

## A Plan for Post-Surge Iraq

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#### Introduction

Almost five years have passed since the defeat of Saddam Hussein's government and Iraqis are still waiting for the better life promised by President George W. Bush in his speech hours before the invasion. Two days before the commencement of the military operations in Iraq, President George W. Bush addressed the Iraqi people with the following message:

"Many Iraqis can hear me tonight in a translated radio broadcast, and I have a message for them. If we must begin a military campaign, it will be directed against the lawless men who rule your country and not against you. As our coalition takes away their power, we will deliver the food and medicine you need. We will tear down the apparatus of terror and we will help you to build a new Iraq that is prosperous and free. In a free Iraq, there will be no more wars of aggression against your neighbors, no more poison factories, no more executions of dissidents, no more torture chambers and rape rooms. The tyrant will soon be gone. The day of your liberation is near."<sup>[1]</sup>

If history has a tendency to repeat itself, this is one case of such tendency. On 23 November, 1920, "Sir Percy Cox read in Arabic a proclamation which included the following statement of policy:

"The British Government has now occupied Basra, but though a state of war with the Ottoman Government still prevails, yet we have no enmity or ill-will against the population, to whom we hope to prove good friends and protectors. No remnant of Turkish administration now remains in this region. In place thereof the British flag has been established, under which you will enjoy the benefits of liberty and justice, both in regard to your religious and secular affairs."<sup>[2]</sup>

While President Bush's message does not express the imperialist tone of Cox's statement, the two share one thing in common: none of their promises in a better future for Iraqis were positively fulfilled.

The United States' efforts to stabilize Iraq for the past years have been always described as "progress." The quality of progress was finally defined by Ambassador Crocker in the following terms: "the cumulative trajectory of political, economic, and diplomatic developments in Iraq is upwards, although the slope of that line is not steep."<sup>[3]</sup> In plain English, the progress is there, but hardly enough to get the job done. Meanwhile, a growing number of Iraqis feel some unhealthy nostalgia to the bad old days. This article aims at identifying the reasons for the lack of adequate

progress and suggesting some measures to give the trajectory a better direction. This task cannot be adequately accomplished without providing a critique of the current U.S. policy in Iraq and the alternative “plans” suggested by some critics of this policy.

Three plans compete for the chance to replace the official policy in Iraq: a simple “cut and run” plan which calls for the withdrawal of all U.S. troops as soon as possible and let the Iraqis sort out their differences; a simple division of Iraq into three autonomous regions, as it was in the Ottoman days; and the Biden Plan, which is, in spite of its shortcomings, the most coherent of the three. This article, for obvious reasons, will ignore the first two plans and discuss the Biden Plan and the official U.S. policy in Iraq. It will also propose an alternative plan for the post-surge era.

## The Biden Plan

Senator Joseph Biden has devoted a lot of time and energy to the Iraqi problem. He is correctly described as “probably the best-informed member of Congress on Iraq.”<sup>[4]</sup> As his plan shows, he does grasp many of the current problems in the country and provide reasonable ways to solve some of them. But the plan also fails to recognize many essential problems that would call for more than “five points” to solve the Iraqi crisis. Simply put, the Biden plan rests on a political pillar (the first point), which delegates most of the power to the regions and leaves a skeletal national government with jurisdiction on the “common interests.”<sup>[5]</sup> This point maybe scrutinized on several levels. First, the federal government will not be able to keep Iraq together. The Senator’s distinguished career must have taught him that there is more to a viable federal government that what he allows the Iraqi national government in the first point of his plan. Second, the proposal to have a Shi’i region, a Sunni region and a Kurdish region is easier on paper than in reality—one of the problems of the Biden plan is that it is heavily charged with sectarian and racial language that Iraqis try to avoid as they articulate the foundations of their political system. There are millions of Iraqis who will end up in a region not controlled by their own sectarian or ethnic groups. If this plan, as the Senator presents it, designed to end sectarian violence, there no solution to be expected from federalism, because most of the sectarian and ethnic violence takes place in the mixed cities and not in the homogeneous ones like Najaf, Arbil and Tikrit. Third, the regions are not able to handle all of the power that will be given to them under the Biden plan. Until 2003, most of the Iraqi cities never had a governor, a mayor or a chief of police of their own. The regime of Saddam Hussein sent those from Baghdad or the few towns loyal to him. The catastrophic performance of the local governments in the past four years speaks volumes about where this plan will lead. The latest report submitted to Congress by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (October 2007) states that “Iraq’s provincial councils have limited ability to manage and sustain infrastructure projects, and they are not sufficiently budgeting for operations and maintenance requirements.”<sup>[6]</sup> Until those local governments are enabled to act proficiently, it would be irresponsible to give them a sweeping control over the destiny of millions of Iraq’s citizens.

