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December 20, 2005

The Strategy for Success in Iraq

Executive Summary

- The terrorists in Iraq directly threaten the United States because, in their own words, their objective is to drive the United States and coalition forces out of Iraq and use the vacuum that would be created by an American retreat to gain control of that country. They would then use Iraq as a base from which to launch attacks against America, overthrow moderate governments in the Middle East, and try to establish a totalitarian Islamic empire that reaches from Indonesia to Spain.
- President Bush has outlined that the strategy in Iraq has three aspects: political, military, and economic.
 - There are indications of progress in all three areas.
- Politically, in the two-and-a-half years since Iraq was liberated, the Iraqi people have assumed sovereignty over their country, held free elections, drafted a democratic constitution, approved that constitution in a nationwide referendum, and elected a permanent representative under the new Constitutional framework.
 - There has been increasing Sunni participation in each of these elections.
- Militarily, the United States is actively fighting the terrorists, while building and training capable and effective Iraqi security forces, who eventually will take the lead in the fight and take responsibility for the safety and security of their citizens.
 - The United States continues to kill or capture key Al Qaeda members.
 - As of November 30, 2005, approximately 214,000 Iraqi security forces are trained and equipped, which is an increase of 20,000 troops from September alone.
 - There are now more than 120 ground combat battalions of Iraqi military and special police forces conducting operations against the insurgency.
- Economically, the Iraqi government has become more capable of providing essential services.
 - The projected 2005 per capita GDP of \$1,051 is more than double the 2003 amount of \$518, and even exceeds the pre-war 2002 amount of \$802 by more than 30 percent.
 - There are over 100 independent newspapers and magazines, 44 commercial television stations, and 72 commercial radio stations now operating in Iraq.

Introduction

Critics of the war in Iraq have demanded that the Bush Administration either bring home the troops, or at least provide a “plan” to do it. They make such demands without offering a plan themselves, or, more importantly, without explaining why the President’s articulated strategy is not such a plan. The President has explained who the enemy is in Iraq, why it is critical to defeat that enemy, and what must be accomplished before U.S. troops can be brought home.

The Enemy in Iraq

The Islamic extremists are the element of the insurgency in Iraq most dangerous to the United States.

President Bush has recently described the composition of the insurgency in Iraq. As opposed to a monolithic entity, it is more accurately described as a mix of terrorists/Jihadists (both foreign and domestic), Ba’thists and other former regime elements, and Sunni nationalists, or what the President terms rejectionists. The largest group is the rejectionists. These are “mostly Sunni Arabs who miss the privileged status they had under the regime of Saddam Hussein—and they reject an Iraq in which they are no longer the dominant group.”¹ Not all Sunnis profess allegiance to this group, and most of the members of this group are not actively fighting the coalition, although some may tacitly support the enemy. The former regime loyalists held positions of power under Saddam Hussein, and may still harbor dreams of returning to power.² These two groups, and the terrorists, have formed a convenient alliance to oust the coalition from Iraq. They likely do not agree on anything beyond that one overarching strategic goal. In fact, their ability to coordinate efforts to reach that end is limited, although they do all individually employ political violence towards that end.³

The terrorist element of the insurgency, of which Zarqawi’s group is the most well known, most directly threatens the United States and coalition forces because it has a military capability greatly disproportionate to its numbers. Although this element is likely numerically inferior to the elements of the insurgency with strictly local interests, the jihadist element is predominantly responsible for the high-casualty/high-profile attacks against coalition forces in Iraq. Their operating modus operandi is the suicide attack. Their attacks are well planned and well organized; and, they are directed to the strategic end of ejecting the coalition from Iraq. The Islamic extremist element of the insurgency threatens the United States because it directs its considerable military capability towards political goals beyond the mere local interests of the other elements of the insurgency.

¹ George W. Bush, Address at the United States Naval Academy, Nov. 30, 2005.

² George W. Bush, Address at the United States Naval Academy.

³ There is a large criminal element in Iraqi society owing to the fact that Saddam Hussein released many prisoners held in Iraqi jails before the war, which allowed the criminals to permeate into society. There is a prevalence of violence in Iraq, but it is impossible to discern which of it is political violence and which of it is criminal violence.

The political goals of the Islamic extremists are to establish a caliphate in Iraq, and extend it from there.

