

31. Iraq

IRAQ has emerged from U.S. occupation as the only genuine democracy in the Arab world. Despite some violent opposition, a growing number of the 15 million eligible voters have chosen to participate in the political process. The key to a long-term military victory in Iraq that would facilitate the eventual drawing down of U.S. troops is the development of Iraqi security forces that can gradually take responsibility for defending the Iraqi people.

by *James Phillips*

Recommendations

1. Help Iraqis build an inclusive, broad-based, and effective government. The December 2005 parliamentary elections produced a parliament that more accurately represents the Iraqi population than the interim parliament did due to the Sunni Arab boycott of the January elections. The United States should encourage the Shiite-led United Iraqi Alliance and the Kurdistan Alliance, which together garnered almost two-thirds of the new parliament's 275 seats, to include as many Sunni Arab representatives in the new government as possible in order to drain away support for the insurgency, which is predominantly composed of Sunni Arabs. If Iraq's new leaders fail to work together in an effective manner to improve the daily lives of Iraqis, they will squander the popular support bestowed by the December vote and risk plunging Iraq into a bloody civil war. In addition to providing greater security to the Iraqi people, the new government must provide better services, repair Iraq's shattered infrastructure, and root out corruption.

2. Withdraw U.S. military forces according to the security situation on the ground, not according to an artificial timetable. The United States has sacrificed too much blood and treasure in Iraq to squander its chances of victory with a rapid pullout that would jeopardize the survival of a stable democracy. Decisions about the timing of troop reductions should be made by the generals in Iraq, not imposed by politicians in Washington. The United States has a continued responsibility to help Iraqis get back on their feet and defeat the remnants of Saddam Hussein's regime and Islamic extremists opposed to democracy.

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3. Build up Iraqi security forces. The key to a long-term military victory in Iraq that would facilitate the eventual drawing down of U.S. troops is the development of Iraqi security forces that can gradually take responsibility for defending the Iraqi people from insurgent attacks and defeating the insurgency. The United States must help the Iraqi government to build effective, well-trained, and well-equipped military and police forces capable of assuming a progressively larger share of the security burden. In addition to increasing the quantity and quality of security forces, the United States must be sure that they include adequate numbers of Sunni Arabs to alleviate the festering mistrust of many Sunnis in Shiite-dominated government institutions. There should also be an effective vetting process to screen out insurgent sympathizers seeking to infiltrate the security forces. Once adequate numbers of Iraqi forces become operational, the United States should withdraw its troops gradually from Iraqi cities, where they are vulnerable to urban guerrilla attacks, and redeploy them to less populated areas. This will also reduce friction with Iraqi civilians and raise the visibility and increase the profile and effectiveness of the Iraqi government.

4. Mobilize an international coalition to support the new democratic Iraqi government. Many countries have used their disagreement with U.S. policy on Iraq as an excuse to turn their backs on the needs of Iraqis. Now that Iraq has a democratic government, the United States and its allies should press governments that profess to be concerned about the plight of the Iraqi people to extend foreign aid as a concrete manifestation of that concern. Countries such as France and Germany, which did not risk sending troops to Iraq to liberate Iraqis, should now be asked to provide economic support to Iraq's democratic government, which is locked in a struggle to the death with Islamic extremists and Baathist thugs. Governments such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which complain about Iran's influence over the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government, should be asked to provide economic aid to counterbalance that influence.

5. Help Iraqis repair Iraq's shattered infrastructure and build a strong economy. Reconstruction and economic progress have come relatively quickly in postwar Iraq compared to postwar Germany and Japan, and this is despite continued insurgent attacks on Iraq's infrastructure and economic targets. Unemployment remains high, estimated by the government at 28 percent, but U.S. policy did not create that unemployment. Private investment, bolstered with capital remitted from family members abroad, has fueled rapid growth in the private sector. But Iraq's oil production has not recovered as fast as many projected, due to sabotage of pipelines and other facilities and the greater-than-expected damage done to Iraq's oil infrastructure

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by many years of neglect, poor maintenance, and lack of investment under Saddam's regime. Oil production, approximately 2 million barrels per day in 2002, is approximately 1.9 million barrels per day today, but the slow recovery of oil production is partially offset by high world oil prices.

Facts and Figures

- Iraq has emerged from under U.S. occupation as the only genuine democracy in the Arab world.
- Despite the violent opposition of insurgents, a growing number of the 15 million eligible voters have chosen to participate in the political process: 8.5 million voted in the January 2005 elections for an interim government, almost 10 million voted in the October referendum that approved the new constitution, and more than 10 million voted in the December elections for the new government.
- In the December elections, the United Iraqi Alliance (the leading Shiite coalition) won 128 of the legislature's 275 seats; three Kurdish political parties won 58 seats; and two Sunni Arab political parties won 55 seats, with the rest going to smaller secular and independent parties.
- The Iraqi army and security forces have grown from just one operational battalion in July 2004 to more than 120 by the end of 2005. Over 200,000 trained and equipped Iraqis are playing an increasingly active role in fighting the insurgency.
- Iraq has secured agreements with the international community to forgive up to 80 percent of Saddam-era debt, which amounted to \$124 billion in 2003.
- More than 30,000 new businesses have registered with the authorities since the war, and thousands of other businesses are believed to have been established without registering.
- Since the war, U.S. efforts have added 1,400 megawatts of power to the Iraqi power grid, expanding access to 4.2 million Iraqis throughout the country.
- While some Baghdad residents had more electrical power under Saddam's regime—because it diverted power from other parts of Iraq—many Iraqis now have much greater access to electricity than they had before the war. Iraqis outside of Baghdad had only three to

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six hours of access to electricity in 2002 but averaged almost 14 hours a day at the end of 2005.

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This chapter can be found online at issues2006.org/iraq.

Additional Reading

James Phillips, "Pulling Iraq Back from the Edge of Civil War," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 999, February 24, 2006, at www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/wm999.cfm.

The Honorable Richard B. Cheney, "Iraq and the War on Terrorism," Heritage Foundation *Lecture* No. 918, January 6, 2006, at www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/Iraq/hl918.cfm.

James Phillips, "After the Elections: The Road to Political Stability in Iraq," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 945, December 16, 2005, at www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/wm945.cfm.

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice, "International Support for Iraqi Democracy," Heritage Foundation *Lecture* No. 916, December 14, 2005, at www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/Iraq/hl916.cfm.

James Phillips, "Dispelling Myths About Iraq," Heritage Foundation *Background* 1904, December 12, 2005, at www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/Iraq/bg1904.cfm.

James Phillips, "Firm and Patient Realism Needed in Iraq," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 770, June 23, 2005, at www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/wm770.cfm.

James Phillips, "Slow But Steady Progress in Iraq," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 725, April 15, 2005, at www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/wm725.cfm.