo statement and agree a framework for withdrawals with the Coalition [40, 45]

Make clear commitments to address Sunni concerns in the constitutional review, and to share future and present oil revenues equally [25, 28]

Take over the counter-insurgency lead, establishing a set of minimum conditions for acceptable order which can be owned and implemented locally, centring strategy on dialogue with local leaders and building local law enforcement [35, 36]

Explore holding independently audited and consensus-designed polls or referendums for Mosul, Ramadi and other areas, including what local security and political regime would be legitimate [27]

Clarify the role, powers and resources of local government [25, 27, 36]

Distribute substantial financial resources to regional and local governments, giving local leaders a stake in stabilisation [28, 49]

Ensure that displaced persons are rehoused, compensation is paid by the Coalition and Iraqi government, and prisoners are freed or their rights to due judicial process are expedited [56, 59]

Retender as many of the unfavourable contracts let by the CPA or the IGC as possible [48]

Replace blanket de-Baathification with transitional justice under an independent, credible body [62]

Crack down on corruption, in particular with respect to oil revenues [47]

Encourage, fund and seek international support for an Iraqi-led reconstruction movement including the rebuilding of homes and basic services, generating employment for the temporary stabilisation period [53, 55, 56]

Transfer fuel subsidies into direct transfers or petrol vouchers, presenting this as giving every Iraqi a share in their country's oil wealth [49]

Call on wider international community to become more involved in supporting Iraq in future, and enter into dialogue with key states including France and Russia [70 - 72]

Encourage women to be trained and to enter every walk of life, including the security services [61]

THE COALITION

Publish in conjunction with the UN and the new Iraqi government a transparent contract circumscribing the Coalition role and goals, and making Iraqi oversight clear [40]

Relocate the US embassy outside the Green Zone to an alternative hardened site and encourage the Iraqi government to demonstrate its independence from the Coalition by word and deed [24]

Move away in general from joint US-Iraqi 'swoop and clear' operations in the Sunni triangle and provide some advisers, logistics, intelligence and counter-terrorism support to Iraqi-led operations [36, 37]

Ensure that Iraqi forces have the equipment and training they need to operate independently, including helicopters and communications platforms [37]

Develop and implement a framework for withdrawals designed to support the emergence of a narrative of Iraqi liberation, responsive to local conditions but driven by milestones [34, 40]

Apply US pressure to Shia and Kurdish leaders to sustain national dialogue and respect Sunni interests [28]

Withdraw most forces to base and draw down up to half of the presence from theatre or to nearby positions as a 'ready reserve' by June 2006 [42-45, 67]

Disengage from the tensions with Iran in the south, making it clear to Iraqi leaders that this is their responsibility [44]

As troops are drawn down, create compensation and reconciliation funds involving Iraqis in funding decisions [52]

Train remaining troops to show respect for Iraqi culture and sovereignty [54]

Hold talks with Iraq and the UN on a regime of Iraqi and/or international control over the bases presently being built [44, 66]

(To the USA in particular:) Engage Iran and Syria in direct talks [77]

THE UN

Play a central role in facilitating national dialogue and talks with neighbours [72]

Provide support for mediation, reconciliation and dialogue right down to village level, supporting civil society actors and brokering track II talks [30]

Consider appointing a heavyweight special representative or troika with mandates also from the OIC and/or the Arab League [31]

Work with Iraqi government to set up Centres of Listening and Documentation across the country [57]

Help broker the development of a more international security regime including guarantees and a guard force or human security presence [68]

ARAB STATES AND THE ARAB LEAGUE

Play a central role in facilitating national dialogue [30]

Provide track II dialogue and intelligence support [58,70]

Impose a moratorium on reparation and debt payments and work toward full forgiveness [51]

Develop economic development partnerships and investment packages with Iraq [50]

Offer special aid packages as incentives to stabilise Sunni areas [49]

THE WIDER INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, AND IN PARTICULAR THE EU

Assess the feasibility of a more international post-Coalition security regime for Iraq before the review of the UN mandate in June 2006 [63, 64]