Just like other actors in international politics, Islamic extremists have political goals. Ayman al-Zawahiri, commonly believed to be the second in command of Al Qaeda after Osama Bin Laden, outlined a strategy to attain these goals in a letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Bin Laden's designated leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq.⁴ President Bush has relied upon this letter to describe that strategy and those goals succinctly: "Their objective is to drive the United States and coalition forces out of Iraq, and use the vacuum that would be created by an American retreat to gain control of that country. They would then use Iraq as a base from which to launch attacks against America, and overthrow moderate governments in the Middle East, and try to establish a totalitarian Islamic empire that reaches from Indonesia to Spain."⁵ Al Qaeda employs terrorist tactics to establish this empire⁶ because it cannot accomplish this end through an open political dialogue.

The President continues to assert that Iraq is the central battleground in the extremists' effort to establish this caliphate, although critics of war reject this assertion. Zawahiri, however, has stated that Zarqawi's battle in Iraq "is now the place for the greatest battle of Islam in this era."⁷

Islamic extremists will continue to fight even if the United States were to withdraw from Iraq.

Islamic extremists will not quit their war against the United States even if the United States were to withdraw from Iraq, because their aspirations do not end in Iraq or in the Middle East. Zawahiri stated that "the mujahedeen must not have their mission end with the expulsion of the Americans from Iraq."⁸ Another Islamic extremist, Abu Bakar, spiritual leader of Jemaah Islamiyah, gave more detail to that mission by declaring that "if the West wants peace, they'll have to accept to be governed by Islam."⁹ Finally, in his "Letter to America" in 2002, Osama Bin Laden stated that he wants the United States to withdraw completely from all its global interests, convert to Islam, and completely change its society to conform to the dictates of the Koran. He then warned that if Americans "fail[ed] to respond to all these conditions, then [they should] prepare for fight with the Islamic Nation."

⁴ The Director of National Intelligence announced the public release of this letter in a news release on October 11, 2005, which is available at http://www.dni.gov/release_letter_101105.html. The full text of the letter is available as a link to this press release.

⁵ George W. Bush, Address at the United States Naval Academy.

⁶ The Zawahiri letter uses the word "caliphate." The word "caliph" is a title given to a Muslim leader, and literally means "successor" or "deputy." Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Islam and the Challenge of Democratic Commitment*, 27 *Fordham Int'l L. J.* 4, 18 (2003). A caliphate is the jurisdiction of the caliph, namely the defined territory over which he exercises his leadership.

⁷ Zawahiri letter.

⁸ Zawahiri letter.

⁹ Stephen J. Hadley, Remarks of the National Security Advisor to the Council on Foreign Relations, Oct. 18, 2005 (quoting Abu Bakar).

The importance of these statements is that, while Americans may find the interest to establish a worldwide caliphate unbelievable, it is not to the Islamic extremists, who will fight their war against Western civilizations even if the United States were to withdraw completely from not only Iraq, but the Middle East as a whole. As the President explained, “if we were not fighting and destroying the enemy in Iraq, they would not be leading the quiet lives of good citizens. They would be plotting and killing our citizens—across the world and within our own borders.”¹⁰

Accordingly, there can be no compromise with this enemy. President Bush described the essence of the enemy as “a radical ideology with inalterable objectives: to enslave whole nations and intimidate the world. No act of ours invited the rage of the killers—and no concession, bribe, or act of appeasement would change or limit their plans for murder.”¹¹ Thus, success in Iraq is the only option, in order to deny the Islamic extremists an initial victory and a base of operations.

The Strategy for Success Over the Insurgency in Iraq

Success over the insurgency in Iraq requires a political-military strategy.

Success is the essential prerequisite for exit from Iraq. Former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Shultz have asserted in a published opinion piece that, “The mechanical part of success is relatively easy to define: establishment of a government considered sufficiently legitimate by the Iraqi people to permit recruitment of an army able and willing to defend its institutions. . . . The political and military efforts cannot be separated.”¹² The strategy to achieve this success, and hence the return of U.S. troops, is directed at achieving this sustainable outcome, rather than withdrawing by an arbitrary time limit.

