

# Background

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## To Build a Stable Iraq, Empower Iraqis, Not the U.N.

*James Phillips*

The chronic terrorist violence in Iraq, rising projections of rebuilding costs, and growing strains on U.S. troop deployments have prodded the Bush Administration to shift gears on its Iraq policy and explore a greater role for the United Nations. But negotiations with France and other members of the U.N. Security Council that opposed the Iraq war appear to have bogged down.

While more peacekeeping troops and reconstruction aid would be welcome, it is doubtful that greater U.N. involvement will bring with it enough additional peacekeeping troops and financial aid to make a major difference in Iraq. Moreover, there is a danger that greater U.N. involvement in Iraqi politics could impede the task of cobbling together a cohesive government and hinder the evolution of a stable Iraq.

The Bush Administration therefore must be careful not to jeopardize the long-term prospects of a stable Iraq in a rush to obtain marginal increases of international aid for Iraq. A bad deal is worse than no deal at all. Building a legitimate sovereign government in Iraq depends on obtaining the support of the Iraqi people, not the lowest-common-denominator support of the U.N. Security Council.

To stabilize Iraq, the Bush Administration should enlist the Iraqi people, not rely on the undependable United Nations. Specifically, Washington should:

- **Empower** Iraqis to take ownership of their own political future.

- While more peacekeeping troops and reconstruction aid would be welcome in Iraq, it is doubtful that greater U.N. involvement will bring with it enough additional peacekeeping troops and financial aid to make a major difference.
- Moreover, there is a danger that greater U.N. involvement in Iraqi politics could impede the task of cobbling together a cohesive government and hinder the evolution of a stable Iraq.
- The Bush Administration therefore must be careful not to jeopardize the long-term prospects of a stable Iraq in a rush to obtain marginal increases of international aid for Iraq. A bad deal is worse than no deal at all.
- Building a legitimate sovereign government in Iraq depends on obtaining the support of the Iraqi people, not the lowest-common-denominator support of the U.N. Security Council.

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- **Accelerate** the recruitment, training, and deployment of Iraqi army, police, and internal security forces.
- **Reconfigure** U.S. troop deployments and concentrate them on counterinsurgency operations, aided by Iraq's police and army.
- **Upgrade** border security to reduce the infiltration of foreign fighters.
- **Keep** international peacekeeping forces in a unified command under U.S. leadership.
- **Let** the United Nations do what it does best—provide humanitarian aid, supervise elections, and coordinate postwar reconstruction efforts—but minimize its role in addressing issues on which there is no international consensus.

### Iraq's Security Situation: A Glass Half Full?

Coalition forces and the embryonic Iraqi government are facing at least three distinct sources of resistance in Iraq: the remnants of Saddam's regime and its supporters, concentrated in central Iraq; Islamic radicals, including a growing number of non-Iraqi "jihadis" who have traveled to Iraq to fight in the jihad (holy war) against the occupation; and criminal networks that have long smuggled people and goods into Iraq and oil out of Iraq. These three disparate groups share a common hostility to coalition forces but have different goals and political agendas. They do not form a cohesive resistance organized on a national basis, but rather pose local and regional threats.

The security situation is most dangerous in central Iraq, the political stronghold of Saddam Hussein's regime, which is populated primarily by the

Sunni Arab minority that benefited most from Saddam's rule.<sup>1</sup> Northern Iraq, which is populated primarily by Kurds, and southern Iraq, populated primarily by Shiite Arabs, are both relatively stable and secure. An overwhelming majority of the non-Arab Kurds and Shiite Arabs, who together make up about 80 percent of Iraq's 24 million people, opposed Hussein's regime and welcomed liberation.

