

POLICY PAPER  
Number 3, September 2007

# The United Nations in Iraq

CARLOS PASCUAL



# The United Nations in Iraq

CARLOS PASCUAL

This paper was commissioned by the Better World Campaign, a sister organization of the United Nations Foundation, as part of a series of papers developed for the 2008 Presidential campaign on strategies for enhancing international cooperation to address global challenges and advance U.S. interests. The views represented in the paper are those of the author and are not attributable to the Brookings Institution or the Better World Campaign.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

---

Carlos Pascual is a Brookings vice president and director of the Foreign Policy Studies Program. Pascual most recently served as Secretary Rice's lead adviser to create a new U.S. government capacity to manage stabilization and reconstruction in failed and conflict-ridden areas of the globe. A former Ambassa-

dor to Ukraine and Senior Director on the National Security Council staff during the Clinton Administration, his areas of expertise include post-conflict stabilization, international security policy, nonproliferation, economic development, and regions such as Europe, Russia and Ukraine.

# IRAQ: NOT JUST AMERICA'S PROBLEM

---

Stabilizing Iraq has become an issue of massive global and regional consequence. At stake are the risks of a wider regional conflict between Sunni and Shi'a and perhaps between Arabs and Persians, humanitarian tragedy spreading over multiple states, a platform for international terrorism, and disruptions to oil production and transit from the single most critical region affecting global oil markets. A serious and calibrated United Nations role is both justified and necessary, even if success cannot be guaranteed.

U.S. experience in Iraq has demonstrated that a largely unilateral and military-focused approach to stability will not work. Decades of international expe-

rience underscore that, first and foremost, a political agreement among the warring Iraqi parties is needed for a sustainable peace and that long-term multilateral engagement is necessary to create a chance for its successful implementation.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime, the humanitarian and security consequences emerging from Iraq threaten the entire region and those with a stake in its security and resources. As much as Iraq has become a domestic issue in the United States, and as much as other nations may want to distance themselves from American failures in Iraq, Iraq is not just an American problem – and there are no viable American unilateral solutions.

---

<sup>1</sup> U.N. General Assembly and Security Council, 55th Session, "Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations" (A/55/305-S/2000/809), 21 August 2000. Available: [http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace\\_operations/](http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/); accessed 30 May 2007.

# SETTING THE FRAMEWORK: WHAT THE UN BRINGS TO THE TABLE

---

The United Nations should play to its strengths in Iraq: neutrality, legitimacy, humanitarian capacity, and the ability to mobilize a multilateral response. The UN cannot be seen as acting for the U.S. but as leading multilateral reengagement on an issue of regional and global consequence. The UN's effectiveness will depend on the willingness of Iraqi parties to engage in brokering and implementing a peace agreement, whether regional players recognize that they have a stake in peace in Iraq, whether the U.S. actively seeks and facilitates UN engagement, and whether the UN and the United States can coordinate international diplomacy with American forces to create incentives for Iraqis and regional players to support a viable peace in Iraq.

To be effective, the UN also must be mindful of its shortcomings, and member states must take seriously that they constitute the UN. Members of the Security Council must place international imperative over political bickering. Given widespread anti-American sentiments, some countries will be content to see the United States continue to be bogged down in a protracted and humiliating quagmire. China and Russia could play a constructive role if they could act on their interests in stability in the Middle East and international energy markets to advocate a responsible UN role to seek a viable place in Iraq. All member states have to put behind them the controversies of the Oil for Food program, drawing lessons on corruption and transparency from past management mistakes. Brokering a peace agreement cannot be business as usual for the UN – it will require a unique team with flexibility and authority. The UN organs need to recognize their limitations, and the Secretary

General and member states will need to commit the resources needed to coordinate and act effectively.

With these considerations in mind, this paper raises four possible roles for the UN in Iraq:

- A comprehensive response to refugees and to stabilize population movements,
- Brokering a political settlement,
- Mobilizing an international mission to support peace, or,
- If a political solution is not within reach, mobilizing and coordinating an international response to contain the war.

The first two roles require immediate engagement. The latter two require urgent planning. Whether the UN can effectively perform the latter two roles will hinge on whether Iraqis agree to a political agreement that establishes the foundations for governance in Iraq. Without this, a UN role in reconstruction in Iraq will be as feckless as the American effort. Without at least attempting to broker a political agreement, even if it fails, it will be virtually impossible to get the international community to engage seriously in containing the spillover from an Iraqi civil war. The United States should unequivocally support a strong and appropriate UN role in Iraq. If the UN cannot make progress in these areas, the United States will shoulder the costs and risks, including further damage to its reputation, from failure in Iraq.

Some will ask why the UN might succeed in brokering a political settlement in Iraq when the United States has failed. As argued further in this paper, the

probabilities are low, but there is still at least a chance of achieving a political compact among the parties through a serious, internationally mediated effort. The United States has told the Iraqis what they should do, but it has not engaged in a systematic process supported visibly at the highest levels of government to broker a political settlement. The second reason is that the UN can present itself as a neutral actor and with good diplomacy could mobilize support from a wide range of European and Muslim countries who opposed the war. That would add international legitimacy and credibility, which might particularly help in getting the neighboring states to act constructively. The United States would still need to play a leading military and diplomatic role, but it would not be a lone actor.

It is equally important to stress what the UN cannot do: replace the U.S. military role in Iraq. As argued below, neither the United States nor the UN can achieve a military victory in Iraq's civil war. Substituting a UN military mission for U.S. forces without a political settlement will produce the same result: thousands of UN casualties to establish pockets of stability that are completely unsustainable without international forces. It is hard to conceive of any country that would contribute troops to such a mission. If the United States were not already in Iraq, we certainly would not. Even if others did send troops, it would take little time for the UN to come under the same political pressures from its members that the Bush administration faces from the Congress and public to withdraw.

# SETTING THE CONTEXT: SECTARIAN CIVIL WAR AND A FAILED STATE

---

Two fundamental realities define Iraq in 2007: a sectarian civil war and a failed state. To these, add transnational terrorism, organized and unorganized crime, an internal humanitarian tragedy, and the world's biggest emerging international refugee crisis. There can be no sustainable progress in Iraq until the core realities of the civil war and a failed state are addressed.