The political element of the strategy requires creating a government to which the citizens have a certain fealty, to the degree that they are willing to protect it by force against the insurgency. Furthermore, to ensure that U.S. interests are protected, this Iraqi government cannot make the political choice to tacitly allow terrorists to operate within the country’s borders; and, it certainly cannot actively support terrorists as the Saddam Hussein regime did.¹³

The military element of the strategy is linked to the political element because a citizen army will not fight for a government it does not support. The military element of the strategy requires the United States to leave in place an Iraqi government that can enforce the political

¹⁰ George W. Bush, Speech to the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia, Dec. 12, 2005.

¹¹ George W. Bush, Address Commemorating Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2005.

¹² Henry A. Kissinger and George P. Shultz, “Results, Not Timetables, Matter in Iraq,” Wash Post A15, (Jan. 25, 2005).

¹³ For some reason, critics continue to raise the chimera that Iraq was not a haven for terrorism prior to this war, and only became so after the removal of Saddam Hussein. This is demonstrably false. Iraq had been designated as a state sponsor of terror since 1993, State Department, *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1999*, p. iv (Apr. 2000); and the State Department continually outlined Iraq’s support for international terrorism prior to both the attacks of September 11 and the current war in Iraq. *E.g.* State Department, *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1999*, p. 34 (Apr. 2000) (“Iraq continued to plan and sponsor international terrorism in 1999. . . . [I]t continued to provide safehaven and support to various terrorist groups.”).

choice to maintain stability in the country. Iraq is weakened as a state each time terrorists employ violence there, as the ability to exercise a monopoly of force over its territory is crucial to the continuity of Iraq's existence.¹⁴

The strategy involves political and military elements in tandem to prevent illegitimate force, namely terrorist attacks, because a government that is politically responsive to its people decreases the reasons for a disaffected citizenry to express grievances through violence. Furthermore, such a government is able to draw upon a loyal citizenry willing to interdict terrorist attacks by force if necessary.

The political strategy is directed at those members of the Iraqi populace who are "on the fence." They are the people who have not yet given their allegiance to either the Iraqi government or some element of the violent insurgency. The political strategy is to give those individuals some reason to offer their allegiance to an Iraqi national government. That reason will come in the form of an elected government responsive to their needs so that they are willing to support it actively (or at least not oppose it violently). Equally, it is also directed at those members of the insurgency who might have a reason to lay down their arms and work with the government peaceably. On the other hand, the military aspect of the strategy is directed at the elements of the insurgency who have no intention of laying down their arms and joining a political process, namely the Islamic extremists. They must ultimately be killed or captured, and the Iraqis are increasingly taking the lead in executing this military element of the overall strategy.

Secretary Rice summarized the strategy: "In short, with the Iraqi government, our political-military strategy has to be to clear, hold, and build: to clear areas from insurgent control, to hold them securely, and to build durable, national Iraqi institutions."¹⁵ It is difficult to examine the political and military elements of the strategy individually because they are so inextricably linked. For example, the effort to build durable national institutions cannot really take place until adequate security is established in Iraq. And while coalition forces must participate in a significant portion of those security efforts, Iraqi forces are taking lead responsibility for such efforts more and more each day. But in the end, former Secretaries Kissinger and Schultz correctly observe that, "No matter how well trained and equipped, that [the Iraqi] army will not fight except for a government in which it has confidence."¹⁶

There is Demonstrable Progress to This Strategy

Politically, by any metric, the Iraqi people are making tremendous progress.

On December 15, 2005, the Iraqi people went to the polls to elect a permanent representative government under the new Constitutional framework. This is the most recent

¹⁴ See Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, in *From Max Weber*, p. 78 (H. Gerth & C.W. Mills, eds. 1958) (defining a state as "a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory") (parenthesis and italics in original).

¹⁵ Condoleezza Rice, Prepared Remarks of the Secretary of State before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on U.S. Foreign Policy in Iraq, Oct. 19, 2005.

¹⁶ Henry A. Kissinger and George P. Shultz.

example of the incredible progress the Iraqi people have made in the two-and-a-half years since Iraq was liberated from the control of a dictator. “Since then, the Iraqi people have assumed sovereignty over their country, held free elections, drafted a democratic constitution, and approved that constitution in a nationwide referendum.”¹⁷

These elections are instrumental to the final substantive political outcome pertaining to the division of power and influence among the various ethnic groups of Iraq. As Secretary Rice explained, “The state of Iraq was constructed across the fault lines of ancient civilizations, among Arabs and Kurds, Sunni and Shi’a, Muslims and Christians. No one can solve this problem for them.”¹⁸ Moreover, it is “not conceivable that the Sunnis and the Shias are going to overcome hundreds of years of differences within a matter of a couple of years.”¹⁹ In the end, however, the political processes, such as the constitutional structure and popular elections, serve as a framework within which these groups can address and resolve their differences peaceably.