Resistance is heaviest in the predominantly Sunni Arab region of central Iraq, particularly in Baghdad, Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit, and Fallujah, a small city 50 miles west of Baghdad that has become a stronghold of Iraqi Islamic radicals and foreign jihadis.<sup>2</sup> The two groups that fought most fiercely during the war, the Fedayeen Saddam paramilitary forces and foreign jihadis, continue to form the core of the resistance.<sup>3</sup> The foreign jihadis, predominantly Arabs from Middle Eastern countries, have crossed into Iraq from neighboring Syria, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>4</sup>

U.S. intelligence officials estimate that more than 1,000 and perhaps as many as several thousand foreign fighters have flocked to Iraq, although U.S. military officials in Iraq believe the figure is much lower.<sup>5</sup> The jihadis reportedly shave their beards and cross Iraq's borders in small groups before linking up with an underground network inside Iraq that was created by Ansar al-Islam, a radical Islamic group affiliated with Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda terrorist network.<sup>6</sup> Coalition forces have captured 248 non-Iraqi fighters, including 123 from Syria, smaller numbers from Iran and Yemen, and at least 19 suspected members of al-Qaeda.<sup>7</sup> Others are suspected members of Hezbollah, Palestine Islamic Jihad, and other Palestinian splinter groups.<sup>8</sup>

1. Approximately 20 percent of the population are Sunni Arabs, 60–65 percent are Shiite Arabs, and 15–20 percent are Kurds.
2. Jeffrey White and Michael Schmidy, "Patterns of Sunni Resistance in Iraq," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, *Policy Watch* No. 765, June 11, 2003, p. 2.
3. Paul Wolfowitz, "Support Our Troops," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 2, 2003.
4. Coalition forces have captured foreign fighters who crossed the border from all three countries, although others may also be crossing over from Jordan, Kuwait, and Turkey. See Michael Dobbs, "Foreign Islamic Militants Add to U.S. Worries in Iraq," *The Washington Post*, August 24, 2003, p. A18.
5. Peter Finn and Susan Schmidt, "Al Qaeda Plans a Front in Iraq," *The Washington Post*, September 7, 2003, p. A26.
6. Neil MacFarquhar, "Rising Tide of Islamic Militants See Iraq As Ultimate Battlefield," *The Washington Post*, August 13, 2003, p. A1.
7. "Bremer: 19 Al Qaeda Suspects Held in Iraq," *The Washington Post*, September 27, 2003, p. A5.
8. Matthew Levitt, "Tackling Terror in Iraq," *The Baltimore Sun*, September 3, 2003.

The influx of foreign jihadis has the active support of Iran and Syria. Foreign fighters have been captured in Iraq with Syrian travel documents stating “jihad” as the reason for entry.<sup>9</sup> Saef Adel, the military chief of al-Qaeda, reportedly negotiated with the Iranian government to secure sanctuary in Iran and safe transit to Iraq for al-Qaeda members fleeing Afghanistan in late 2001.<sup>10</sup> Saef Adel, from his sanctuary in Iran, reportedly organized the May 12, 2003, bombing of a housing complex in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, that killed 35 people.<sup>11</sup> Although Iran claims that it is keeping al-Qaeda members under house arrest to defuse international pressure, just as Afghanistan’s Taliban regime repeatedly claimed it had done, Iran has refused to extradite Saef Adel and other al-Qaeda members to Saudi Arabia, the United States, or other countries.

Iraqi security officials working for the Governing Council suspect that former members of Saddam Hussein’s Special Operations Directorate, which specialized in remote control bombings and poisonings, are cooperating with Islamic radicals in attacking coalition forces.<sup>12</sup> Some of these men may have been involved in the August 19 bombing of U.N. headquarters in Baghdad, which killed 22 people, including U.N. Special Representative for Iraq Sergio Vieira de Mello.

A former Baath Party official has reportedly confessed to carrying out the August 29 bombing of the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf, which killed more than 80 Shiite Muslims, including Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.<sup>13</sup> This organization, long supported by Iran, had been cooperating with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and was participating in the 25-member Governing Council, which forms the backbone of the Iraqi interim administration. The goal of the bombing probably was to incite a civil war between Shiites and Sunnis

that would sabotage coalition efforts to forge an Iraqi popular consensus supportive of an inclusive democratic transformation in Iraq.

