

Bush, Clausewitz, and Grand Strategic Imperatives: Keeping Political Ends Primary¹

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Introduction

As former President George W. Bush relinquished the reigns as Commander-in-Chief to President Barak Obama, it is fitting to reflect on how the US will remember Bush in years to come. Whether or not one agrees with his decision to commit U.S. forces to military action against Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath Party regime in Iraq, it is clear that Bush's legacy will largely be determined by how Iraq turns out – as a stable, free, and peaceful democracy or something short of that. There is certainly plenty of room for continued improvement in the conditions on the ground and ample time for the political, security, and economic situation to further deteriorate. Yet, since the so-called 'surge,' and the change in US counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq, developments have taken a fundamentally, and undeniably positive turn. It appears that a favorable outcome is plausible, if not likely. The future of the global 'war on terrorism' under the Obama administration must, and certainly will, deviate in certain facets from the policies pursued by Bush. One of the primary ways in which Barak must differ from Bush is that he must implement a Clausewitzian perspective whereby political objectives clearly guide all his grand strategic decisions.³ During the pre-surge years, President Bush did not follow Clausewitz's grand strategic imperative of first setting a clear political end that determines the means used to reach it. The consequences were several lost years, fighting for a free, stable, and democratic Iraq with resources and means incommensurate

¹ The views and opinions expressed in this essay are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Department of the Army, the US Military Academy, or any other US governmental body.

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³ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 88-89.

with that end. Bush began to get it right with his new plan for Iraq. Obama must do likewise, despite facing a severe international economic recession among other pending crises.

The Case of Iraq

Pre-War Planning and an Organizational Mistake

Although the Bush administration made several mistakes in assessing Iraq's post-invasion environment, the State Department had properly assessed much of the situation and did develop a plan for Iraqi reconstruction. The State Department outlined its plan in a massive document known as the *Future of Iraq Project*. They developed it between August 2002 and April 2003, with consultation from other agencies. Similar to Dobbins, the report envisioned many of the problems that we have since seen occur in Iraq. The report recommended 'debaathification,' but not to include the entire administration since the current institutional structure in Iraq was important for maintaining social order. The report also recommended gradually reducing the Iraqi Army by half, eventually using the element that was left for combating drug smuggling and terrorism. The project highlighted the extent 12 years of UN sanctions had crippled Iraq, and increased corruption. It emphasized the difficulty and the importance of fixing this situation soon after the invasion and suggested that oil revenues pay for it.⁴ In hindsight, the State Department seems to have had a qualified assessment of the situation. Paul Bremer and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) would have done well to follow its recommendations.

The main reason that the *Future of Iraq Project* recommendations were neglected was that (then) Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld outmaneuvered the State Department and received Bush's nod for the Defense Department to be the lead agency overseeing reconstruction efforts in Iraq.⁵ This was a problem because it meant that the US military – as the organization with the most people on the ground in Iraq and as the designated lead proponent – would form the de facto leadership in *all* state-building efforts in Iraq. This is problematic because the military is designed to fight and win armed conflicts; it is not designed to accomplish the myriad of other tasks inherent in state-building. Instead of simply focusing on the security situation, and providing a stable environment from which political, economic, civil-administrative, and humanitarian tasks could be undertaken, the military was the final authority on *all* decisions. Rumsfeld, like the military, approached the problems and tasks in Iraq from a military perspective, and therefore an operational one, rather than a strategic

⁴ The National Security Archive, "New State Department Releases on the 'Future of Iraq' Project," available at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB198/index.htm>, accessed March 14, 2008.