The January 2007 National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq, reflecting the concurrence of the 16 heads of the U.S. intelligence agencies, concluded that Iraq's growing polarization, the weakness of the state, and the "ready recourse to violence are driving an increase in communal and insurgent violence and political extremism" that is likely to get worse unless the U.S. and Iraqi governments are able to find some way to reverse this trend.<sup>2</sup> The August 2007 National Intelligence Estimate notes pockets of improvements where coalition forces conduct counter-insurgency operations, but overall violence "remains high; Iraq's sectarian groups remain unreconciled; [and] AQI (Al

Qaeda in Iraq) retains the ability to conduct high-profile attacks."<sup>3</sup> Shiites mistrust U.S. efforts at reconciliation. In Basra, Shi'a militias are fighting each other for power.<sup>4</sup>

The August 2007 National Intelligence Estimate further affirms that "Iraqi political leaders remain unable to govern effectively"<sup>5</sup> and that the "Iraqi Government will become more precarious over the next 12 months."<sup>6</sup> Sunnis "believe the central government is illegitimate and incompetent."<sup>7</sup> Sunnis who have cooperated with American forces in mid-2007 to oppose Al Qaeda in Iraq also intensely oppose the Shi'a dominated government. The Kurds are systematically increasing control over Kirkuk, a center of oil wealth, which will provoke another source of conflict with the Sunnis. Al Qaeda in Iraq has established itself as an independent franchise, drawing recruits from the Gulf and North Africa.<sup>8</sup> The Iraqi Security Forces "will be hard pressed in the next 12-18 months to execute significantly increased security responsibilities."<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> National Intelligence Estimate, *Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead*, January 2007. Available: [http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/politics/20070203\\_intel\\_text.pdf](http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/politics/20070203_intel_text.pdf); accessed: 4 February 2007.

<sup>3</sup> National Intelligence Estimate, *Prospects for Iraq's Stability: Some Security Progress but Political Reconciliation Still Elusive*, August 2007, p.1. Available: <http://thinkprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/08/august-2007-nie.pdf>; accessed: 23 August 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Karen DeYoung and Thomas E. Ricks, "As British Leave, Basra Deteriorates," *Washington Post*, 7 August 2007.

<sup>5</sup> National Intelligence Estimate, *Prospects for Iraq's Stability: Some Security Progress but Political Reconciliation Still Elusive*, August 2007, p.1. Available: <http://thinkprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/08/august-2007-nie.pdf>; accessed: 23 August 2007.

<sup>6</sup> National Intelligence Estimate, *Prospects for Iraq's Stability: Some Security Progress but Political Reconciliation Still Elusive*, August 2007, p.3. Available: <http://thinkprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/08/august-2007-nie.pdf>; accessed: 23 August 2007.

<sup>7</sup> National Intelligence Estimate, *Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead*, January 2007. Available: [http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/politics/20070203\\_intel\\_text.pdf](http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/politics/20070203_intel_text.pdf); accessed: 4 February 2007.

<sup>8</sup> National Intelligence Estimate, *Terrorists Threats to the Homeland*, July 2007. Available: [http://dni.gov/press\\_releases/20070717\\_release.pdf](http://dni.gov/press_releases/20070717_release.pdf); accessed: 7 August 2007. Rasheed Abou-Alsamh, "Anti-Saudi Tide Rises in Iraq," *Christian Science Monitor*, 9 August 2007. Available: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0809/p01s05-wome.html?page=3>; accessed: 9 August 2007.

<sup>9</sup> National Intelligence Estimate, *Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead*, January 2007. Available: [http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/politics/20070203\\_intel\\_text.pdf](http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/politics/20070203_intel_text.pdf); accessed: 4 February 2007.

In other words, sectarian interests often backed by militias dominate Iraqi politics and the streets. Iraq's civil war is a different challenge from the military invasion of 2003. The United States is not pitted against a specific enemy. At times President Bush has cited Al Qaeda as the enemy.<sup>10</sup> The U.S. military claimed in July 2007 that most recent attacks on U.S. forces have come from renegade Shi'a militias supported by Iran.<sup>11</sup> The reality is that there are no clear protagonists, and almost all actors have been associated with violence. The United States is interjecting itself between enemies. Even if the insertion of U.S. forces arguably has deterred a wider and more brutal sectarian war, that alone is not sustainable. And that would be just as true for UN forces as for the United States.

The call for a brokered political agreement in Iraq must be seen in this context of sectarian civil war. Civil wars in Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Haiti, South Africa, and Northern Ireland have all demonstrated that peace cannot be achieved without a political agreement among the warring parties. Military force can help induce a political settlement or create space to implement it, but force alone cannot sustain peace. In tiny Kosovo, for example, a concentration of NATO forces three times greater than in Iraq cannot indefinitely quell internal unrest if an agreement cannot be reached between the Kosovar Albanians and the Serbs.<sup>12</sup> Even when parties can reach agreements, they often fail – and it could very well be the case that Iraqis simply are not “done fighting.” Shiias may still believe they can “win.” Sunnis are committed to making sure that Shi'a do not. Militias may be so splintered that it is difficult for any actor to rein them in or for any group of leaders to speak credibly on behalf of the sectarian groups they claim to represent.

All of these factors make peace in Iraq a long shot. That should not stop serious attempts at reconciliation, but the efforts must match the complexity of the task. The U.S. setting political benchmarks will not cause reconciliation to spontaneously generate. Progress will require outside help from a neutral party that does not have a direct stake in the war. The United States is part of the conflict and cannot play this role. Every major regional organization will be perceived as taking sides. The UN is the only body that approximates neutrality and can claim all the relevant state actors within its membership.

If the path to stability is uncertain, what should be clear is that the current American strategy for reconciliation – setting benchmarks and demanding that a failed Iraqi state achieve them – will lead nowhere. As of August 2007, three major political blocs have withdrawn from the cabinet and the parliament.<sup>13</sup> The state cannot perform most basic functions such as maintaining law and order and providing security for its people. It is also unrealistic to expect Iraq to fix itself through a sequential process of passing laws and holding elections and referendums. Issues such as oil revenues, federal regional relations, and the question of de-Baathification are inter-related. It is unrealistic to expect warring parties to settle on part of this equation without understanding the outcomes on related issues.