Secretary Rice explained that there is reason to be optimistic, as, for years, the differences between Sunni, Shia, and Kurds “were dealt with through violence and repression. Now Iraqis are using compromise and politics.”²⁰ This is evidenced by the increasing participation in the political process, most notably by the Sunnis. The large majority of Sunni Arabs boycotted the January elections for a Transitional National Authority (“TNA”), for which the national voter turnout was 58 percent. In the October referendum on the written Constitution, 1.3 million more voters participated than did in the January elections, amounting to a 63-percent participation rate overall. The participation rate in both of these elections exceeded the 55-percent voter turnout in the United States 2004 Presidential election.

Early indications and analysis from the December elections reveal that the participation rate was even higher than that of the October elections. Some reports assert that the overall participation rate may be close to 70 percent. Specifically, early reports indicate that participation in the Anbar province increased dramatically over the past two elections, which is a province that rejected the Constitution by a vote of nearly 97 percent, and in which only ten percent of the people participated in the January elections. U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, estimated that more than 60 percent of the citizens of the Anbar province participated in the December elections. Furthermore, according to the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq, 307 political entities and 19 different coalitions, registered for the December elections. There were 6,655 candidates in total. Additionally, it also seems that the levels of violence directed at the voting process were below both the January and October elections.

The fair trial of Saddam Hussein by Iraqis is an additional indicator of progress.

The Iraqi people display a desire to develop an indigenous judicial system with their process to try Saddam Hussein themselves, rather than abdicate that responsibility to an international tribunal. There is a certain arrogance revealed by those who believe that Saddam Hussein can only get a fair trial before an international tribunal. The Iraqis themselves know that

¹⁷ George W. Bush, Speech to the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia.

¹⁸ Condoleezza Rice.

¹⁹ Condoleezza Rice.

²⁰ Condoleezza Rice.

this trial will be on a world stage, and that the international community will watch this trial to determine if the new Iraqi government is prepared to be a responsible protector of human rights. Iraq's Interior Minister, Bayan Jabr, stated that the trial is an example of a free and stable Iraq, where the human rights of all are protected, even those who denied such rights to others.²¹

This one very public trial is but one example of a developing rule-of-law environment in Iraq. Currently, all Iraqi provincial criminal courts are now operational; and there are 351 judges in Iraq trained by the coalition.²² A judicial system that provides due process to all, rather than disappearances and summary execution of dissenters, is a critical element of a government that people will support rather than fear.

The Iraqi government has become more capable in providing essential services.

For Iraqis to have confidence in their government, it is vitally important that the economy continue to grow and the government be able to provide public goods and perform essential public services. The economy in Iraq continues its general upward trend. For example, according to the Brookings Institute Iraq Index,²³ the projected 2005 per capita GDP of \$1,051 is more than double the 2003 amount of \$518, and even exceeds the pre-war 2002 amount of \$802 by more than 30 percent. On a more individual level, as compared to pre-war Iraq under Saddam Hussein, the index estimates that there are five times more telephone subscribers and five times more cars on the street. There are 32 times more Internet subscribers, and this figure does not even include users of Internet cafes. There are now over 100 independent newspapers and magazines, 44 commercial television stations, and 72 commercial radio stations.²⁴

Significant progress is also being made in improving Iraq's essential services, in areas such as electricity, water, sanitation, and transportation infrastructure. The average amount of electricity generated nationwide exceeded pre-war levels by February 2004, and generally remained around pre-war levels until November 2004. It exceeded pre-war levels again in June 2005, and is now only slightly below that level. Electricity is available nationwide for an average of 11.6 hours per day.²⁵ Public works projects continue throughout the country to address essential services. For example, in northeastern Ninewa province, a province in which the majority of the voters in October rejected the Constitution, an electric plant is running again for the first time in several years, which will produce enough electric power to serve approximately 49,720 Iraqi homes or businesses in the area. As the President has noted, "In the space of two-and-a-half years, we have helped Iraqis conduct nearly 3,000 renovation projects at schools, train more than 30,000 teachers, distribute more than 8 million textbooks, rebuild irrigation infrastructure to help more than 400,000 rural Iraqis, and improve drinking water for more than 3 million people."²⁶

²¹ United States Department of State Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, *Iraqi Weekly Status Report*, (Nov. 2, 2005) available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/56134.pdf>.

²² Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 25 (report to Congress, Oct. 2005).

²³ Michael O'Hanlon at Brookings leads the Iraq Index project, which is a statistical compilation of economic, public opinion, and security data. It is available at <http://www.brookings.edu/iraqindex>.

²⁴ Brookings Institute Iraq Index.

²⁵ United States Department of State Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, *Iraqi Weekly Status Report*, (Dec. 7, 2005) available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/57949.pdf>.

²⁶ George W. Bush, Address to the Council on Foreign Relations, Dec. 7, 2005.

These economic reconstruction projects in Iraq take place against the backdrop of an infrastructure that was completely plundered and neglected by Saddam Hussein. Moreover, although economic reconstruction has been considerable, security concerns have been primarily responsible for delays.²⁷ As the President has noted, it is difficult to rebuild Iraq “when terrorists are trying to blow up that which the Iraqis are trying to build.”²⁸ An insecure environment has a deleterious effect on the ability of the Iraqi government to deliver essential services and rebuild infrastructure, which in turn affects the confidence Iraqi citizens have in their government.

Militarily, Iraq continues to defeat terrorists and make progress towards the goal of independently providing for its own security.

Even with all of this notable political progress, a stable Iraq will not be completely in place until adequate security is established. Iraqi security forces will have to kill or capture those final elements of the insurgency who have no intention of participating in the political process and every intention of violently attacking political institutions. The President has provided further detail to the military element of the strategy going forward in Iraq. First, “coalition and Iraqi security forces are on the offensive against the enemy. . . . [Next,] as we fight the terrorists, we’re working to build capable and effective Iraqi security forces, so they can take the lead in the fight—and eventually take responsibility for the safety and security of their citizens without major foreign assistance.”²⁹

Coalition forces, in concert with Iraqis, continue to defeat terrorists in Iraq.

Operation Steel Curtain was a recent operation directed at restoring Iraqi sovereign control along the Iraq-Syria border and destroying the Al Qaeda network in western and northern Iraq. Military forces are making progress in this particular mission, as evidenced by the recent killing of Abu Saud, an Al Qaeda operative in Iraq who helped foreign fighters enter Iraq.³⁰ Additionally, military forces continue to disrupt and degrade the ability of the Islamic extremists to fight by killing enemies that would certainly kill U.S. soldiers if given the chance. As an example, coalition forces recently killed Abu Azzam, a key Zarqawi group leader who was considered the second in command for operations of Al Qaeda in Iraq.³¹ Coalition forces are also making progress against top Al Qaeda global leadership. For example, this summer, Pakistani troops captured Abu Farraj al-Libbi, who was widely believed to have succeeded Khalid Sheik Mohammed as the number three person in the Al Qaeda leadership. Zawihiri

²⁷ George W. Bush, Address to the Council on Foreign Relations; *Iraq: Recent Developments in Reconstruction Assistance*, p. CRS-15, CRS Report RL 31833 (updated Oct. 13, 2005).

²⁸ George W. Bush, Address to the Council on Foreign Relations.

²⁹ George W. Bush, Address at the United States Naval Academy. *See also* Army General George Casey, Prepared Remarks of the Commanding General of Multinational Forces-Iraq (“MNF-I”) before the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing regarding U.S. Military Strategy and Operations in Iraq, Sept. 29, 2005 (“Our aim is to defeat the terrorists and foreign fighters and to neutralize the insurgency while we progressively transition the counterinsurgency campaign to increasingly capable Iraqi security forces and ministries.”).

³⁰ United States Department of State Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, *Iraqi Weekly Status Report*, (Nov. 2, 2005).

³¹ Donald Rumsfeld and General Richard Myers, Press Briefing with the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Sept. 27, 2005.

acknowledged this to be “a blow.”³² Then, Hamza Rabia, who had replaced al-Libbi, was also killed in early December.