The second point calls for equitable distribution of revenues. This is the right thing to do, but the plan needs some adjustment. A guaranteed 20 percent of “all present and future revenues” for Sunnis should be made after taking into consideration the central government’s expenses. Otherwise, the other two groups end up financing the state from their own portions. Additionally, the second point in the plan seems to worry about the Ba’athists, but gives no attention whatsoever to their victims who outnumber them more than ten to one. In this sense, the plan will replace a small angry minority of former oppressors with a large furious majority of victims. The Senator, in spite of his obvious effort to follow the situation in Iraq, perhaps is not aware that a vast majority of the victims of the past regime are still victims in the new regime. To reward their former oppressors and tell them (the victims) to simply “get over it,” will create a political and moral quagmire the consequences of which can be catastrophic.

The third and fifth points present good suggestions concerning the engagement of Iraq’s neighbors, politically and financially, in solving Iraq’s problems. Unfortunately, most of those are

unrealistic at the present time. First, the regional states are not operating in harmony with one another, because they have mutually exclusive goals in Iraq. Also, some of them are on the worst terms with the United States, which gives them no incentive to cooperate. Indeed, even the U.S. 'allies' seem to pursue their own interests, which at times can be to the opposite of what the United States tries to accomplish. Further, the plan does not explain how to make those "oil-rich Gulf states" give money to Iraq. Until now, Kuwait insists on collecting all of the compensations for Saddam's invasion and occupation in 1990-1991, much less provide any financial aid, and Saudi has only agreed to give Iraq loans in addition to some unsubstantial aid. Saudi Arabia still wants Iraq to pay the loans from the Iraq-Iran War, some \$15 to \$18 billion. Although they agreed recently to forgive 80 percent of the loans, they did claim that unpaid interest has brought the amount owed to \$39 billion.<sup>[7]</sup> In this case, Iraq will still have to pay half of the original debt. As the Iraqi minister of Finance, Baqir Jabr, pointed out, "Saudi Arabia has also failed to deliver on a long-standing pledge to provide \$1 billion in new aid."<sup>[8]</sup> Additionally, some Gulf States, including Saudi Arabia, have undermined the stability of Iraq. In the words of one U.S. representative, the Saudi government shows "tacit approval of terrorism."<sup>[9]</sup>

The fourth point calls for a withdrawal and re-deployment of "almost all U.S. forces from Iraq by 2008." As it will be discussed shortly, this goal is not realistic, given the status of Iraq's security forces. The plan does not call on giving Iraq a credible military and police to be able to defend itself in a very bad neighborhood, the Middle East. It calls for keeping a small number of troops, around 20,000, "to strike any concentration of terrorists, help keep Iraq's neighbors honest and train its security forces." If 150,000 U.S. troops were deemed insufficient to keep Iraq safe, hence the surge, then how could one tenth of that number of troops accomplish this goal?