⁵ Bob Woodward, *State of Denial*.

political perspective. This hierarchy reverses Clausewitz's principle of political objectives determining the military means.⁶

That this occurred, and the manner in which it occurred, is both insightful and worrisome. There is little explanation for it other than the power of personality and the dynamics of political relationships within the Bush administration. (Then) Secretary of State Colin Powell did not enjoy the same access to Bush that Rumsfeld did.⁷ Technically Powell outranked Rumsfeld by holding the senior Cabinet position. It is likely that Rumsfeld's previous experience as Defense Secretary in Ford's administration was responsible for his ability to navigate Washington's political channels more capably, and demand the ear of Bush with greater frequency, skill, and effect. The result was an increased ability to secure favorable decisions for himself, and the Department of Defense. This often occurred at the expense of Powell, the State Department, and more importantly the nation. The squabble over who would lead the US's post-invasion effort was not settled by Bush's designation of the Defense Department as effectively maintaining a leadership role. There continued to be a last minute power struggle between Rumsfeld and Jay Garner (the initial US envoy to Iraq following the invasion). Instead of recognizing the need to include staff for Garner from all pertinent agencies, Rumsfeld insisted on providing him staff only from within the Defense Department. This was true even when the Defense Department was not the agency best suited to fill a position.⁸

The State Department should have been responsible for coordinating the host of state-building activities, for which it is better suited than the military. The State Department in general, and one of its subordinate organizations, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in particular, should have exerted greater engagement in meeting the needs of the Iraqi people. These organizations should have brought the people, the money, and the equipment necessary to fulfill, or hire Iraqi contractors, to complete reconstruction requirements. Instead, military commanders served as makeshift mayors over local communities, contracted, and oversaw the work that was being done. Such efforts detracted from work related to securing the towns, and outlying areas they were ultimately responsible for. It is true that such activities contribute to security by gaining the trust of a local population and it is also true that security concerns were a big part of why the State Department was not more involved. Security levels in Iraq did not permit State Department officials to travel around Iraq unescorted. However, it was also a problem that the State Department could not get substantial numbers of quality people to go to Iraq.⁹ This is because Iraq duty is dangerous and because, until recently,

⁶ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 87-89, 605.

⁷ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack*.

⁸ Bob Woodward, *State of Denial*, p. 129.

⁹ Associated Press, "With Shortage of Volunteers, U.S. State Department to Order Diplomats to Serve in Iraq," available at <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,305616,00.html>, October

the State Department's policies did not allow obligatory deployments of its people into combat zones. (Former) Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's policy overturning this outdated practice was a positive step, but occurred too late to make a difference during the decisive early stages of the post-invasion state-building efforts. So, instead of an integrated effort among the major contributing organizations (State, Defense, USAID, Treasury, CIA, and NGOs), the missions of other organizations shifted to the military.

The result, on a microscopic level, was that the military carried out tasks for which they were not specialists. On the broader level the result was that the US made military means the only means of accomplishing unclear political aims – a mistake that has been extremely costly. This occurred because Bush – not wanting to repeat the mistakes made by (former) President Lyndon B. Johnson's micromanagement during the Vietnam War – adopted a hands-off approach, preferring to defer decisions on the direction of the war to the generals on the ground. Bush mistakenly continued this approach until implementing the 'surge.'¹⁰

Other Challenges and More Mistakes

Recent years have seen the exodus of many of Iraq's upper and middle classes.¹¹ Without these individuals to form the backbone of a budding civil society, Iraq is finding the internal dimensions of its state-building task more difficult. The CPA's policies of 'debaathification' and the dismissal of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) further exacerbated this problem by removing the leadership from Iraqi institutions, and crippling their ability to properly function. It stripped them of a ready-made stability force which would have been extremely useful during the initial post invasion days when there was a window of opportunity during which the ISF could have secured Iraq's borders and prevented terrorists (foreign and domestic), those stirring up sectarian violence, and criminals from establishing substantial footholds in the post-Hussein vacuum. While the process of vetting the 485,000 Iraqi Army personnel would have been challenging, the alternative has proven significantly more costly.¹²

28, 2007, accessed May 4, 2008.

¹⁰ President George W. Bush, "President's Address to the Nation," 10 January 2007, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html>, accessed May 4, 2008.

¹¹ R. Nolan, "Global Views: Iraq's Refugees," June 12, 2007, available at http://www.fpa.org/topics_info2414/topics_info_show.htm?doc_id=509313, accessed May 4, 2008.