If peace is not achieved, the spillover from Iraq could threaten the entire region. The refugee crisis, as discussed in the next section, could become a new source of instability and conflict, as major refugee displacements have in virtually every other part of the world. Insurgent groups would likely cross borders seeking support, recruits and perhaps to widen con-

---

<sup>10</sup> “The key theater in this global war is Iraq. Our troops are serving bravely in that country. They’re opposing ruthless enemies, and no enemy is more ruthless in Iraq than al Qaeda.” (President George W. Bush, Remarks On The Global War On Terror, Charleston, SC, 24 July 2007. Available: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/07/20070724-3.html>; accessed: 9 August 2007.)

<sup>11</sup> Kim Gamel, “No. 2 U.S. Commander Says Rogue Shiite Militiamen Have Become Responsible for Many Attacks,” *Washington Post*, 5 August 2007; accessed: 9 August 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Carlos Pascual and Kenneth M. Pollack, “The Critical Battles: Political Reconciliation and Reconstruction in Iraq,” *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 3, Summer 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Iraq Index: *Tracking Variables Reconstruction and Security in Post-Saddam Iraq*, 13 August 2007, p. 37. Available: <http://www3.brookings.edu/fp/saban/iraq/index.pdf>; accessed: 9 August 2007.

flict. Neighbors would likely be drawn further into backing sectarian brethren. Wider instability would help Al Qaeda franchises gain stronger holds in the region, including the potential for further destabilization in Lebanon. A referendum in Kirkuk and signs of Kurdish nationalism could risk Turkey acting in Kurdistan. All these factors would create greater instability around Israel. And beyond the region, the

risks to energy production and transit would likely manifest themselves in yet higher prices – radically so if there are real disruptions to supply when there is virtually no spare short-term oil production capacity outside of the Gulf.<sup>14</sup>

These are not just U.S. issues. The global and regional stakes call for UN engagement.

---

<sup>14</sup> For an overview of international oil supply options, see the 10 August 2007 International Energy Association Oil Market Report (<http://omrpublic.iea.org/archiveresults.asp?formsection=full+issue&formdate=2007&Submit=Submit>), especially pp. 18-27. The Saudis continue to have the largest spare capacity at about 2 million barrels per day (mbd). Russia is producing far above historical trends and is seen to have little spare capacity. Neither Nigeria nor Iraq are reliable fallbacks for oil. A disruption or perceived disruption in Gulf oil production or transit, with few ready alternatives, could produce sharp price hikes and fuel international speculation.

# MANAGING THE REFUGEE CRISIS

---

Regardless of one's political views of the Bush Administration or the war in Iraq, the plight of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons demands a coordinated international response. Already almost 2.2 million refugees have fled Iraq, and another 2 million have been displaced internally.<sup>15</sup> Most are in Syria (1.2 million) and Jordan (estimates range from 350,000 to 750,000). The history of other major civil wars suggests that several million more people might also seek refuge in neighboring states if they can get out of Iraq or if other countries will let them in.<sup>16</sup> As of August 2007, the main international strategy to cope with Iraqi refugees has been inadequate support to governments hosting Iraqis and efforts to resettle Iraqis in groups of thousands when the problem is in the millions. The UN Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees must lead a new international response.

The next phase of refugees will present a different scale of crisis. Most of the "early" refugees have been

professionals, living off savings and drawing on the hospitality of extended families. That trend is changing. More than half of the professional class has left the country. Savings have been exhausted. "New" refugees have fewer resources, many are victims of violence, and there is little resilience left in family networks.<sup>17</sup> The International Organization for Migration documented that 86% of those who fled said they were targeted because they belonged to a certain religion or sect.<sup>18</sup> Religious minorities and people in mixed marriages can no longer live safely. Those who have had an active role with the U.S., UN, or other international organizations have been targeted by militias. Increasingly, the very people needed to rebuild Iraq do not live there.

In the future, displaced Iraqis are more likely to gather in ad hoc camps, emerging out of desperation despite the reluctance of regional governments who do not want problems imported into their territories. Already, eight percent of the internally displaced live in such camps<sup>19</sup>. Jordan has closed its border, and Syria

---

<sup>15</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Iraq Situation Continues to Worsen, Local Governorates Overwhelmed." Available: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/iraq?page=briefing&cid=46653e804>; accessed 24 July 2007. Refugees International, "Iraq: The World's Fastest Growing Refugee Crisis," 5 July 2007. Available: <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/content/article/detail/9679>; accessed: 27 July 2007. International Organization for Migration, International Organization for Migration, Iraq Displacement: 2007 Mid-Year Review, July 2007, p.2. Available: <http://www.iom-iraq.net/Library/2007%20Iraq%20Displacement%20Mid-Year%20Review.pdf>; accessed 24 July 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollack, Things Fall Apart: Containing the Spillover from an Iraqi Civil War, Analysis Paper 11, The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution (January 2007), pp. 3-7. According to Byman and Pollack, recent civil wars such as in Lebanon, Kosovo, and Congo resulted in 10-25% of the total populations crossing borders as refugees.

<sup>17</sup> For a descriptive account of the fate of refugees in Jordan, see <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/10/world/middleeast/10refugees.html?ex=1187409600&en=9bff725129c88d77&ei=5070&cenc=eta1>

<sup>18</sup> International Organization for Migration, Iraq Displacement: 2007 Mid-Year Review, July 2007, p.2. Available: <http://www.iom-iraq.net/Library/2007%20Iraq%20Displacement%20Mid-Year%20Review.pdf>; accessed 24 July 2007.

<sup>19</sup> International Organization for Migration, International Organization for Migration, Iraq Displacement: 2007 Mid-Year Review, July 2007, p.4. Available: <http://www.iom-iraq.net/Library/2007%20Iraq%20Displacement%20Mid-Year%20Review.pdf>; accessed 24 July 2007.

may try to. Within Iraq, governates are also closing their borders. Syria and Jordan argue that their social services have reached a breaking point, even with outside aid, and within Iraq such services are unavailable or overstretched. Problems for women are particularly acute. As males are killed in the war, there are more female-headed households, and women face particular hardship relocating. All of this is adding to the prospects for implosion and exploitation.

Iraqis remaining at home will continue to be threatened by a war that has claimed 50,000-150,000 civilian lives since 2003.<sup>20</sup> The potential loss of life is difficult to estimate. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country of about 4.4 million (less than one fifth of Iraq's population), 100,000-110,000<sup>21</sup> civilians and military died during the war from 1992 to 1995. The war that led to Pakistan's separation from India in 1947 claimed on the order of 300,000 lives, and another 300,000 were killed when Bangladesh split from Pakistan in 1971. It is difficult to extrapolate from these experiences to the level of killing one might see in Iraq if the mitigating influence of outside militaries were removed. Compared to the India-Pakistan partition, Iraq may present a more complex humanitarian challenge: more weapons, multiple armed groups rather than two major protagonists, and predominantly sectarian violence, not based on national identity or territories to which populations could withdraw in an uneasy truce.