Progress continues in the training, equipping, and participation of Iraqi security forces.

Army General George Casey has found that “the capacity of Iraqi security forces has increased quantitatively and qualitatively over the past year.”³³ As of November 30, 2005, approximately 214,000 Iraqi security forces are trained and equipped.³⁴ This is an increase of 20,000 troops from September alone. Moreover, in August 2004, there were five Iraqi regular Army battalions in combat; whereas there were 91 Army battalions in October 2005.³⁵ An Iraqi combat battalion has between 350 and 800 troops. In total, there are over 120 ground combat battalions of Iraqi military and special police forces conducting operations against the insurgency, which is an increase of 22 over the prior three months.³⁶ Given this progress, Army General Casey stated that the United States may now seriously begin considering “transitioning this counterinsurgency mission to [the Iraqi security forces].”³⁷

The capabilities of Iraqi security forces are measured in three tiers of operational readiness. A tier three unit is one that can fight alongside coalition units, while level two units can “take the lead” in operations. A tier one unit is a unit that is fully independent, not just capable of leading operations, but one that requires no coalition assistance in any form.³⁸ There is one battalion at the tier one level of readiness, while there are approximately 40 at the tier two level and 80 at the tier three level.³⁹

Although only one combat battalion is fully independent, this does not mean that Iraqi security forces are not capable of performing functions crucial to maintaining the security of Iraq. It is important to note that a fully independent battalion has a quite formidable capability, as there are even “some battalions from NATO militaries that would not be able to meet this standard.”⁴⁰ Rather, the most important metric at this time is the number and capability of tier two units.

First, in terms of numbers, the number of Iraqi battalions taking the lead in combat operations has increased by 50 percent since July.⁴¹ In the Tal Afar offensives of Operation Steel Curtain, Iraqi troop participation outnumbered coalition participation, as 11 Iraqi battalions participated, supported by five coalition battalions providing support.⁴² Furthermore, Iraqi

³² Zawahiri letter.

³³ Army General George Casey.

³⁴ Approximately 112,000 Ministry of Interior and 102,000 Ministry of Defense. United States Department of State Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, *Iraqi Weekly Status Report*, (Dec. 7, 2005).

³⁵ Condoleezza Rice.

³⁶ George W. Bush, Address at the United States Naval Academy; *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 27.

³⁷ Army General George Casey.

³⁸ *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 28.

³⁹ George W. Bush, Address at the United States Naval Academy.

⁴⁰ George W. Bush, Address at the United States Naval Academy.

⁴¹ Air Force Brigadier General Donald Alston, Comments of the Spokesman MNF-I, Oct. 30, 2005.

⁴² George W. Bush, Address at the United States Naval Academy; Army General George Casey.

forces, as opposed to coalition forces, provided the bulk of security for both the October and December elections in Iraq; and it was these tier two forces that did it.

Second, with respect to capability, units rated at the second level mark a critical achievement because they are at the point where they can control space, thereby allowing coalition units to focus their comparative capabilities elsewhere.⁴³ The lead capability of Iraqi forces is crucial because they know the geographic area and culture. They are more effective than outside forces at gaining the trust of the local populace, which is critical to securing an area. Insurgencies are ultimately defeated by the domestic will, and Iraqi forces are much better placed to win that support. With such support, they can collect the information required to defeat an insurgency. For example, local citizens must have confidence in and allegiance to their government, rather than to the insurgency, so as to be willing to turn over members of the insurgency to the government. Here, too, significant progress is being made against the insurgency. There has been a “dramatic increase in intelligence tips received from the population in the past several months,”⁴⁴ which indicates both that the populace is increasingly rejecting the most radical elements of the insurgency, as well as assisting the Iraqi government and coalition forces in defeating that element of the insurgency.

In the end, the violence is contained, as “14 of the 18 provinces in Iraq are stable and secure. The four remaining provinces—Baghdad, Al Anbar, Salahuddin [sic, Salah ad Din] and Nineveh—on the other hand, account for 85 percent of the attacks across Iraq while representing just over 40 percent of the population.”⁴⁵ When security forces militarily clear an area of insurgents, such as in the offensives of Operation Steel Curtain, security forces must then be able to hold and secure a cleared area. Tier two Iraqi troops must be the troops to occupy and secure an area, rather than coalition forces, for two reasons. First, as noted, local troops are better qualified to collect the information required to defeat an insurgency domestically. Second, if coalition forces do this work, they will likely be seen as an occupying power.