Although the threat of terrorism remains acute in Iraq, the shadowy groups that launched these and other attacks appear to lack the popular support base to sustain a guerilla war on a national scale. They can mount hit-and-run attacks in some areas but continue to depend on terrorism and assassinations to demoralize supporters of the Governing Council and deter close cooperation with the CPA.

Despite such intimidation tactics, the overall security environment appears to have improved incrementally in recent months. One American reporter recently noted that “The road from Baghdad Airport to the city, which a few months ago was a gantlet of daily attacks, is now a bit safer. Stores are stocked with goods and restaurants that used to close at dusk for fear of bandits now stay open until 9.”<sup>14</sup>

A major source of insecurity stems from Saddam’s vain effort to bolster his flagging internal support by releasing more than 100,000 criminals from prisons in the days before the war. Many of these criminals ran rampant in the immediate aftermath of the war, opportunistically looting government property and robbing other Iraqis with impunity due to the collapse of the Iraqi police. Since then, much progress has been made in reconstructing the Iraqi judicial system, reopening approximately 300 of 400 Iraqi courts and 49 of 151 prisons, and putting 37,000 police back on the streets.<sup>15</sup>

Iraqis have noticed slow but steady progress, and their optimistic outlook is reflected in recent polls. An August poll conducted by Zogby International and *American Enterprise* revealed that two-thirds of Iraqis want U.S. troops to stay for at least another year and roughly 70 percent believe that their country and their personal lives will be better off in

9. *Ibid.*

10. Finn and Schmidt, “Al Qaeda Plans a Front in Iraq.”

11. *Ibid.*

12. MacFarquhar, “Rising Tide of Islamic Militants See Iraq As Ultimate Battlefield,” p. A10.

13. P. Mitchell Prothero, “Baathist Says He Planned Blast,” *The Washington Times*, September 16, 2003.

14. David Ignatius, “Anger Control in Baghdad,” *The Washington Post*, September 26, 2003, p. A27.

15. L. Paul Bremer, “Bremer Hails Appointment of Iraqi Cabinet Ministers,” press conference, September 2, 2003, p. 9.

five years.<sup>16</sup> A Gallup poll of Baghdad residents conducted in early September found that nearly two-thirds believed the removal of Saddam's regime was worth the hardships that they were forced to endure and that 47 percent had a favorable view of Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, leader of the CPA, compared to 22 percent who had an unfavorable view.<sup>17</sup>

Although the security situation remains threatening, the United States has made considerable progress in Iraq, particularly when measured against the historical record of other postwar occupations. As Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has noted:

Within two months, all major Iraqi cities and most towns had municipal councils—something that took eight months in postwar Germany. Within four months the Iraqi Governing Council had appointed a cabinet—something that took 14 months in Germany. An independent Iraqi Central Bank was established and a new currency announced in just two months—accomplishments that took three years in postwar Germany. Within two months a new Iraqi police force was conducting joint patrols with coalition forces. Within three months, we had begun training a new Iraqi army—and today some 56,000 are participating in the defense of their country. By contrast, it took 14 months to establish a police force in Germany and 10 years to begin training a German army.<sup>18</sup>

### **The United Nations: Divisive Debate, Delay, and Denial**

The Bush Administration initially hoped to win Security Council approval of a resolution in late September, calling for greater international support for U.S.-led efforts to rebuild Iraq, but French-led opposition to the U.S. draft resolution and the ensuing diplomatic logjam have prompted the Adminis-

tration to push back its timetable, seeking passage of the resolution by the October 23 conference of aid donors in Madrid, Spain. France and Germany rejected the American draft resolution, saying it did not cede enough control over Iraq to the U.N. or transfer sovereignty to Iraqis soon enough.