The UN already has authority to act on refugee issues, but it needs resources and a renewed perspective to do so effectively. Three levels of action are needed.

- In New York, Secretary General Ban should task OCHA and UNHCR to coordinate a strategy for refugees and displaced persons commensurate with the problem. The strategy should address the capacity of neighboring states to cope with more displaced Iraqis, humanitarian assistance and social services, humanitarian aid corridors into Iraq, employment issues, security options inside and outside Iraq, and the implications for eventual returns to Iraq. International resettlement should continue to be part of the strategy, but it cannot be the core of the strategy given the numbers involved. An international appeal commensurate with the new strategy should be launched.<sup>22</sup> The Secretary General should present the strategy to the Security Council for endorsement in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1770 (check – passed Friday). OCHA should convene as needed ministerial or sub-ministerial meetings that ensure high-level engagement from regional actors and key donors and should regularly report back to the Security Council.
- In Amman, UNHCR, with support from OCHA and IOM, should establish a regional task force on the refugee crisis. At a minimum, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Kuwait, Lebanon, the U.S., and the EU should participate. The task force should meet at least twice a month, and on an ad hoc basis as needed, to create a regular venue to foresee problems, coordinate responses, identify funding

---

<sup>20</sup> *International Herald Tribune*, "Iraqi Health Minister Estimates as Many as 150,000 Iraqis Killed by Insurgents," *The Associated Press*, 9 November 2006. Ellen Knickmeyer, "One-Day Iraq Toll Is Highest for U.S. In Many Months," *Washington Post Foreign Service*, 19 October 2006.

<sup>21</sup> The original death toll estimate by the Bosnian government after the war was around 200,000. This figure has been widely quoted by the Western media. The United Nations' agencies had previously estimated 278,000 killed and missing persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They also recorded around 1,325,000 refugees and exiles. The current estimates are more modest: around 100,000 Bosnians and Herzegovinians—Bosniac, Serb and Croat. A research conducted by the International Criminal Tribunal in 2004 by Tibeau and Bijak puts forth a more precise number of 102,000 deaths. Available at: <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1291965/posts>; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>22</sup> On 8 January 2007, UNHCR launched a \$60 million appeal to fund its work over a 12 month period for refugees and internally displaced people affected by the conflict in Iraq (see: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/iraq?page=press&cid=45a243a54> and <http://www.unhcr.org/partners/PARTNERS/45a296f24.pdf>). On 12 July 2007, UNHCR doubled its 2007 budget to \$123 million (see: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/469630434.html>).

gaps, and surface issues that need higher level action through New York. This could build on the work being carried out by the UN's "cluster F" in Amman, which coordinates work with Iraqi IDPs and refugees.<sup>23</sup> In the past, UNHCR has kept a low profile in the region due to the sensitivities of Jordan and Syria, which already host large Palestinian refugee populations. The refugee issue has now grown so large that it cannot be quietly downplayed.

- Building on UNHCR's increasing operational presence in the countries in the region and on

existing UN coordination structures at the national level, UNHCR should work with host country officials to ensure that strategies are in place and implemented to address the humanitarian and security needs of displaced Iraqis. Those strategies should feed into a wider regional approach. Gathering Iraqis into camps should be a last recourse. But plans should also be developed for worst case scenarios. Triggers should be identified to help assess when existing country infrastructure cannot cope with refugees, so that alternatives can be phased in systematically.

---

<sup>23</sup> Cluster F is one of 8 clusters coordinated by UNAMI and the UN country team. In Iraq, it works on internally displaced persons and refugee issues. For more information, see: <http://www.uniraq.org/clusters/cluster8.asp>.

## BROKERING PEACE

---

There will be no peace in Iraq without a political settlement. That alone should motivate the United States and the international community to launch a political process to try to broker a political compact among the parties. Yet thus far there has been no serious effort in this direction. Regional meetings in Baghdad and Sharm el Sheik did not have an action agenda or follow up. The International Compact for Iraq is a framework for assistance conditioned on policy actions by Iraq, similar in spirit to the conditionality packages developed for the former Soviet states. For the short-term, the ICI is a self-defining mechanism for stalemate as Iraq cannot realistically implement the conditionality. Visits by Secretaries Rice and Gates to encourage the Gulf states to support Iraq will produce little concrete action as long as “support” suggests bolstering what is perceived as Shi’a dominance in Iraq.

A new approach is needed. It should be led by the UN. The UN must work closely with the United States to ensure that military action supports diplomacy. All Iraqi parties that are not associated with Al Qaeda in Iraq should be given a voice in the process. To succeed, regional actors would have to endorse a political settlement or agree at a minimum not to undermine it. If an agreement is reached, it will require international troops and oversight to implement it.<sup>24</sup> Political agreements to end civil wars require massive preparation and negotiation. They do not spontaneously generate.

UN Security Council Resolution 1770, passed on August 10, 2007, provides the necessary mandate to seek political reconciliation in Iraq. Implementing this mandate will require unequivocal political backing, careful calibration of expectations, and skilled diplomacy.

- The UN, starting with the Secretary General, should make clear publicly that the chances for success are low. The mission is being undertaken because of its importance, not because it is easy. Iraqis may not be ready to make peace, yet the cost of continuing to fight is huge and could engrain sectarian divides that extend beyond Iraq.
- The U.S. must accept that UN leadership is needed, must seek and reinforce it, and must coordinate bilateral diplomacy with a wider UN-led multilateral strategy. If the U.S. does not actively support a UN lead, neither the Iraqis nor their neighbors will give credence to the political process. If the U.S. tries to dominate, the process will lose credibility.
- Member states should accept that seeking a political settlement is worthwhile even if it fails. Launching this political process will at least make clear the fault lines among the warring Iraqis and provide a baseline for future negotiations. A credible political process might also

---

<sup>24</sup> Carlos Pascual and Kenneth M. Pollack, “The Critical Battles: Political Reconciliation and Reconstruction in Iraq,” *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 3, Summer 2007.

open the door to multilateral engagement to contain the war's regional spillover.