¹² LTC (ret.) Oliver North reported that this was the number of soldiers in the Iraqi Army when Paul Bremer disbanded it in Spring 2003. He reported this in March 2008 during his "War Stories" segment on Fox News when commemorating five years of Americans fighting for freedom in Iraq.

The past few years have seen major US-led efforts to train a new force to replace the one that Paul Bremer dismissed.¹³ These units are vital for Iraq to protect itself against internal and external threats, but it must be a dependable force. Lieutenant General (retired) William Odom and Lawrence Korb offered an alternative view of training ISF. They believe that training more ISF is counterproductive because they lack a sense of national identity. Iraqi soldiers and police may use the training they receive from American soldiers and marines to fuel more civil violence by abandoning their units and joining militias or independently carrying out vendettas they have harbored and are now equipped to act on.¹⁴ This scenario is possible, but the earlier decision to release ISF left the US with few plausible alternatives to training a new group of ISF. The US could, hypothetically, provide Iraq with a surrogate security service indefinitely or leave Iraq without its own security capability; neither of these, however, are realistic options.

The 'Surge' and a New Plan

The recent change in tactical and operational means to establish a secure and stable Iraq has been known simply as the 'surge' because of its predominant feature: a surge of approximately 30,000 additional US troops, and the training of another 100,000 Iraqi Security Forces. Bush announced this plan in January 2007. It involved more soldiers and more marines who arrived in Iraq largely between March and August 2007. They were primarily positioned in and around Baghdad and in the western province of Al Anbar, respectively.

Bush's strategic objective was for the Iraqi government to make the important decisions necessary to take the country forward politically in the 'breathing space' that the additional troops would provide by increasing security in the most troublesome and most critical areas of Iraq.¹⁵ This was a prudent decision and a significant shift from Bush's previous strategy and through it he demonstrated, for the first time since the launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom, a Clausewitzian understanding of first determining overarching political objectives, and then matching appropriate means to accomplish those ends. The new strategy also meant that Bush's strategy was based, for the first time, on correct assumptions about the conditions on the ground and what they required.¹⁶

¹³ Hannah Hickey, "Bremer defends disbanding Iraqi army as the 'most important decision I made,'" April 27, 2005, available at <http://news-service.stanford.edu/news/2005/april27/bremer-042705.html>, accessed on May 4, 2008.

¹⁴ LTG (ret.) William Odom and Lawrence Korb, "Training local forces is no way to secure Iraq," *Financial Times*, July 19, 2007.

¹⁵ President George W. Bush, "President's Address to the Nation," 10 January 2007, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html>, accessed May 4, 2008.

¹⁶ National Security Council, "Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review: Summary Briefing Slides," January 2007.

Along with the new strategy Bush appointed a new top general in Iraq, General Petraeus.

General Petraeus agreed with the new strategy and was charged with implementing it. In addition to additional manpower, Petraeus outlined new means for their tactical deployment. The new tactics coincided with those he had recently outlined in the US Army's new counterinsurgency manual; *FM 3-24*.¹⁷ The new operational philosophy was a return to counterinsurgency principles long understood and employed by the US Army Special Forces. Now all US ground troops in Iraq utilize them. Petraeus' new tactics involved a greater dispersion of troops among the Iraqis. It moved US and Iraqi soldiers from a few heavily protected enclaves to many smaller patrol bases. These were run at the company and platoon level instead of at the battalion, brigade, or higher level, as had previously been done. The plan recognized that an increased tactical presence would hinder the operations, planning, and safe dwelling of insurgents, terrorists, and those fermenting sectarian violence.

Petraeus' operational concept centered on a proven counterinsurgency strategy that involves: securing the 'hearts and minds' of the local populace by orienting security missions towards a population-based security strategy, instead of a target-based security strategy. This is important because it recognizes that long-term success is contingent on securing the support of the local population. If a majority of citizens feel safe, they will tend to have a more favorable impression of their government and of the US's involvement in their country. They will also be more likely to provide information leading to further arrests of violent and criminal elements.