France insisted that the U.N., not the CPA, should oversee Iraq's transition to self-rule. It also proposed an extremely rapid timetable for transferring power that would severely undermine the chances for establishing a stable government. On September 12, French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin laid out a plan that called for Iraqis to establish a provisional government in a month, write a constitution by the end of the year, and hold elections next spring, all under U.N. auspices. Secretary of State Colin Powell dismissed the French plan as "totally unrealistic." Even the U.N. Secretariat, which on September 25 withdrew most of its staff after a second bombing of the U.N. headquarters, does not support the maximalist French position on Iraq.

French President Jacques Chirac claims that his thinking on Iraq was influenced by his own experience as a French army officer fighting in Algeria during its war for independence from France,<sup>19</sup> but the situations are not analogous. Most Iraqis supported the American-led liberation, while most Algerians supported the Algerian revolutionaries.

A better Algerian example—and one also to be avoided—is the premature elections held by Algeria's authoritarian regime in 1991, which led to the electoral victory of radical Islamists who plunged Algeria into a civil war that has killed more than 100,000 people.<sup>20</sup> Rushing to turn power over to an Iraqi government that is ill-equipped to handle it responsibly could lead to a "one man, one vote, one time" regime that would lack legitimacy and jeopardize the prospects for building a stable and effective government.

16. Karl Zinsmeister, "What Iraqis Really Think," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 10, 2003, p. A24.

17. Patrick Tyler, "In a Poll, Baghdad Residents Call Freedom Worth the Price," *The New York Times*, September 24, 2003, p. A12.

18. Donald Rumsfeld, "Beyond 'Nation-Building,'" *The Washington Post*, September 25, 2003, p. A33.

19. Elaine Sciolino, "Chirac Calls for Transfer of Authority to Iraqi People," *The New York Times*, September 28, 2003, p. A6.

20. See James Phillips, "The Rising Threat of Revolutionary Islam in Algeria," Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 1060, November 9, 1995, at [www.heritage.org/Research/Africa/BG1060.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/Africa/BG1060.cfm).

France claims that the U.N. is necessary to boost the legitimacy of any Iraqi government, but the U.N. cannot bestow what it does not possess. Political legitimacy in Iraq ultimately can be given only by the Iraqi people in free elections, not by the United Nations or external powers, and elections will take time to organize properly. France's real goal appears to be to deny legitimacy to the American-led occupation, not to bolster the legitimacy of any particular Iraqi government. For this reason, France is determined to resist any Security Council resolution that implies retroactive approval of the U.S. war to liberate Iraq.

By placing a higher priority on the rapid transfer of sovereignty than on improving the security situation, France puts the cart before the horse. Even if elections could be held in the present unsettled situation, no Iraqi government could long survive if it could not keep the electricity on or protect its citizens from terrorists and criminals. A rapid transfer of authority would not help improve the security situation, since the security threats come from groups opposed to the new political authority. Nor would a rapid transfer of power necessarily ease the security burden on the coalition forces, because that would depend on the course of the war against the remnants of the old regime.

A premature transfer of sovereignty could, however, destroy the prospects for a successful transition to democracy. In the words of a constitutional lawyer and adviser to the Governing Council, "Actual control is the indispensable hallmark of sovereignty. Nothing could be worse for the future of democracy in Iraq than the creation of a puppet government unable to keep the peace."<sup>21</sup>

The French notion of a swift transfer of power to Iraqis is reckless, hazardous, and impractical. After all, the U.N. took seven years to transfer power to local politicians in Bosnia and still has not done so after four years in Kosovo. Why should the coalition be held to such an arbitrary and rushed timetable in Iraq, which is much bigger than both? The United States has too much at risk in Iraq to give

France, or any other power that opposed the liberation of Iraq, a veto over U.S. policy.

It also is increasingly apparent that few additional international troops or little economic aid will be forthcoming, even if the Bush Administration does gain passage of a favorable U.N. Security Council resolution. Turkey, Pakistan, India, and South Korea, which have been asked to furnish additional troops, face domestic political opposition to such deployments that will not be assuaged by a U.N. resolution.