To undertake this task, the UN needs a special team with a high profile and respected leader and a flexible mandate. It cannot be business as usual. The lead negotiator should report to the Secretary General and must be empowered to engage regional and international actors directly.

The Secretary General should appoint two Special Representatives (SRSGs) for Iraq: one to oversee day-to-day operations on humanitarian, reconciliation, and reconstruction programs; a second to run a process focused on achieving a brokered political compact. It is important to separate the two functions to ensure that humanitarian assistance and reconstruction are not perceived as being used to support political objectives. On the operational side, a major challenge for the SRSG will be the need to balance the security of UN staff – presently provided by MNF-I forces – with principles of neutrality. The SRSG responsible for the political process will need a small team and a significant travel budget. The team should include individuals who know Iraq and who can liaise effectively and credibly with key external constituencies such as the United States, the EU, the permanent members of the Security Council, and the Gulf states.

Running such a political process is as much art as science. It will require engaging all the key actors in Iraq, all the neighboring states, and all the major external actors (the US, EU, others in the P5, major donors, and potential troop contributors). Following are some of the critical strategic considerations.

- *Core elements.* Any agreement will likely revolve around a “five plus one” agenda: federal-regional relations; sharing oil revenues; political inclusion (redressing the de-Baathification issue); disarmament, demobilization

and reintegration of militias; and minority rights. Even under a minimalist federal government arrangement, Sunnis will need assurance of a role in an equitable allocation of oil revenues. Minority rights are key to protecting those who do not succumb to sectarian pressures to move. Demobilization of militias will be needed for the state to regain control over the use of force. The Kurds will insist on retaining regional autonomy. The “plus one” is the timing of a referendum on Kirkuk, which is guaranteed by the constitution but could trigger pressures for Kurdish independence and draw Turkey and Iran into the conflict. Because these issues are so interconnected they should be negotiated as a package rather than sequentially, in order to maximize options for viable compromises.

- *Five-Year Truce.* The focus should be agreement on a five-year truce – provisions that can create sufficient confidence to stop the fighting – with the option to extend the timeframe annually. At this point animosities are too sharp to expect that the parties can negotiate permanent solutions to the core agenda. Developments over the coming years may also produce better options than can be developed in just a few months.
- *Iraqi Positions.* As a condition for participating in the negotiation process, Iraqi political parties and militia leaders will need to condemn the role of Al Qaeda in Iraq and agree to cooperate against Al Qaeda. The SRSG must have leeway on whom to consult. As seen in the current U.S. military experience, that may entail militias that once attacked American forces.<sup>25</sup> The Special Representative will likely need to meet separately with the Iraqi actors, mapping out their positions against the “five plus one” agenda in order to determine if there

---

<sup>25</sup> Thomas E. Ricks, “Deals in Iraq Make Friends of Enemies,” Washington Post, 20 July 2007. Available: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/19/AR2007071902432.html?nav=emailpage>; accessed: 9 August 2007.

are potential deals to be made that also respect core substantive objectives. That may lead to small group meetings among parties to test potential alliances.

- *Regional Players.* In parallel with surveying Iraqis, the neighboring states should be engaged on their positions on the core agenda. Again, these meetings should start separately to mitigate the inevitable posturing and gamesmanship that occurs when competing actors are in the same room. From these meetings the SRSG will need to determine which outside actors have useful leverage, with whom, and issues where potential spoilers need to be isolated or neutralized.
- *Support team.* Iraqi and regional consultations will need a dedicated expert support team to provide guidance on issues ranging from the commercial viability of revenue sharing arrangements on oil, to international experience on legal and constitutional arrangements. The UN will need to organize experts available in real time to support the negotiation process. It will also need to develop public information strategies, using local and regional television and radio, to explain the UN role and mitigate attempts at disinformation from Al Qaeda and other potential spoilers.
- *Brokering an Agreement.* Eventually a judgment will need to be made on whether to try for a major meeting to broker an agreement – like the Bonn agreement for Afghanistan or the Dayton agreement for Bosnia. Running such a meeting must be a carefully orchestrated process of negotiating among an inner circle of key Iraqis, while engaging in a more limited way a wider contact group of the neighboring states that is separated from the Iraqis. The U.S. will need to sustain constant bilateral diplomacy throughout this process, coordinating every step of the way with the Special Representative. The Bonn Agreement exemplified such coordination, with the UN

Special Representative (Lakhdar Brahimi) running the core meetings and the U.S. special envoys (Jim Dobbins and Zalmay Khalilzad) engaging with all the external actors.

From the narrow perspective of who should run a political process to broker an agreement, we can draw a few lessons from experience:

- There must be a leader with international stature who is a skilled negotiator.
- The work is all consuming and leaves no time for the day-to-day operations.
- The Special Representative managing ground operations has a critical role in program operations and should feed insights to the lead negotiator, but should not be put in a position where mixing “actions and negotiations” could compromise his credibility.
- The political process may fail, and if it does the UN should probably call off the political negotiations, but not necessarily terminate its operations on the ground – so separating the lead negotiator and the SRSG for operations may give more flexibility.

Finally, the desire for a political agreement should not result in accepting just any settlement. The SRSG, the negotiating team, and key partners in the negotiations will need to determine if the commitments are genuine, adequate, and sufficiently encompassing of the key players to be viable. The initial peace agreement for Darfur in April 2006 (check date), for example, was stillborn because it did not involve all the key rebel factions. In 1999, the Rambouillet negotiations on Kosovo were called off because the Serbs would not consider viable compromises on Kosovar autonomy. In Iraq, the harsh reality of failing to reach a political agreement is that this eclipses the case to sustain an American military presence. Iraqis need to understand it and face up to the prospect of even greater bloodshed if American troops withdraw.

# PEACE BUILDING IN IRAQ

---

A political agreement to end the war is not an end point but a milestone on a course to sustainable peace. From there, the complexity of implementing the agreement takes hold. It will be a long-term proposition. International forces stayed in Bosnia for over a decade, they are still in Kosovo, and, even in resource-rich countries such as Russia and Ukraine that went through massive transitions without wars, it took almost a decade to halt their economic declines after the collapse of communism. The international community must recognize that it will take a decade of sustained peace for Iraq to become stable and prosperous.