A further goal of the new plan is best expressed by three words: "Clear, Hold, and Build."¹⁸ 'Surge' troops and Petraeus' new tactics constitute the 'clear' portion of the plan. The 'hold' phase involves holding the security gains garnered during the 'clear' phase, even after authority for a sector's security is transferred to Iraqis. The 'build' phase entails building on the security gains to do the other work involved in state-building. This means improving local civil administration, making infrastructure and reconstruction improvements, and fostering political progress and the development of an enduring civil society.

The State Department chipped in with the advent of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). Rice began the PRT program in November 2005, but the teams are now an integral part of the 'build' phase of the new US plan in Iraq. PRTs operate in all eighteen provinces of Iraq and primarily involve civilian elements, but coordinate their actions with the military brigade who has responsibility for the area in which they are working. PRTs focus on three of the five

¹⁷ FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency, available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf>, accessed May 4, 2008.

¹⁸ "Strategy for Victory in Iraq: Clear, Hold, and Build," March 20, 2006, available at <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/63423.htm>, accessed May 4, 2008.

portions of Dobbins' plan for successful state-building: political institutions and democratization, civil administration, and economic reconstruction.¹⁹ The PRTs relieve the military of some of its additional duties and enable it to focus on the security mission – a task for which it has been trained and for which it is well equipped. Although all details have yet to surface, the initial assessment is that PRTs have been successful in furthering the state-building effort.²⁰

There are signs that the 'surge' is working. Until recent violence around Basra in spring 2008, the security situation had returned to 2004 to 2005 levels in most quantifiable measures. This included number of attacks, number of Iraqi and US casualties (military and civilian), and levels of Iraqi displacement (internal and external). The level of oil production has nearly returned to prewar levels. There is \$100 million (USD) per year flowing from Baghdad to the average Iraqi province (compared to \$0 in 2004). And Iraq's global rank for corruption is at its lowest level since 2003.²¹ These indicators demonstrate that the 'surge' has produced favorable results.

The real measurement of the 'surge's' success, however, is not the improved security situation now. That is an indicator of tactical, or at best, operational success. Strategic success will be measured in two parts. The first factor is whether the ISF are robust enough to maintain the security gains when the 'surge' troops are redeployed from Iraq. This will test their competence, will, and loyalty. The result will either prove Bush correct for pursuing this mid-course correction in strategy, or prove Odom and Korb correct in their assessment that the training of the ISF was a mistake because Iraqis' true loyalties lie along tribal, ethnic, and religious lines rather than with the national government.

The second lasting measurement of success is whether Iraqis take the remaining, and most important, political steps and compromises necessary to unite their country. This is largely beyond US control – besides diplomatic leveraging to pressure the Iraqi executive and their legislators. Several developments demonstrate the beginnings of a national identity and increased political competence. On February 13, 2008, the Iraqi government conducted a logrolling maneuver to pass important legislation that constituted an important compromise between the various ethnic groups over contentious issues, including the level of power for the central government.²² The 2008 offensive

¹⁹ Provincial Reconstruction Teams Fact Sheet, March 20, 2008, available at http://iraq.usembassy.gov/pr_01222008b.html, accessed May 4, 2008.

²⁰ General (ret.) Barry McCaffrey, "General McCaffrey Iraq AAR," available at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/12/general-mccaffrey-iraq-aar/>, accessed May 4, 2008.

²¹ Jason H. Campbell and Michael E. O'Hanlon, "The State of Iraq: An Update," March 23, 2008, available at http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/0309_iraq_ohanlon.aspx, accessed April 24, 2008.

²² Jason Gluck, "Iraq's Unheralded Political Progress," *Foreign Policy*, March 2008, available at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4236&print=1, accessed April 24, 2008.

in Basra demonstrates that Maliki will not cater to Shiites and their militias on all issues, and five of the eleven political benchmarks have arguably been achieved.²³ One of the central objectives yet to be accomplished in the political arena, is also one of the largest and most difficult issues – oil revenue sharing. This issue and outcomes on the status of Kirkuk and continued negotiation over the power balance between the central government and the provinces will determine whether Iraq is politically viable over the long term.