Pakistan and Turkey now are raising the bar for their participation by requesting that other conditions be met. Turkey is calling for the coalition to disarm the Kurdish Workers Party, which has waged a separatist insurgency in eastern Turkey from bases in Iraq.<sup>22</sup> Pakistan now wants the Governing Council, Arab states, and the Islamic Conference to approve a Pakistani deployment in addition to another U.N. resolution.<sup>23</sup> The Bush Administration reportedly has sharply reduced its estimates of additional troops that could come with another U.N. resolution to from 10,000 to 15,000—a number that will not have a significant impact on the internal security situation.

Given the meager benefits of another U.N. resolution in terms of international troops and aid and the possible adverse consequences of trying to make decisions in Iraq by committee, the Bush Administration must carefully resist concessions at the U.N. that would undermine efforts to enhance Iraqi security and to aid its democratic transformation. At the U.N. Security Council, a bad deal is worse than no deal at all.

### **Building a Stable Iraq**

The problem in Iraq is not a lack of American soldiers, or soldiers from other countries, but the lack of effective Iraqi allies in the battle against Baathist and Islamist terrorism. Washington needs to involve Iraqis as much as possible in defeating these scourges, both of which threaten them more than the United States. After all, they will inherit postwar Iraq after the coalition forces go home.

21. Noah Feldman, "Democracy, Closer Every Day," *The New York Times*, September 24, 2003, p. A27.

22. Metan Munir, "Ankara Links Iraq Force to U.S. Actions over Kurds," *Financial Times*, September 30, 2003.

23. Felicity Barringer, "Little Chance of Pakistani Troops in Iraq," *The New York Times*, September 22, 2003, p. A3.

Ahmad Chalabi, chairman of the Iraqi National Congress, the inclusive umbrella group for the anti-Hussein opposition, is on the right track:

There is no need for more American or foreign troops in Iraq today. Only one force can defeat the Saddam Hussein network—the Iraqi people. The United States has thus far failed to unleash and use the huge and latent anti-Hussein sentiment among the people.<sup>24</sup>

The long-term U.S. goal in Iraq is to transfer authority to a responsible and representative group of elected Iraqi leaders. Increasing the number of American troops will make the nascent Iraqi government more dependent on American power and less able to defend itself against violent internal challenges. As Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld put it, “We do not want to put so many forces in there that we create a dependency on the U.S. and then we have to stay.”<sup>25</sup>

A bigger American military presence not only would encourage greater political dependence by Iraqis, but also would present resistance forces with more targets and longer lines of communication to harass. Significantly, American field commanders in Iraq have not requested additional U.S. troops.

In purely military terms, the threat posed by resistance fighters and terrorists is not very potent. In fact, the average number of military engagements in Iraq has fallen from 25 per day in July to about 15 per day in September, with most of the engagements consisting of short firefights lasting only two or three minutes.<sup>26</sup> But the frequent ambushes and sniper attacks, punctuated by more deadly terrorist bombings, undermine the morale of Iraqi security forces and deter many Iraqis from cooperating with the coalition forces.

American troops often have difficulty distinguishing friendly Iraqis from hostile ones, or even Iraqis from foreign Arabs. Better intelligence is needed to

support counterterrorism and counterinsurgency missions, which Iraqis are best positioned to provide. As Bernard Kerik, who oversaw the re-establishment of the Iraqi police force after the war, has observed, “What we need is the ability to identify, locate, and capture or kill the enemy that is trying to prevent freedom in Iraq—and no one can do that better than the Iraqis themselves.”<sup>27</sup> Ambassador Bremer maintains, “It’s not a question of more troops. It’s a question of being effective with our intelligence, of getting more Iraqis to help us.”<sup>28</sup>

### Enlist More Iraqis, Not Foreigners

Free Iraqis, organized and strongly supported by the U.S.-led coalition, would be much more capable of rectifying the security situation in Iraq than any number of U.N. peacekeeping troops. The CPA made a mistake when it dismantled the Iraqi army and security forces but failed to involve the Iraqi National Congress and other opposition groups in a supporting security role. The result was a chaotic vacuum in which the Baathist remnants, Fedayeen Saddam, foreign jihadis, and various criminal gangs have flourished.