That timeframe alone underscores why any single nation, even the United States, cannot unilaterally support Iraq onto a path of prosperity. The demands on personnel and resources are too great to be sustained credibly by one international actor. The extent of this commitment also suggests that, if the international community does not have a role in brokering the peace, there will be less incentive to contribute seriously to the expensive and time-consuming process of building a viable state.

The next attempt at peace building in Iraq will be more difficult than the first failed American efforts in 2003. Iraqis are disillusioned and lack trust. Four years have passed since major military operations, and life for Iraqis is worse in most ways: less security, less

electricity, less water, less access to health care, more unemployment, and extreme risks from just sending children to school.<sup>26</sup> Even with a peace agreement, it will take time to build confidence that the agreement will hold. The United States in particular feels like it already made its contribution, and there will be resistance to extensive new commitments.

The United Nations should consider a peace building role in Iraq only if there is a binding political settlement accepted by the main sectarian groups in Iraq, with clear indication that militia leaders will follow political leaders, and endorsed by Iraq's neighbors. Without such an agreement, attempts at peace building will result in unsustainable half measures constrained by violence and will not make a meaningful difference to most Iraqis. The UN will fare no better than the United States. Without a political agreement, the UN should limit its economic role to humanitarian relief.

The provisions of a political settlement must shape the details of a peace building strategy. There are, however, lessons from Iraq and other international missions that should inform both the process and substance of a peace building strategy.

- *Common Strategy, Shared Expectations.* A reconstruction framework for Iraq should be developed that makes clear the expectations

---

<sup>26</sup> For statistics on all these measures, see *Iraq Index: Tracking Variables Reconstruction and Security in Post-Saddam Iraq*, 13 August 2007. Available: <http://www3.brookings.edu/fp/saban/iraq/index.pdf>; accessed: 9 August 2007.

and commitments on the part of both Iraqis and the international community. The International Compact for Iraq is a starting point, but it should be revisited in light of a peace agreement and restructured as needed with the guidelines below in mind. Both donors and Iraqis should refrain from over-promising, yet at the same time attention has to be given to short-term impacts on security and jobs in order to build credibility. Most post-conflict situations result in an initial euphoria and then lead to disappointment and resignation when expectations are not met. Expectations need to be scaled down, yet there also must be a clear strategy and capacity to act rapidly to shift momentum on the ground and drive home that the political settlement is more than rhetoric.

- **Local Ownership, International Oversight.** International actors can support the process of rebuilding the Iraqi state, but eventually Iraqis have to believe in the state they are creating in order for it to be viable. That is challenging in a state that has been at war with sharp divisions among sectarian groups. A peace settlement will provide guidelines for compromise, but one has to expect that every aspect of any agreement will be tested. A key function for the UN will be to provide neutral oversight, and perhaps a venue to work out disputes, so that Iraqis begin to rebuild trust and can begin to give practical meaning to “local ownership” from a national and not a sectarian perspective. The mechanism for UN oversight should be informed by the dynamics of the political negotiations, which will likely suggest a combination of actors who can retain local trust. At a minimum a regular review mechanism should be created as a driver toward implementation.
- **Security.** Most recent peace agreements in the wake of civil wars have required an interna-

tional peacekeeping force in order to help reinforce a secure space in which the agreement can be implemented. The goal should be to mobilize a UN-led force focused particularly on border security, with the United States continuing a significant but reduced military presence in Iraq. If one took troop ratios from Bosnia or Kosovo as a guide, the force presence would be as large as 250,000 in the non-Kurdish parts of Iraq.<sup>27</sup> A more realistic target for Iraq would be on the order of 175,000 total U.S. and UN troops in the first year, reducing this level to 100,000 if the agreement holds. Against the international requirement of 175,000 troops, the United States should propose to provide 100,000 in the first year, and then scale down to 50,000 in the second year, while supporting the UN in recruiting the balance of forces. In principle, it would be attractive to have one force under UN leadership, but it is unrealistic to contemplate that the United States would place on the order of 100,000 troops under UN command; at present it is unlikely that the United States would even place such a large number of troops under NATO. This will be a huge challenge for the UN, which does not have a standing force. It will require special contributions for the mobilization and equipping of other national forces. The United States should seek a supplemental appropriation to fund a major share of these costs, while seeking contributions from the neighboring states. It would be the most effective way in which to support the orderly reduction of the U.S. force presence in Iraq.

- **Rule of Law.** The most important factor in restoring Iraqi confidence in Iraq will be to create the semblance of a rule of law that is systematically administered without regard to religion or ethnicity. To be effective this will require an overhaul of the police, the Ministry of the Interior, the courts, and the peniten-

---

<sup>27</sup> Carlos Pascual and Kenneth M. Pollack, “The Critical Battles: Political Reconciliation and Reconstruction in Iraq,” *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 3, Summer 2007, p. 9.

tiary system. In the short-term, a combination of peacekeepers and international police will need to share with Iraqis basic law and order functions to stress a new era in enforcing the rule of law. Ideally this would entail 20,000-30,000 international police as part of the international mission, but experience has shown that these numbers are not available. Out of necessity, designated units of the peacekeeping mission must take on this function. The cost of reconstituting the Ministry of Interior and the police will be large, perhaps on the scale of \$5 billion, and donors will resist getting involved. The United States may balk because it has already spent so much in this area. Yet if there has been a glaring lesson from Iraq and Afghanistan it has been that failure to take a comprehensive approach to the full system of law and order has undermined progress in every other area of reconstruction. A separate fund should be created specifically for this purpose, with contributions from Iraqi oil revenues, the United States, Gulf states, and other donors.

- **Oil Revenues.** Disputes over revenue sharing were one of the factors driving the Sunni insurgency, and, if the provisions of the political settlement in this area are not fully met and completely transparent, they will be the first factor to cause a political settlement to unravel. One should expect attempts to distort accounts and cut special deals. Based on trends in other resource-rich conflict states, corruption in the energy sector will be endemic. Even perceived diversion of natural resource wealth to particular groups or individuals can reignite civil wars. This is a difficult area for the UN because of the legacy of the Oil for Food program during Saddam Hussein's period. That said, there is no alternative to an international oversight mechanism, monitored by an independent international firm, on both oil revenues and on the implementa-

tion of the natural resource provision of the political agreement. The foundations for this mechanism exist, but it may be necessary to transition the current oversight framework for oil revenues to a new international mechanism with extensive publicity on measures taken to ensure transparency.

