



## Discussion Papers

# Why we are not prepared to win the peace in Iraq

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### Summary

The increasingly ambitious agenda for post-Saddam Iraq now includes disarmament, regime change, democracy in Iraq and a safer world for all. What is missing is any realistic discussion of the sacrifices that will be required to produce this kind of rosy scenario. President Bush and Prime Minister Blair seem determined to avoid discussing the costs and burdens of defeating Saddam Hussein and rebuilding the country afterwards until after a decision to go to war has been made. This creates a serious risk that our publics and parliaments will decline to shoulder the burdens of victory. Losing the peace in Iraq may carry greater risks than attempting to contain Saddam Hussein. We need to look carefully at plans for peace before the die is cast for war.

The usual argument for not being drawn into a discussion about what will be needed to win the peace is that the future is too difficult to predict. Yet the Pentagon is quite capable of juggling multiple sets of war plans, and the major outlines of challenges presented by an occupation of Iraq are clear. Initially at least it may require as many troops to secure Iraq as to defeat Saddam. Some occupation forces may have to remain for five to ten years.

Responsibility for the civil administration of Iraq will fall largely on the US at first, and there may have to be an international civil presence there for a decade. The creation of a 'democratic Iraq within its current borders' is a long-range goal, not an instant product of victory over Saddam.

There will be a major humanitarian crisis that we are not yet well prepared to deal with.

Iraqi oil revenues will first go to providing food and humanitarian aid, and what is left over will not pay for Iraqi reconstruction. Getting others to help pay to clean up after a war they have opposed is going to be harder than has been acknowledged.

We are talking about an even higher cost for war and the subsequent peace than the \$100-200bn Bush economic adviser Larry Lindsey got fired for talking about. Even without the unknowns, such as Saddam's use of WMD or the widespread destruction of the Iraqi infrastructure, the bill may be upwards of \$300 billion, including

grants and loans to members of what is coming to be known as 'the coalition of the willing'. Yes, the US economy could afford this, but are the American people prepared for the sacrifices? And how much are even coalition allies, such as the UK, able to contribute if their people and parliaments are not convinced?

President Bush has made the case that with Saddam gone and Iraq under democratic rule; peace in the Middle East will be more attainable. A more convincing case can be made that a US occupation of Iraq will inflame the Middle East and encourage terrorism and attacks on Israel, thus making an Arab-Israeli peace a more distant prospect.

A skeptical if not hostile world will be watching how the US and the UK meet these challenges. Failure will undermine our security, as well as the political careers of Bush and Blair.

### **Risks of invasion**

Military victory against Saddam's military can be taken for granted. But there are risks that have not been adequately discussed.

The bad guys, be they Iraqi, al Qaeda, or Hezbollah could well beat us to hidden caches of WMD and then use them against the US or its supporters. As demonstrated in Afghanistan, terrorists are more nimble than even Special Forces commandoes, and one must expect that, with or without Iraqi connivance, terror cells are preparing to take advantage of the fog of war to grab stocks of chemical or biological weapons. Seven years after 60,000 NATO forces entered Bosnia, caches of prohibited conventional weapons are still being found – and used.

Saddam and/or some of his key lieutenants could escape capture and organize to take revenge, as Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar have done so successfully. Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, the most wanted war criminals of the Bosnian war, are still at large seven years after NATO entered Bosnia, and US and allied forces have shown little enthusiasm for going after them.

US officials erroneously compare post-Saddam Iraq with post-World War II Germany and Japan, two homogeneous and disciplined societies. A more apt comparison would be Yugoslavia. Chaos and violence could follow the collapse of Saddam's regime, as various factions indulge in reprisals or simple looting. This could be compounded by the intervention of outside actors, supporting their own clients within the country. For example, one of the most sensitive issues involving Turkey is the role its forces will play in Northern Iraq. Their stated desire to disarm the Kurdish militias, or to promote the return of the Turkomen minority to strategic Kirkuk, or to severely limit Kurdish autonomy, represent only one such hazard. Whatever the Turks do in the north, the Iranians may follow suit in the south in support of the oppressed and disenfranchised Shiia majority.

Undoubtedly, there will be an initial large increase in the numbers of Iraq refugees and internally displaced people, followed by a massive return flow. The returnees will be looking to return to their homes, many of which are now occupied by those resettled by Saddam. This will create new demands for pluralistic government as well as challenges for law enforcement. In addition, conflicting demands will come to the fore - for example Kurdish and Turkish insistence on control of Kirkuk.