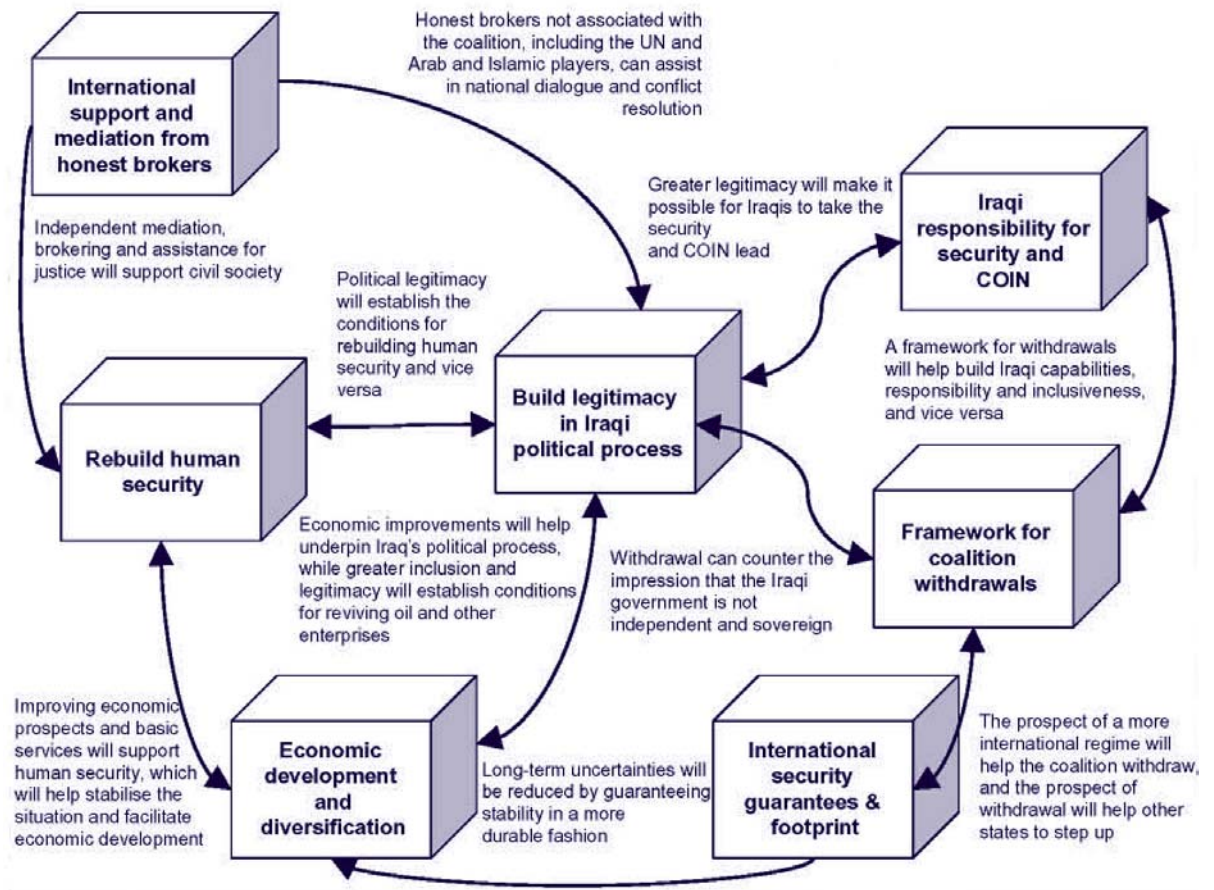
Respond positively to Iraqi calls for greater international involvement and an end to occupation [40]

Provide track II dialogue and intelligence support [37, 58, 70]

Provide support and training to help professionalise and restructure police forces [36]

(To donors who have not yet paid their pledges:) Clarify willingness to make good pledges to the International Reconstruction Fund Facility, potentially conditioning this on the replacement of the Coalition regime by a more international framework [52]

The dynamics of an integrated strategy



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IRAQI LIBERATION? TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY

OxfordResearchGroup

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In 2003 Scilla Elworthy, ORG's Founder Director, was awarded the Niwano Peace Prize, and in April 2005 *The Independent* newspaper named ORG as one of the top 20 think tanks in the UK.

About this report

This discussion document draws on the expertise of an international high-level consultative panel, including British, Iraqi, Middle Eastern and American experts from the military, foreign service, intelligence community and civil society. It brings together seven key elements of a positive alternative strategy for Iraqi stabilisation and development.

This integrated strategy offers a route toward changing the narrative from occupation to liberation, establishing an inclusive Iraqi political process and stabilising conditions on the ground. This can be accomplished if international support for Iraq significantly changes its approach, from fighting a war against the insurgency to strengthening civil society, legitimacy, human security and the economy.

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