To bolster security in Iraq and build a stable Iraqi government, the Bush Administration should:

- **Empower Iraqis to take ownership of their own political future.**

A foreign occupation is an unnatural state of affairs that chafes against the universal desire of all people to control their own future. Ambassador Bremer has laid out a seven-step plan that would be one of the swiftest transitions from dictatorship to democracy ever accomplished.

Three of the seven steps have already been taken: the establishment of an interim government, the creation of a preparatory committee to decide how to write a new constitution, and the appointment of Iraqi ministers to conduct the day-to-day business of government administration. The four remaining steps could be accomplished as early as next fall: the

24. Ahmad Chalabi, “The View from Iraq,” *The Washington Post*, August 31, 2003.

25. Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, interview, *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, September 11, 2003.

26. Danielle Pletka, “Troops in Iraq: More Isn’t Better,” *The New York Times*, September 23, 2003.

27. Bernard Kerik, “Baghdad City Cop,” *The Wall Street Journal*, September 24, 2003, p. A20.

28. Brian Knowlton, “Three Senators Say Iraq Needs More U.S. Troops and Money,” *International Herald Tribune*, August 25, 2003.

writing of a new constitution, the popular ratification of the constitution, the election of a new government, and the dissolution of the coalition authority.<sup>29</sup>

Bremer's plan remains the best strategy for building a stable and democratic Iraqi government. Political legitimacy in Iraq can come only through the popular support of the Iraqi people, not through a vote of the U.N. Security Council, some members of which are led by regimes that lack popular legitimacy.

- **Accelerate the recruitment, training, and deployment of Iraqi army, police, and internal security forces.**

To free U.S. troops from stationary guard duties, police work, and routine security patrols, more Iraqi personnel need to be recruited, trained, and deployed. About 55,000 Iraqis already participate in five different security forces: the army, police, building security guards, border guards, and civil defense corps.<sup>30</sup>

The Iraqi police, with approximately 35,000 personnel, form the biggest single force, but many of them lack equipment and training. The CPA plans to expand the police force to field a force of 65,000 to 75,000 officers by the end of 2004. But local police are often reluctant to combat anti-American forces and criminal gangs because they are often outgunned and subject to intimidation because they live in the communities that they patrol.

To combat the remnants of Saddam's regime and powerful criminal gangs more effectively, Iraqi Interior Minister Nouri Badran has announced the formation of a paramilitary force composed of members of the security wings of five anti-Hussein opposition groups and former officers of Iraq's security services, screened for loyalty to the interim government. Badran hopes to field a force of 1,500 by the end of the year and eventually build up to 9,000.<sup>31</sup> Such a national police constabulary, similar to Italy's *Carabiniere*, would be much better equipped and trained than local Iraqi police forces

to deal with the terrorists and mafia-like criminal gangs that now infest Iraq.

The United States should support this Iraqi initiative while taking care to balance the need for rapid recruitment with extensive vetting to weed out pro-Baathist Iraqis. The CPA must also establish close civilian supervision, initially by Americans but ultimately by Iraqis, to ensure that this internal security force does not become as predatory and repressive as its predecessors in Iraq.

Putting an Iraqi face on internal security operations is important not only for reducing the demands on American troops to perform tasks for which they were not trained, but also for reducing the friction inevitably generated by occupying troops, no matter how benign, in a foreign land. Iraqi civilians will also be more likely to provide intelligence to Iraqi security personnel than to foreign troops.