- **Militias and Jobs.** Few states have managed the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of militias well. The first two components are generally straightforward. The process generally unravels with reintegration. If former militia members are reintegrated into communities with 30-40 percent unemployment, the likelihood is that 30-40 percent of the militia members will be unemployed and disgruntled within a year. Hence, experience has shown that the strongest DDR program is one that is teamed with a massive, community-based job creation program throughout the country. Again, the most effective path to such job creation is local – through municipal works programs and more importantly through micro-credit programs that can help jumpstart local business development. Experience in the Balkans has shown that micro-credit, even in post-conflict societies, can be undertaken as a viable and self-sustaining business and should not be treated as one-time handouts, which generally do not produce meaningful or sustainable results.<sup>28</sup>
- **Reconciliation, Governance and Politics.** A common mistake after most peace agreements is to drive too quickly to elections before warring parties have begun to reconcile and establish a track record of governance. Elections in such an environment can simply reinforce sectarian competition. Time needs to be given to establish a track record of governance that allows the provisions of a political settlement to be implemented. The political agreement itself

---

<sup>28</sup> The experience of ProCredit Bank throughout the Balkans, a bank network funded through the EBRD, has demonstrated that micro and small credit is viable and sustainable in places such as Bosnia and Kosovo. For more information on ProCredit Bank, see <http://www.procreditbank.com.mk/>

should specify arrangements for governance and the timeframe for future elections. The UN's role will be that of honest broker – to set objective benchmarks that should be achieved to support viable elections and to engage in an honest discussion with Iraqis and international partners on meeting those benchmarks. The objective is not to discourage a democratic progress, but to make a democratic process credible with maximum participation from all groups in an environment that allows elections to support the process of reconciliation rather than reignite past tensions.

- *Coordination.* Coordination has become a word often derided as a substitute for inaction, but, when coordination fails, international missions in support of peace building can be more of a strain than a help for a fragile state. The UN system alone has differing bodies for peacekeeping, political affairs, refugees, humanitarian relief, development, and women and children – to name just a subset. On top of the UN bodies, add the World Bank, IMF, regional donors, bilateral donors, specialized agencies, and nongovernmental organizations. The UN has struggled to move to a “One UN” system that speaks through a single SRSG, but that is only a start. The challenge for the UN will be to name an SRSG with leadership and authority who can convene the international

community in Iraq and manage a weekly process of coordination among donors as an agent for the Iraqi government. In New York, the Peace Building Commission should be given a special mandate and the necessary staff to host monthly review sessions with Permanent Representatives that focus attention on specific aspects of the political agreement. An international conference on Iraq should be planned within two months of a settlement, and a follow up announced to review progress in a year – with a mandate to the SRSG and the Peace Building Commission to sustain oversight and coordination on the ground and in New York.

The failed attempts at reconstruction in Iraq and the serious struggles in Afghanistan in a mission that includes the UN, NATO, massive U.S. support, the EU, and other international donors should underscore the difficulty of helping a nation re-establish the functions of governance, the rule of law, security, and an environment to simulate investment. A successful peace-building mission in Iraq will take a decade and massive resources. To be sure, Iraqi revenues should eventually contribute more and more to that resource base, but an early international injection of funds will be needed to support job creation. The temptation on the part of most states will be to shortchange a UN peace building mission in Iraq, to assume that it can be done cheaply and quickly. The United States already made that mistake, and it should not be repeated.

## CONTAINING WAR

---

If attempts to broker peace fail, one must expect that pressure will increase within the United States to withdraw troops, that a staged withdrawal will begin within a year, that the conflict within Iraq will intensify, and that this will lead to an even greater loss of Iraqi lives and sectarian violence. Such resurgence of conflict will likely spark even greater population displacements and induce neighboring states to pick sides along sectarian lines. The challenge for the United Nations would be whether it can build from the process of failed negotiations on a political compact to foster an international coalition to contain the regional spillover from an intensified Iraqi conflict.

Success would largely depend on two factors. One is whether neighboring states and other parties gain, even from the failed negotiations on a political compact, an appreciation for the regional and global stakes emanating from Iraq. The second is whether UN leadership on political reconciliation will sufficiently change international public perceptions so that other nations do not reflexively see any involvement in Iraq as a suicidal association with a failed American policy. The Secretary General and his Special Representative as well as members of the Security Council will have to make honest judgments about whether the international community has the political will to devote resources and perhaps troops to mitigate the threats emanating from a wider conflagration within Iraq.

In addition to the UN's role on refugees discussed earlier, the UN could play three important roles in an international effort to control the war's spread. The first option is largely diplomatic and should be explored. Testing the diplomatic option will help

inform whether the other two options that entail a ground presence would be viable.

- **Diplomacy:** The UN should seek consensus from neighboring states and other major international actors (e.g., the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the United States, the EU, the P-5) on principles and actions that will help limit external sparks to Iraq's internal conflict. All parties should pledge "noninterference in Iraq" – no cash, weapons, and fighters to support sectarian militias. All parties must condemn Al Qaeda in Iraq and clamp down on links to Al Qaeda franchises and Al Qaeda's home base in Pakistan. Turkey and Iran should pledge not to intervene in Iraq's Kurdish areas.
- **Borders:** Arrangement should be established within Iraq and with neighboring states to control and monitor borders. These arrangements would have two functions: to ensure the safety of people displaced by violence and to discourage outside interference in Iraq's civil war. Within Iraq, the UN should support safe havens before main border crossings to give displaced persons the choice to stay within Iraq. Those fleeing persecution cannot be denied refugee status, but, if they choose to stay in Iraq given difficult conditions in neighboring states, they will need humanitarian support, shelter, and services. Safe havens would need to be protected and patrolled, and the residents disarmed. Rather than pretend that

the refugee burden does not exist, neighbors should work out with the UN special border arrangements. Ideally they would invite multilateral observers on their territory to observe border crossing and conduct spot inspections on potential illegal crossing points. Turkey could advance its domestic interests and reduce international speculation about interference in Iraq by inviting observers who could deter and, as necessary, document PKK flows from Iraq into Turkey.