The training of Iraqi security forces to a capability where they can independently provide for their own security is critical to the ability of the United States to disengage from Iraq. The President has expanded upon this to define victory in Iraq in terms of “meeting certain clear objectives: when the terrorists and Saddamists can no longer threaten Iraq's democracy, when the Iraqi security forces can protect their own people, and when Iraq is not a safe haven for terrorists to plot attacks against our country. These objectives, not timetables set by politicians in Washington, will drive our force levels in Iraq.”⁴⁶ Since the Islamic extremist element of the insurgency has no intention of participating in the political process peaceably, the major criteria for withdrawing U.S. forces will be a function of present and projected levels of insurgent activity, and the readiness and capability of Iraqi security forces to interdict that violent activity.⁴⁷ Iraqi security forces are making progress towards that end both in terms of numbers and capability each day.

⁴³ *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 28.

⁴⁴ *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 19.

⁴⁵ Air Force Brigadier General Donald Alston, Comments of the Spokesman MNF-I.

⁴⁶ George W. Bush, Speech to the Woodrow Wilson Center, Dec. 14, 2005.

⁴⁷ *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 44.

Critics’ “cut and run” strategy is not viable.

Critics of the President’s strategy call for the return of U.S. troops from Iraq without concomitantly outlining a strategy to leave in place an Iraqi government capable of protecting itself from insurgent violence. As Secretary Rice has stated, “If we tire and decide that we’re going to withdraw and leave the people of the Middle East to despair, I can assure you that the people of the United States are going to live in insecurity and fear for many, many decades to come.”⁴⁸ This is true for at least two reasons. First, a democratic Iraq makes the United States more secure; hence, abandoning democracy in Iraq is not in the U.S. interest. Second, leaving Iraq before the strategic goals are achieved would only “embolden the terrorists and invite new attacks on America.”⁴⁹

A democratic Iraq means a more secure United States.

If the United States withdraws from Iraq, it would “put at risk all the democratic progress [the Iraqis] have made over the past year.”⁵⁰ This would contradict a vital element of the strategy in the war on terror, as “a democratic Iraq is a crucial part of our strategy to defeat the terrorists.”⁵¹

A democratic Iraq “drains the swamp” of potential terrorist recruits.

A democratic Iraq “den[ies] the militants future recruits by replacing hatred and resentment with democracy and hope across the broader Middle East.”⁵² Secretary Rice outlined how totalitarian regimes in the Middle East create a recruiting pool for terrorist groups:

The “freedom deficit” in the broader Middle East provides fertile ground for the growth of an ideology of hatred so vicious and virulent that it leads people to strap suicide bombs to their bodies and fly airplanes into buildings. When the citizens of this region cannot advance their interests and redress their grievances through an open political process, they retreat hopelessly into the shadows to be preyed upon by evil men with violent designs.⁵³

National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley has explained how democracy counteracts this behavior:

It is the spread of freedom, democracy, and justice that is the antidote to Islamic extremism. Experience shows that it is not poverty, but rather alienation, that most encourages terrorism. [For example,] Muhammed Atta and the other 9/11 hijackers were predominantly middle class and

⁴⁸ Condoleezza Rice.

⁴⁹ George W. Bush, Speech to the Woodrow Wilson Center.

⁵⁰ George W. Bush, Speech to the Woodrow Wilson Center.

⁵¹ George W. Bush, Speech to the Woodrow Wilson Center.

⁵² George W. Bush, Address Commemorating Veterans Day.

⁵³ Condoleezza Rice, “The Promise of Democratic Peace,” Wash. Post B7, Dec. 11, 2005.

well-educated. . . . [Democracy] offers participation in the place of exclusion.⁵⁴

One way a democratic Iraq makes the United States more secure is that the promotion of political liberalization and democracy in Iraq is a key element in our overall policy of “draining the swamp”—eliminating places where terrorists can be recruited, trained, financed, and hidden. One by one, from Palestine to Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia to Iraq, friendly territory is being denied to the terrorists.

A democratic Iraq is a key step in expanding the removal of terrorist sanctuaries.