- **Reconfigure U.S. troop deployments and concentrate them on counterinsurgency operations, aided by the Iraqi police and army.**

An American military presence is needed—augmented as much as possible by NATO allies and other nations that share the coalition's goal of building a stable and democratic Iraq—until a permanent Iraqi government is elected and becomes capable of defending itself against Baathist revanchists and other anti-democratic forces. As the Iraqi police and internal security forces gradually build up and restore law and order to Iraqi cities, American troops should be steadily withdrawn from urban areas where they are vulnerable to terrorist attack and their operations are constrained by the presence of a dense civilian population.

Coalition forces should transfer responsibility for most stationary security duties at hospitals, power plants, oil pipelines, schools, government buildings, and other critical infrastructure to Iraqis as soon as possible. About 33 percent of U.S. troops currently deployed in Baghdad are responsible for guarding buildings or other important facilities,

29. L. Paul Bremer, "Iraq's Path to Sovereignty," *The Washington Post*, September 8, 2003, p. A21.

30. Dana Priest, "Iraqi Role Grows in Security Forces," *The Washington Post*, September 5, 2003, p. A16.

31. Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Iraqi Minister Assembling Security Force," *The Washington Post*, September 18, 2003, p. A1.

down from 56 percent in July.<sup>32</sup> As more Iraqi police and security forces become available to assume these responsibilities, American troops should be reasigned to conduct counterinsurgency and counterterrorist operations to keep relentless pressure on the remnants of the Baathist regime and other hostile forces. Iraqis loyal to the interim government should be recruited by the police and the army, particularly in the intelligence branches to develop networks of informants and infiltrate the Baathist and jihadi resistance groups.

Regular U.S. Army troops, initially deployed to invade Iraq, should be gradually replaced by special forces, military police, military intelligence, civilian affairs specialists, and other personnel more suited to fighting an unconventional war against terrorists, criminal gangs, and guerillas. The heavy armor formations needed for the initial invasion should be gradually replaced with lighter forces more suitable for small-unit, search-and-destroy missions, fast reaction strikes, commando raids, and intelligence-gathering missions. Smaller and lighter forces, deployed away from population centers, will minimize friction with Iraqi civilians and require less logistical support that could be targeted for attack.

- **Upgrade border security to reduce the infiltration of foreign fighters.**

To stem the growing threat posed by non-Iraqi jihadis who are flocking to Iraq, the coalition must make a greater effort to seal Iraq's porous borders and intercept infiltrators before they can link up with compatriots inside Iraq. Particular attention needs to be paid to Iraq's borders with Iran and Syria, both of which have a long history of supporting anti-American terrorists. Iran and Syria cooperated to support the Hezbollah terrorist group in its efforts to drive the Multinational Peacekeeping Force (formed of American, British, French, and Italian troops) out of Lebanon in 1983–1984 and Israeli forces out of southern Lebanon by 2000.

Turkey, Jordan, and Kuwait can be depended upon to patrol their sides of the Iraqi border. Saudi Arabia, however, may be less cooperative in policing its border to prevent Wahhabi fundamentalists from stirring up trouble in the Sunni Arab heartland of central Iraq.

The Pentagon and Central Intelligence Agency should identify the border areas most heavily crossed by foreign infiltrators and establish aerial surveillance, communications intelligence, and human intelligence networks to closely monitor critical border regions and guide coalition and Iraqi forces to intercept infiltrators. U.S. military forces freed from security and police duties in the cities should be redeployed to sensitive border areas, along with CIA paramilitary units, Iraqi army units, and Iraqi border guards.

The United States should also finance, train, and deploy Kurdish militia forces astride the most heavily used infiltration routes. The Kurdish *pesh merga* paramilitary forces not only have a reputation as fierce fighters and a long history of fighting Baathists and Islamic radicals, but also would be dependable allies against Arabs or Iranians seeking to prevent the establishment of a pluralist Iraq. The U.S. should provide leadership, helicopter transports, intelligence, and logistical support for Kurdish units deployed on the borders and eventually fold them into multi-ethnic units of Iraq's internal security forces.