Looking Back and Ahead

What Went Wrong?

Assuming the decision for war, the fundamental problem was that the administration did not have one clear political aim. The political objectives were incongruous and each required different means to achieve them.²⁴ This led to the deployment of means not best suited to accomplish what, over time, has become the only political goal – a democratic Iraq. In addition, the State Department should have led the post-invasion reconstruction efforts instead of the Department of Defense. This together with the US's poor organization for state-building meant the US was not prepared to win the peace that followed the war. As for the smaller yet still significant mistakes the US made, I succinctly state below what I cover in more detail in other areas of this paper:

1. Miscalculation on the number of troops that would be required for post-invasion stability;
2. Disbanding the Iraqi Army and police forces;
3. Debaathification;
4. Abu Ghraib and other horrible incidents;
5. Employing a target-based security strategy versus a population-based security strategy. This strategy entailed staying in military enclaves versus dispersing into smaller and more numerous bases among the people;
6. A poor public relations campaign that does not consistently register well with Americans or Iraqis and is beat by insurgent and terrorist propaganda;

²³ Jason H. Campbell and Michael E. O'Hanlon, "*The State of Iraq: An Update*," March 23, 2008, available at http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/0309_iraq_ohanlon.aspx, accessed April 24, 2008.

²⁴ Chris Angevine, a joint Law – International Relations graduate from Yale University and a Fulbright Scholar, mentioned this in a talk we had about Professor Odom's take on what went wrong in the Iraq War, April 28, 2008.

7. Employing too narrow a view of the global ‘war on terrorism,’ or the “struggle against violent extremists.” This view results in too heavy a focus on the *military* aspects of the struggle instead of on the intelligence, law enforcement, financial, public relations, and the long term battle of *ideas* and of *values*.

It is striking to notice that all of these, except for the notable exception of numbers four through six, have been primarily political in nature. Abu Ghraib and other similar abuses are horrific and have been terribly damaging to state-building efforts in Iraq. They also tarnished the US’s image in the world. However, these are not reflective of the entire US military and it has pursued justice for the wrong doers.²⁵ As for number six, Petraeus addressed this mistake with his new operational methods and progress is being made with security gains and regaining the trust of the Iraqi people.

Keeping Sight of the Political Context in Clausewitzian Fashion

Obama needs to publicly redefine victory in Iraq in a political context. Bush and his administration often spoke of ‘winning in Iraq’ or achieving ‘victory in Iraq,’ but their terminology was imprecise. What is victory, and at what level are they referring to victory? Political victory, and hence success in Iraq, means a viable (preferably democratic) Iraq able to govern and protect itself without external assistance. This should be the US’s current aim in Iraq and what victory implies. Obama agrees. A White House document that accompanied the ‘surge’ indicates that the current US strategic goal is “a unified democratic federal Iraq that can govern itself, defend itself, and sustain itself, and is an ally in the War on Terror.”²⁶ The problem is that it has not been well communicated to the American public. This understanding of victory was largely lost when Bush spoke of ‘winning in Iraq.’ The context is often tied to the military and the correlation with the broader political context for the US’s state-building in Iraq is lost in the discussion about the ebb and flow of the security situation.

The new administration under Obama needs to shift focus from US military Generals to the political process. Prior to the surge, President Bush adopted an approach of regularly indicating he would simply follow the recommendations of the commanders on the ground in Iraq who understood the security situation. His point, understandably, was to make decisions based upon the facts on the ground. Bush did not want to cater to domestic political calls for what he

²⁵ At least twelve soldiers have been convicted of various charges related to the Abu Ghraib incident, all including dereliction of duty. More information is available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu_Ghraib_torture_and_prisoner_abuse#Courts-martial.2C_nonjudicial.2C_and_administrative_punishment, accessed May 4, 2008.