The removal of Saddam and the installation of a US-led interim government in Baghdad will in itself have destabilizing effects in the region. If the effort is botched, the effects will aggravate anti-American feeling in the Muslim world with attendant damage to US interests. For example, the UN administrator in Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, has warned that the weak government in Kabul may not be able to withstand the buffeting from all sides that would result from turmoil in Iraq and unrest in the rest of the region.

### **US planning for post-Saddam Iraq**

In 2002, two parallel planning processes were going on in the State and Defense Departments. In the State Department, the "Future of Iraq" project brought together US officials and Iraqi exiles to produce a blueprint for reconstruction and governance after Saddam. Hundreds of pages of documents were produced, including suggestions for amending the Constitution and other basic laws.

Meanwhile, civilian Defense Department planners were thinking along more ambitious lines, envisioning a democratic Iraq that would be a model for change throughout the Middle East. This conflicted with the views of many in the uniformed military, which has a deep distaste for 'nation-building' and fears being stuck with an impossible task. But only the Defense Department has the manpower to develop and implement detailed plans of the kind required, and the resources to carry them out. Therefore, in January, President Bush decided that responsibility for the period immediately after Saddam's departure should rest in the Defense Department.

Following this decision, the creation of an Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance within the Office of the Secretary of Defense was announced on January 20. It is headed by the man who had responsibility for relief operations in northern Iraq in 1991, retired Lieutenant General Jay Garner. A month after the formation of Garner's office, the Defense Department convened a (classified) interagency planning meeting, involving some hundred individuals from a dozen US agencies "each responsible for a different mission in post-war Iraq".

Overall responsibility for Garner's office and for the planning process rests with Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, a noted unilateralist. Michael Mobbs, a former legal associate of Feith's, will be handling issues of civil administration in Garner's office; though, it has been pointed out, not reporting to Garner on issues of substance. Although much of the press reporting about developing plans has been based on leaks or unattributed background briefings, the tone has been strikingly unilateral. For example, the *Washington Post* of February 21 speaks of "complete, unilateral (US) control of a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq".

Based on our experience in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan some projections can be made about our ability to deal with the problems we will face over the medium term.

## **Security**

The primary task of US forces after the collapse of Saddam's regime will be to maintain security so that humanitarian aid can be distributed and a working civil administration can be set up. Conservative military planners assume that scattered hostilities and the search for WMD will continue for several months after the collapse of Saddam's regime, and that the task of stabilization will only begin in 2004.

Currently, a public debate is going on within the Pentagon concerning the size of the security force that will be needed immediately following the collapse of Saddam's regime. In response to a question posed during a Senate hearing, Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki offered his personal opinion that a security force would have to be essentially the same size as the invasion force, 'hundreds of thousands' of US and coalition forces. This same estimate has been put forward by outside experts, such as the Brookings Institution's Michael O'Hanlon. A security force of 230,000 would be less than half as large in proportion to the Iraqi population as that deployed in Kosovo today or in Bosnia in 1996.

Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz dismissed Shinseki's estimate as "wildly" off the mark. According to a number of press accounts, the US Joint Staff is planning for a stay-behind US force of 45,000-60,000, and expects that coalition partners will supply a larger number. This suggests a repeat of the situation in Afghanistan, where US forces concentrate on mopping up Iraqi armed forces and running down WMD while other nations provide a peacekeeping force designed to provide security in areas where there is little organized resistance. Based on the lack of enthusiasm for expanding the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, our ability to persuade others to send tens of thousands of ground troops to operate under US command in Iraq is at least open to question.

It would be nearly impossible for the US to sustain a military presence of even 150,000 without increasing the size of the standing army and restructuring it. This is particularly true as we are looking over our shoulder at the next actor in the 'axis of evil', North Korea's Kim Jong Il, whose threats become louder as our preoccupation with Iraq grows. Thus there is a real possibility that, as in Afghanistan, we will not be willing or able to field a security force large enough to do the job, and that other nations will not be able or willing to fill the gaps.

A heavily-armed US ground force of even 50,000 would be adequate to deal with organized resistance by military units, as was the case in Bosnia. But US emphasis on force protection means we will be less effective in dealing with small-scale violence, reprisals and internecine strife. Part of US invasion strategy involves arming

opposition groups, as we did in Afghanistan. Disarming and pacifying these groups later, however, will certainly be problematic, especially if they are not satisfied with the newly emerging political structure of the country. Thus, a 60,000 strong Kurdish militia in the north and 100,000 Shiia in the south could mount a robust resistance to a post-Saddam regime they opposed.