- **Military Forces:** The positioning of international forces within Iraq and along its borders could complement whatever core military strategy the United States pursues in Iraq – from withdrawal to sustaining a significant

internal presence. International troops positioned along borders in Iraq could help deter the flow of terrorists, weapons, and support for the war, and potentially disrupt Iraqi insurgents seeking to export their cause to the region or trying to obtain money, weapons, and recruits from neighboring states. The total force requirement for such a containment strategy could run as high as 80,000.<sup>29</sup> A UN force could meet part of this requirement, with American forces meeting the rest of the requirement. Such forces would need to come from outside of the Middle East. They could not be seen as having a direct stake in the conflict. They would be under UN command, closely coordinating with American military forces.

---

<sup>29</sup> Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollack, *Things Fall Apart: Containing the Spillover from an Iraqi Civil War*, Analysis Paper 11, The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, January 2007, pp. 29-48.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

---

Realities on the ground in Iraq and in American and international politics will shift rapidly and affect the nature of what can be done in Iraq. American policy has so failed to deal with the complex nature of security, political, and economic challenges in Iraq that it has created new threats: risks of a wider sectarian conflict in the region between Sunni and Shi'a, an emboldened Iran, a network of Al Qaeda franchises operating throughout the Middle East and North Africa, ungoverned spaces in Iraq that can become a base to export transnational terrorism, and instability and lack of resiliency in international oil markets. These threats are regional and global. They call for multilateral engagement that the United Nations can lead. Yet there should be no illusions about simple success.

Whatever the situation in 2009, a new American President must recognize that the current war in Iraq is not the United States against an enemy, but the United States interjecting itself among many enemies within Iraq. That war cannot be solved by military means. Even if the United States were to help quell the violence in the short term, the fighting would erupt again with an American withdrawal. Until there is a political compact among Iraqi parties, endorsed by neighbors and the international community, there will be no prospect for peace in Iraq.

The next American President would demonstrate wisdom and leadership in promoting UN leadership to negotiate a political compact. This paper has offered suggestions on strategies and tactics. As the military often quips, any war plan will change in battle – and so too will any diplomatic strategy. What clearly will

not work is to set benchmarks for Iraqi performance and lecture a failed state where the parties are at war to fix itself through legislation. This has never happened in the modern history of conflict.

In advocating and supporting a UN-brokered peace for Iraq, the next President should also require that American military strategy be coordinated with the diplomatic process. It should be made clear to Iraqis and the international community that, if the Iraqis will not take advantage of a credible multilateral process to reach a political compromise, American troops cannot make a sustainable difference in Iraq and will be withdrawn. Perhaps by 2009 that process will have already started. What should not be forgotten under any circumstance is that diplomatic and military strategies must reinforce each other as part of a coherent policy. In Iraq, the United States seems to have forgotten the meaning of proactive diplomacy to achieve peace.

Regardless of the status of military and diplomatic efforts in Iraq, American presidential candidates should educate themselves about the status of refugees and displaced persons in Iraq. These are innocents who have fled for their lives. There are at least 4 to 4.5 million people who have fled the war, perhaps half of those across borders. Such population flows are not just a humanitarian tragedy, but eventually they will become their own security threat to the region. The United States must urge, support, and finance UN initiatives through OCHA and UNHCR to have a real regional strategy that ranges from humanitarian to personal security and in turn recognizes that resettling tens of thousands at a time cannot be the solution.

An American President should recognize the limits of unilateralism, even if cloaked in a mantle of a “coalition of the willing,” to help a nation rebuild the very social fabric of its existence. The United Nations can play a role in providing legitimacy and mobilizing international partners. Yet the UN also has major limitations in coordination and coherence, and it is slow in mobilizing international forces and police. Building capacity to administer the rule of law has challenged every international actor. The United States should support a UN mission to lead a new phase of reconstruction in Iraq, but for the UN to succeed the United States must stay engaged with troops, resources, and expertise. The United States will have to invest in building UN capacity and engage in international efforts to get others to do the same.

The limits of unilateralism also apply to containing the spillover from war in Iraq if it is not possible to broker, at this point, a political compact among the parties. The United States should encourage a UN role in diplomacy to get commitments from Iraq’s neighbors not to fuel the Iraq civil war with money and weapons and, by implication, exacerbate the foundations for international terrorism. Perhaps other nations, not from the Middle East, could contribute troops or observers to control the spillover. An even broader lesson is that the disruption of diplomatic ties with perceived enemies only hampers our capacity when we have no choice but to find common ground. At present the very ques-

tion of a dialogue with Iraq has become an issue, when the real focus should be on the substance of such a dialogue.

America’s image around the world has reached an all time low. The Pew Global Attitude Project Survey Report released on June 13, 2006, showed that the United States military presence in Iraq is seen by most nations as a greater threat to world peace and security than Iran.<sup>30</sup> The Pew Global Attitude Project Survey Report released on June 27, 2007, showed that, in nearly all countries surveyed, “more people view China’s influence positively than make the same assessment of U.S. influence.”<sup>31</sup> World Public Opinion 2007, a report published by the Chicago Council on Foreign Affairs and WorldPublicOpinion.org, shows that, “in 10 out of 15 countries, the most common view is that the United States cannot be trusted to ‘act responsibly in the world.’”<sup>32</sup> The United Nations cannot solve these problems for the United States. But the next American President may well find that engaging seriously in multilateral fora, investing in rebuilding the United Nations, respecting and abiding by international law, and resorting to unilateral action only under imminent threats could restore respect for the United States and American leadership. In Iraq, American advocacy for UN political and humanitarian leadership may not only help the United States in Iraq, it may begin to give credence to a reawakening of American diplomacy and international engagement.

---

<sup>30</sup> *America’s Image Slips, But Allies Share. U.S. Concerns Over Iran, Hamas*, Pew Global Attitudes Project, Survey Report, 13 June 2006, p.3. Available: <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=252>; accessed: 9 August 2007.

<sup>31</sup> *Global Unease with Major World Powers*, Pew Global Attitudes Project, Survey Report, 27 June 2007, p.44. Available: <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=256>; accessed: 9 August 2007.

<sup>32</sup> *World Public Opinion 2007*, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs and WorldPublicOpinion.org, 25 June 2007, p.30. Available: [http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/UserFiles/File/POS%20Topline%20Reports/WPO\\_07%20full%20report.pdf](http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/UserFiles/File/POS%20Topline%20Reports/WPO_07%20full%20report.pdf); accessed: 9 August 2007.



THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION  
1775 MASSACHUSETTS AVE., NW  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036-2103  
[www.brookings.edu](http://www.brookings.edu)