²⁶ National Security Council, “*Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review: Summary Briefing Slides*,” January 2007.

saw as artificial timelines for bringing troops home. He believed that a troop drawdown must be attached to the conditions on the ground. The theory behind this is sound. Coupled with Bush's motivation to avoid micromanaging the military, one can understand Bush's *laissez faire* approach toward his Generals.

But Generals require strong strategic leadership to set proper parameters for political aims, and subsequently what their missions should consist of. The various aims touted for the Iraq War entailed different missions for the military. Three of the top reasons for invading Iraq were: regime change; the dismantling of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program; and instilling a democratic regime. These three political aims all require significantly different military missions.²⁷ For instance, a military operation could potentially accomplish the first two objectives with little external assistance, and in months. On the other hand, the third objective takes years and requires much more than merely military operations, but a long-term, well coordinated interagency effort. Bush failed to provide appropriate strategic leadership because he failed to provide the military leadership a clear political aim. A clear "political purpose (which is) the supreme consideration"²⁸ is necessary for Generals to develop a military mission which fits that objective. When provided, the political aim enables war to be one appropriate means of reaching the end, simply "the continuation of policy by other means."²⁹

Bush did change commanders in Iraq, and of the US Central Command prior to implementing the 'surge,' thereby illustrating his role as Commander-in-Chief. Yet since the surge, Bush has continued to publicly elevate Petraeus more so than Ryan Crocker, the American Ambassador to Iraq. The result is that the US views Petraeus as a potential savior of the US endeavor in Iraq, but hardly knows who Ambassador Crocker is. This is problematic because it shifts the focus to the military – with accompanying expectations that they will be able to accomplish the job alone – and away from the political realm, where the lasting work is to be done. Bush's rhetoric probably does not reflect his true priorities, but merely the context of the current situation, and a favorable manner by which to sell the 'surge.' It is an effective tactic because it elevates the military, shifts focus and responsibility away from Bush, and capitalizes on the respect and support that the American public has for the US military. However, together with Bush's failure to articulate a clear political aim, it is troubling. At worst, these are an indication that Bush did not understand Clausewitzian grand strategic principles. At least, it sends a wrong signal to the American public that the military situation is ultimately the driving force in Iraq when in

²⁷ Chris Angevine, a joint Law – International Relations graduate from Yale University and a Fulbright Scholar, mentioned this in a talk we had about Professor Odom's take on what went wrong in the Iraq War, April 28, 2008.

²⁸ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 87.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

reality the political situation both in Iraq and in the US should be what shapes the military's involvement.

Organizing for State-Building

Thomas Barnett offers a possible solution to the US's poor organizational structure for state-building. His plan is meant to organize for mission accomplishment, facilitating winning the long term state-building struggle that the US currently faces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo. He advocates splitting the US military into two elements, a Leviathan Force and a Systems Administration Force. The first would have the mission of winning US wars; the second of winning the peace. The first would tear down networks; the second would build them. The former would retain the bulk of US conventional military capability, particularly heavy armor units and Special Forces. A mix of light infantry and psychological operations units would comprise the latter, along with elements from the State Department and other agencies. The Leviathan Force would not be subject to the International Criminal Court (ICC), while the Systems Administration Force would.³⁰

Barnett's idea for restructuring and redefining the mission of various elements involved in America's state-building endeavors offers a unique approach, and one that the country should strongly consider. While his concept is not without fault and he does not offer enough details to make the concept implementation ready, he does base his ideas on developing a more fitting approach to matching ends with appropriate means. His transformation – in organization and mission – would better equip the US to meet global needs. It also provides a solution to current US weaknesses by better utilizing existing capabilities. Finally, Barnett's concept could form the basis of a strategic compromise between the EU and the US in the 'long war' against terrorism.³¹ The two actors may be able to resolve some of their post 9/11 differences over perspectives for waging the war against terrorism and reach common ground on important values to defend, and a methodology for so doing.