It is the policy of the United States in the global war on terrorism to eliminate safehavens for terrorist groups, and expanding freedom is crucial to eliminating safehavens. Thus, an important way a democratic Iraq makes the United States more secure is that it adds another nation to the coalition fighting terrorism rather than supporting it, and it serves as an example for reformers across the region. Therefore, if democratic advances in Iraq are not supported and are allowed to languish, the example a democratic Iraq provides to the remainder of the region will be extinguished.

Supporting a democratic Iraq sends a signal to the region that the United States is serious about expanding freedom. This was a theme of the President’s second inaugural address, and success in Iraq is a tangible execution of that policy. It makes the Middle East take note that the United States regards the success of freedom in the region as vital to the security of the United States. For, “as the hope of liberty spreads in the Middle East, the terrorists will lose their sponsors, lose their recruits, and lose the sanctuaries they need to plan new attacks.”⁵⁵ It is in this way, as the President has stated, that “by standing for the hope and freedom of others, we make our own freedom more secure.”⁵⁶

A U.S. withdrawal emboldens Islamic extremists.

Islamic extremists “target nations whose behavior they believe they can change through violence.”⁵⁷ The Vice President has noted why Islamic extremists have sufficient reason to believe that their tactics have worked in the past, namely U.S. troop withdrawals after the 1983 attack of the Marine barracks in Lebanon and the 1993 events in Mogadishu, Somalia; or the responses after the 1993 World Trade Center attack, the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing, the 1998 attack on two embassies in East Africa, or the 2000 attack on a United States warship, the U.S.S. Cole. He stated that “terrorists [have] hit America and America did not hit back hard enough. . . . The terrorists came to believe that they could strike America without paying any price.”⁵⁸ If the United States were to withdraw from Iraq due to an aversion to violence, rather than the

⁵⁴ Stephen J. Hadley, Remarks of the National Security Advisor to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee National Summit 2005, Oct. 31, 2005.

⁵⁵ George W. Bush, Speech to the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia.

⁵⁶ George W. Bush, Address Commemorating Veterans Day.

⁵⁷ George W. Bush, Address Commemorating Veterans Day.

⁵⁸ Richard B. Cheney, Address to the Marines at Camp Lejeune, Oct. 3, 2005.

completion of the strategy for success, the terrorists would have Iraq as a base from which to conduct future attacks against the United States and its allies. Moreover, premature withdrawal from Iraq would invite such attacks because the terrorists would take this as yet another reason to believe that their violent strategy is successful.

This is a test of political will, and the will of the American people is strong.

In this particular instance, the insurgents are now targeting the American political will in order to change the behavior of the United States into withdrawing from Iraq. The insurgents cannot defeat U.S. and Iraqi security forces on the battlefield; rather, to succeed, they must demoralize the American public enough to foster a demand for withdrawal from Iraq in particular, and from our position against the terrorists in general. From there, the extremists would fill the ensuing vacuum with their own governing structures and repression. A pessimistic American public is the hope of the insurgency in Iraq, and of adherents to Islamic extremism in general. As the President stated in response to a question at the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia, “The only way we can lose is if we lose our nerve.”⁵⁹

Most Americans appreciate the consequences of withdrawing from Iraq before the strategic goals are met there. This is why the House of Representatives rejected, by a vote of 3-403, a call to terminate the deployment of United States forces in Iraq immediately.⁶⁰

The American public should not equate the loss of American troops with an unsuccessful Iraq strategy. Each sacrifice is honored and mourned, and is made in the cause of making the United States more secure. Troop loss is not the result of a strategy that is in and of itself a failure, but instead follows directly from engaging an enemy that has declared war on the United States—a war that would not stop even if the United States were to withdraw from Iraq.

Conclusion

The President has a political and military strategy to achieve success in Iraq. His opponents have not offered a strategy as coherent and comprehensive as the President’s plan. When the President’s strategy is executed to completion, there will be a secure and democratic Iraq that does not threaten its neighbors and U.S. allies, and denies to Islamic extremists a base of operations in their declared war against the United States. At that time, U.S. troops will be brought back from Iraq, leaving in place a more secure America.

⁵⁹ George W. Bush, Speech to the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia.

⁶⁰ H. Res. 571, 109th Cong., 1st Sess., Nov. 18, 2005. There were also six members voting “present,” and 22 not voting.