- **Keep international peacekeeping forces in a unified command under U.S. leadership.**

Washington should encourage as many other countries as possible to participate in an international peacekeeping force in Iraq, but with the clear understanding that all forces will be part of a unified command under American leadership. Setting up a separate command under the aegis of the United Nations would reduce the effectiveness of additional troops, complicate international cooperation, and raise barriers to communications and intelligence sharing. The two bombings of U.N. headquarters in Baghdad demonstrate that hostile forces are still present in Iraq, requiring more than merely routine peacekeeping duties.

- **Let the United Nations do what it does best—provide humanitarian aid, supervise elections, and coordinate postwar reconstruction efforts—but minimize its role in addressing issues on which there is no international consensus.**

32. Greg Jaffe, "Military Plans Pullback in Iraq Cities," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 18, 2003, p. A3.



The United Nations can play a constructive role in providing humanitarian aid to the Iraqi people, helping them conduct free and fair elections, and coordinating the efforts of various nations to rebuild the mismanaged, poorly maintained, and repeatedly looted infrastructure of Iraq. But as a consensus-based international organization, the U.N. does a poor job of grappling with controversial issues that divide its membership. Polarizing issues either paralyze the U.N. or lead it to adopt a lowest-common-denominator approach that papers over differences while failing to address the problem at hand effectively.<sup>33</sup>

The U.N. failed to act decisively to confront the challenge posed by Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, despite violations of 17 U.N. Security Council resolutions. There is no reason to believe that it can now act decisively to free Iraqis from the continued threat posed by Saddam's shattered regime and an influx of Islamic radicals.

Given the sharp disagreements between the United States and other Security Council members over how to construct a new political system in Iraq, handing responsibility for Iraq over to the U.N. would be a serious error. Such a surrender of authority would undermine American national interests by diminishing the prospects for establishing a stable pro-Western government in Iraq that would play a positive role in the volatile Middle East.

Moreover, a more intrusive U.N. role is not in Iraq's national interest. The disastrous record of the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Somalia and the failure of U.N. peacekeepers in Bosnia to prevent massacres in Srebrenica and other U.N.-designated safe havens are troubling precedents that give little hope for a U.N.-led political transformation in Iraq.

## Conclusion

Too many observers have been quick to jump to the conclusion that postwar American efforts to build a stable Iraq are doomed to failure, just as some of the same observers wrongly concluded that the American military campaign had gone awry after several Iraqi counterattacks had disrupted the supply lines of advancing coalition forces during the first week of the war.

Much progress has been made in postwar Iraq. Although stubborn diehards from the old regime, Islamic radicals, and criminal gangs continue to pose threats to coalition forces and the Iraqi people, these threats are manageable. Most Iraqis support an American-led political transformation in Iraq. The resistance comes from anti-democratic forces with narrow popular bases operating primarily in central Iraq.

Ultimately, only Iraqis can build a stable democratic system and defeat those opposed to that course in their country. The United States can help by organizing and empowering them to take control of their own future. More Iraqis should be enlisted to bolster security in Iraq and exorcise the ghosts of Saddam's regime and opportunistic Islamic radicals. Foreign troops can provide short-term security help, but they also bring with them a heavy long-term political handicap for Iraqi political leaders who must regain Iraq's sovereign independence.

The sooner an Iraqi face is put on the struggle against Baathism and Islamic radicalism, the sooner Iraqis will reject continued terrorist attacks. The best way to secure the peace in Iraq is therefore to transfer authority to responsible Iraqis, not to the United Nations.

—James Phillips is Research Fellow in Middle Eastern Studies in the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies at The Heritage Foundation.

33. See Nile Gardiner, Ph.D., and David B. Rivkin, Jr., Esq., "Blueprint for Freedom: Limiting the Role of the United Nations in Post-War Iraq," Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 1646, April 21, 2003, at [www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/bg1646.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/bg1646.cfm).