Final Thoughts

The problem is a political one at its core, and one that the US now has little direct control over. The US can set the conditions for success for Iraq, to include substantial assistance on the security front – both in direct terms on the streets and in training the ISF, both of which the US continues to do. However, political

³⁰ Thomas Barnett, "*The Pentagon's New Map for War and Peace*," February 2005, available at <http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/view/id/33>, accessed March 23, 2008.

³¹ Michael Howard, "*What's In A Name?: How to Fight Terrorism*," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2002, available at <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20020101facomment6553/michael-howard/what-s-in-a-name-how-to-fight-terrorism.html>, accessed May 4, 2008.

progress on contentious issues is up to the Iraqis. The Iraqis' logrolling on February 13, 2008 offers hope on the political front in Iraq, but much remains to be done to demonstrate that the success experienced a year ago was not an isolated incident.³²

In a general sense, what the US can and must do is facilitate Iraqi ownership of their country. The transition in US presidents can facilitate this shift in security responsibility. Obama's statements during the campaign to withdraw US combat forces within sixteen months of taking office³³ adds pressure to Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and his administration to rapidly prove they are able to govern and secure their country without massive amounts of US military forces. Obama can increase political leverage with Maliki and even give the latter better bargaining power with his fellow Iraqi leaders by making elements of future aid conditional on successful achievement of certain political, security, and economic benchmarks. In the meantime, Obama must focus on the grand strategic imperative. He must clearly and consistently communicate the political aim, continue allocating appropriate means toward its accomplishment, and adapt those means as conditions change.

Specifically, the US needs to continue the population-based security strategy, while realizing it is a means toward the end and not the end in itself. The US should increase the number of PRTs and their resources to bolster their capabilities. The work they do is critical to long term success by contributing to better security, to an improved economy, and to better governance. The US needs to continue training, equipping, and transferring greater authority and responsibility to ISF, while preparing a thorough plan for a responsible and phased withdrawal of the 'surge' troops. The US should plan for withdrawing more units, but should not execute further withdrawals until conducting a reassessment after the initial drawdown is complete.

The US must also engage the regional powers that can help Iraq develop Westphalian sovereignty.³⁴ The US needs to encourage states in the Middle East to develop a Regional Security Pact.³⁵ The Pact needs to address political and diplomatic, economic, security, and humanitarian dimensions. It will not be easy to negotiate, but it is a realistic way to address Iran's negative involvement in Iraq. It is realistic because each state in the region has a stake in preventing the explosion of a regional conflict and an even greater humanitarian crisis than has been experienced to date. Despite the costs, challenges, and past mistakes,

³² Jason Gluck, "Iraq's Unheralded Political Progress," *Foreign Policy*, March 2008, available at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4236&print=1, accessed April 24, 2008.

³³ Senator Barack Obama, "Obama-Biden Website: War in Iraq," available at <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/iraq/>, accessed January 19, 2009.

³⁴ Stephen Krasner, "Sovereignty, Organized Hypocrisy," p. 11–20.

³⁵ Professor Jolyon Howorth, during his *Europe, the U.S., and the Iraq Crisis* class at Yale University, April 24, 2008.

the US cannot afford to abandon Iraq, or to continue indefinitely at current levels of military and financial involvement.³⁶ Based on his extensive campaign rhetoric to the contrary, we can expect Obama to withdraw the bulk of US forces from Iraq by the mid-term election in two years or before. As he does so, he should follow the general policy guidance I have outlined, while maintaining the Clausewitzian imperative of keeping political aims at the forefront of US' grand strategic objectives. This constitutes the best and most realistic opportunity for a stable, sovereign Iraq. These factors will be key to Obama's ability to successfully negotiate the transition of American forces out of Iraq, and they will be central to Bush's ultimate legacy.

³⁶ This is true in a military sense because of the toll that repeated deployments take on military personnel, their families, and enlistment. It is also true financially. Although the US could sustain financial support for current levels of involvement in the Iraq War for a long time, it cannot do so indefinitely and certainly not without significant tradeoffs in the level of financial support available for domestic programs. This is especially true in light of the ongoing US and global recessions.

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