The provision of security involves policing, and US ground forces are traditionally reluctant to do this, lacking both the training and the equipment. As US commanders in Bosnia repeatedly said, US combat troops are prepared to use deadly force, but not to arrest, detain and investigate criminals or control riots or looting by civilians. Other countries' forces that participate in a multinational security force will be bound by their own rules of engagement, which generally forbid taking action against civilians

International civil police are likewise poorly prepared to deal with armed mobs. In Bosnia, NATO decided to rely on European paramilitary police, such as Italian Carabinieri or Spanish Guardia Civil, but these units were often ineffective, and NATO commanders feared that they would get caught in a situation that spun out of control, requiring NATO forces to come to the rescue. An excellent study of the task of nation building by a commission made up of prominent Americans with experience in the field suggest that NATO and/or the EU set up a multilateral gendarmerie of this sort, to supplement peacekeeping forces. Perhaps our experience in Iraq will persuade political leaders of this need.

Demobilized Iraqi military may present a special security challenge. According to press reports, we plan to confine defeated units to barracks and then reconfigure a much smaller force. This could result in hundreds of thousands of unemployed ex-soldiers with easy access to weapons roaming the streets. While US officials have frequently compared post-Saddam Iraq to post-War Germany, this aspect of post-WW I Germany is not what they had in mind. Then, demobilized soldiers formed an anarchic "Freikorps" that ran riot throughout the country and set the stage for later revanchism.

### **Administration of Justice**

Closely related to the policing and security situation is the need to establish the rule of law. Leaving aside the question of war crimes and the creation of some sort of international tribunal to deal with them, plans must be made to deal with those who indulge in violence, reprisals, looting and 'ordinary' crime. As in Kosovo, there will be a judicial vacuum as the Baathist judges are removed and the criminal code revised. How does one deal with those who have been detained by international security forces? How does one introduce an equitable justice system?

Initially, it appears that coalition combat commanders will be responsible for law and order in their sectors. Presumably this means that suspected criminals will be held in military detainment centers. But bringing them to trial is another matter. The eventual solution in Kosovo was to bring international judges in to deal with serious cases. But this system was set up under UN authority, it took a great deal of time to establish, and it has proven very difficult to hand over to local authorities. If we choose to treat these criminals as enemy combatants, or to try them in military courts there will be an outcry around the world.

In Bosnia, the international community finally came up with a formula for reforming the judicial system on a fast track, by changing the system of judicial appointments and purging the system of the corrupt and politicized. But in Bosnia this has required robust international intervention.

### **Humanitarian assistance**

The exact dimensions of the humanitarian crisis that will emerge after an invasion of Iraq will depend on how the war goes. But a number of facts are known already:

- The Iraqi population is uniquely vulnerable, given the consequences of the Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf war of 1991 and the subsequent sanctions. A million children under five are badly malnourished. Sixty per cent of the population is totally dependent on food distributed by the Iraqi government under the oil for food program, which requires the import of half a million tons of food per month.

- UN relief agencies now operating in Iraq under the oil-for-food program will have to be evacuated before any invasion begins, and getting them back in will depend both on the security situation and on a new UN Security Council resolution restarting oil-for-food.
- No matter how hard we try to avoid collateral damage, war will cause thousands, if not tens of thousands, of civilian casualties. If WMD are used, and if there is house-to-house fighting in major cities, these numbers could increase greatly.
- The medical infrastructure is badly degraded, and stocks of medicines are low. There is hardly any capacity to deal with victims of WMD.
- Potable water supplies could be disastrously affected if electrical generation cannot be restored promptly after a war.
- There are already over a million internally displaced persons and refugees, and this number could double if war comes. Many would try to take refuge in countries neighboring Iraq, where the borders may well be closed.

In his State of the Union address, President Bush said "we and our coalition partners... will bring to the Iraqi people food and medicine and supplies; and freedom." While the effort to operationalize this commitment is accelerating, it continues to lag well behind the schedule for going to war.

The US military has stockpiled relief supplies for the emergency needs of one million and rations for three million person/days, but we are counting on UN agencies and non-governmental organizations to provide and coordinate humanitarian aid once areas have been secured. They, in turn, must rely on funding from governments and on the ability to coordinate their plans with the military. There are a number of constraints on this process:

- The UN cannot operationalize relief plans without the endorsement of the Security Council, which will not be forthcoming until war breaks out. Meanwhile UN agencies have requested funds to make contingency preparations, which are slow in coming. Contacts between the US Defense Department and UN agencies have so far been limited.
- The UN's senior humanitarian official in Iraq has warned that US and UN contingency plans for relief are "grossly inadequate".
- NGOs lack capacity in Iraq. For a variety of reasons, including the sanctions regime, most have not been working in areas under Saddam's control. At this stage, no substantial funding is available to these NGOs to make preparations for a humanitarian crisis; some compare the \$2bn spent on military preparations to about \$1m made available to fund US NGO preparations. NGOs also claim that so far there have been no meaningful consultations with the Defense Department about coordination on the ground.
- There is no money in the US budget for a major relief effort. Congress will be asked to pass an emergency spending bill to cover both military and humanitarian costs of war, but the sums may be much larger than the US public is prepared for.
- Funding for UN operations must come from member states. If the US has declared the UN 'irrelevant' by then, this may be harder to get than we assume now. Also, to resume the critical oil-for-food program, a new Security Council resolution will be required.
- Providing security on the ground is key to the relief operation. Even if Saddam's regime collapses quickly, it may be months before secure access can be provided in some areas.

In sum, steps are being taken to close the gaps in preparing for a major humanitarian relief mission, but we are not yet ready. Our eventual response will be closely and critically examined by the world media, particularly in the Muslim world. Failure to adequately meet the challenge will have a direct effect on our national security, and on the overall verdict on the effort to remove Saddam.

### **Interim administration**

The planning process for governing Iraq immediately after Saddam goes seems to rely heavily on trial balloons. Initially, background briefings and leaks seemed to center on the creation of an Iraqi provisional government made up of exiles and centered on the Iraqi National Congress (INC). After opposition figures inside Iraq denounced this idea, however, US spokesmen backed away from the idea.

The second publicly discussed version of interim rule centered on an American military governor filling the role played by Generals MacArthur and McCloy in post-World War II Germany and Japan. This too played poorly in Iraq and the Muslim world, and has been replaced by a third variant, that of the American civilian governor, "an American of stature, a former US state governor or Ambassador". US officials speaking on the record denied that any such final decision has been made. When General Garner met with UN officials in early March, he indicated that he would initially be in charge of civil administration and that after a brief period a prominent non-American civil administrator would be sought.

## **Governance**

Our stated goal is a democratic Iraq within its existing boundaries, and US officials claim to believe that such a solution can be attained within two years. This seems wildly optimistic, given the lack of democratic institutions or opposition political parties. The aspirations of Kurds and Shiia for autonomy and an end to the rule of the Sunni minority suggest that creating these new institutions will not be easy. The phrase used by senior US officials currently is the need for 'representative' government, meaning presumably negotiated power sharing. In fact, there is little alternative to such an approach, at least until there have been changes to the Constitution and basic laws governing elections and the structure of government. Considerable work has been done on these issues through the "Future of Iraq" project, and presumably these ideas will be tried out on the Iraqi consultative commission that will be formed from both those outside and inside Iraq.

Based on the example of democratization efforts in the Balkans, years will be needed to create an infrastructure of democracy even after decisions have been made on key elements of government structure. Clearly the Iraqi people are as capable of democracy as the Bosnians, but in Bosnia after seven years we are still working to train parliamentarians, reform political parties, refine the electoral system and recreate local governments. A no less lengthy process will be required in Iraq, and to suggest otherwise is disingenuous.

What seems to be consistent in all this is that for a few months after the departure of Saddam, while military operations are still in progress, an American, probably General Garner, will be in charge of a civil government that will work closely with the theater commander, General Franks. As much of the mechanism of the central government will be retained as possible, while a process of de-Baathization goes on at the top level of ministries and local government, with US and coalition 'advisers' providing guidance.

This kind of operation will lack legitimacy and popular support, so the choice will be between rapid turnover to Iraqis or the creation of an international civil administration as a second interim step. According to press reports, a small planning group in the UN has produced a report proposing something like the situation in Afghanistan: a UN assistance mission in support of an Iraqi interim government. The UN group reportedly excluded a UN civil administration, as in Kosovo or East Timor, as being beyond the UN's capabilities, which it no doubt would be.

It remains to be seen whether such a model would be acceptable to the US, as it would fall well short of the stated US goal of transforming Iraqi politics. Coexistence of a UN assistance mission and a major US presence could be difficult, especially if the US has declared the Security Council irrelevant because of its failure to pass a second Iraq resolution. Finally, our experience in Afghanistan raises questions about the effectiveness of such a minimalist international role.

Another possibility is an international civil administration established outside the UN, similar to the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia. This would require the 'coalition of the willing' to bear more of the costs of the operation, and EU participation would be almost essential. Still, countries that oppose war in Iraq may feel differently about contributing to the peace effort, particularly since this could affect their own economic interests.

Moving from 'interim' international rule to 'democratic' Iraqi rule will be a long, challenging and expensive process. A premature transition, as in Cambodia, could lead to the undoing of the work accomplished over years. Staying too long will make enemies of the forces we want to promote.

## **Reconstruction and oil**

The first point to emphasize is that 'owning' post-war Iraq is an economic and political liability, not an asset. It is simply not true that Iraqi oil revenues and other assets will be adequate to pay the bill for reconstruction, at least initially.

Even if Saddam does not destroy his country's oil infrastructure, the bill for humanitarian aid will use up much of its oil revenues, which currently amount to \$12-15bn per year. Over the short term, that could rise to \$20bn if oil prices remain high and production is increased. In addition to repairing war damage, we will have to repair Iraq's general infrastructure that has deteriorated over the last two decades. By some estimates, the bill for reconstruction will run to \$250bn. And of course much of the reconstruction aid must be front-loaded, so that our promises of a better life to come seem to have some reality.

The usual first resort in such circumstances is to call a donors' conference. In the case of Afghanistan, where our efforts had broad support, this produced pledges but little money. The most likely source of major assistance is the EU, but it remains to be seen if the French and Germans will be forthcoming. Of course their companies have interests in Iraq, and this may override the politics of pique. But at best EU assistance is slow in materializing. Given US performance in implementing what the President called a 'Marshall Plan' for Afghanistan, skepticism about the sacrifices the Congress and the Administration will make to rebuild Iraq is justified.

This is not a war for oil, as the Iraqi people and the national oil company will retain control of this resource. However, civil administrators will have to deal with a number of conflicting demands:

- Turkey, and probably others, are asking for 'concessions' to compensate them for the risks of war.
- Russia, France and probably others are demanding observance of the tentative contracts they have signed.
- Allies and opponents alike are asking the US to ensure that the debts Iraq owes them are honored. This raises additional questions such as, for example, do we try to arrange for supportive Bulgaria which is owed \$1.7bn to enjoy priority over Russia's \$8bn?
- And then there is the question of contracts for oilfield services and for exploiting new fields. Will we just leave it to the market to deal with these problems?

Many of these questions are ones we will have to deal with early in the process. UN planners have already suggested that they do not want to deal with these issues. We need to think now about how to 'internationalize' the response and place the UN in the role of development coordinator. If we are not careful, it might appear that oil was more of a factor in the decision making process than it does now.

## **Global impact**

President Bush and other administration spokesmen argue that toppling Saddam will help solve other international problems. If it turns out that we win the peace, it may have some positive effect. But failure to produce a unified, democratic Iraq within a relatively short time frame will more surely have a negative effect on our posture around the world.

In his February 26 speech, President Bush claimed that removing Saddam would pave the way for peace between Israel and a 'truly democratic' Palestinian state. But at the same time he aligned the US with the new Sharon government's policy of continuing to establish settlements in occupied territories in the West Bank and Gaza. Sharon offers only to freeze settlements, not remove them, if the violence stops and Arafat is replaced. It seems most unlikely that following a US invasion of Iraq, Palestinian suicide bombing will stop and the process of democratizing the PLO will move into high gear. Meanwhile the US will be providing billions of dollars in loan guarantees to bolster the Israeli economy. This will, *inter alia*, permit the expansion of settlements.

It has also been suggested that dealing with Saddam will have a moderating effect on other members of the 'axis of evil'. In fact, it seems more likely that the effect will be to encourage nuclear proliferation, as Kim Jong Il and Iranian leaders conclude that they must deter the US with credible threats of nuclear retaliation. It has been claimed that removing Saddam will weaken al Qaeda and deter terrorism. But if the peace is botched, there will be more recruits to terrorist organizations and our fragile successes, for example in Afghanistan, may be undone.

If the US goes to war without UN backing, we will have seriously weakened the UN, NATO, and our worldwide network of alliances. Even if we do not need these institutions to wage war, we need them to maintain a stable world in which US interests can prosper.

### **Rethinking war and peace**

President Bush has raised the bar to an impossible level for the Security Council, by insisting on both disarmament and regime change. This suggests that, lacking nine affirmative votes, the US and the UK will not call for a vote on their Security Council resolution but will go to war, sometime around March 14. This approach guarantees minimal international support for the post-war effort to rebuild and reform the country.

Because so much of the Bush Administration's rationale for the war is built on wishful thinking, and because there has been so little discussion of the sacrifices that would be needed to accomplish the goals we have set, there is no sense of commitment among the US and UK publics to the long haul. At best, the outcome will fall well short of the rosy picture that has been described. At worst, we will see Iraq turn into a failed state like Afghanistan, a breeding ground and refuge for terrorist organizations like al Qaeda. This would be a more serious threat to the world, and to the people of Iraq, than Saddam Hussein represents today.

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