Additional critique of the plan must emphasize that the plan makes no mention of corruption, which is the second form of terrorism in Iraq, nor does it present any measures to end it. Indeed, under the plan corruption is more likely to thrive. Iraq's provinces need a long process to establish the institutions that would ensure accountability and transparency. In 2006, Iraq was placed as the second most corrupt country in the world, sharing the same place on the list (160) with Myanmar and Guinea, and saved from the worst position by Haiti. This is not likely to change, except for to worse, when the 2007 report is announced. Iraq's 2006 budget was \$41 billion and it will be \$48 billion in 2008, the highest in Iraq's history. Yet, Iraqis still live in sub-human conditions, worse than those of the poorest countries. The only ones who seem to have prospered are the politicians and their allies.<sup>[10]</sup> To put it bluntly, with this level of corruption, all of the talk about a strong, stable and democratic Iraq is mere nonsense.

The United States is, sadly, part of this problem. To be sure, the United States did not introduce corruption in Iraq. But the United States has tolerated gross corruption for a higher priority, namely so as not to disturb the political process. Hence, a unique opportunity to break away from the old system of corruption was missed. From the billions of dollars that simply disappeared during the CPA era to the latest revelations of gross corruption cases, the U.S. Government has not taken any significant steps to prosecute the offenders, much less use available tools, such as the Interpol, to bring fugitive embezzlers to justice. This conduct on part of the U.S. Government caused some frustrated members of Congress, like Rep. Henry Waxman, to introduce House Resolution 734, accusing the State Department of "abuse of the classification process to withhold from Congress and the people of the United States broad assessments of the extent of corruption in the Iraqi Government."<sup>[11]</sup> This came after the State Department "retroactively classified two reports on corruption in Iraq," that were previously disseminated. The resolution also expressed frustration at the State Department for "directing its employees not to answer questions in an open forum that call for 'Broad statements/assessments which judge or characterize the quality of Iraqi governance or the ability/determination of the Iraqi government to deal with corruption, including allegations that investigations were thwarted/stifled for political reasons.'"<sup>[12]</sup> The resolution was passed in the House of Representatives on October 16, 2007, by an overwhelming majority of 395 to 21.<sup>[13]</sup> This is not about some small matters of petty corruption or embezzlement. As Representative Waxman put it, quoting the Head of the Iraqi Commission

on Public Integrity, Radhi al-Radhi, testifying before Congress, “Corrupt Iraqi officials had stolen a staggering 18 billion dollars.”<sup>[14]</sup> Thirty-one investigators, according to al-Radhi, were assassinated to prevent the exposure of those corrupt officials.

The plan, in Senator Biden’s words, aims to “beef up” the federal arrangement in the Iraqi constitution. This is not possible, of course, without a constitutional amendment. Iraqis of all groups reject this level of tampering with the constitution. It goes without saying that amending the constitution to make it reflect a plan presented by a U.S. senator is in itself a bad plan that can only excite the resentment of Iraqis. Iraqi politicians are conveniently racing to criticize the Senate vote to endorse the Biden Plan in harsh terms. The leader of one bloc in the Iraqi legislature described the vote in the U.S. Senate to pass a non-binding resolution (essentially based on the Biden plan) as a move that shows no ethics, taste or any respect to the International law, asking the interviewer, “What if the Iraqi legislature passed a similar non-binding resolution to divide the United States?”<sup>[15]</sup>

## U.S. Policy: No Good Options

Setting all diplomatic niceties aside, Ambassador Crocker complained that “[no] Nelson Mandela existed to emerge on the [Iraqi] national political scene; anyone with his leadership talents would have not survived.” This line was echoed in a speech President Bush gave, saying: “Mandela is dead, because Saddam Hussein killed all the Mandelas.”<sup>[16]</sup> In between, Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice also dwelled on the same theme and attributed the assumed lack of an Iraqi Mandela to the fact that “Saddam Hussein killed people, a lot of the leadership of Iraq.”<sup>[17]</sup> This lack of faith in all Iraqis, at the highest level of the U.S. Government, tells the whole story of failing to accomplish any substantial political progress in Iraq. In fairness to Ambassador Crocker and his superiors in the Government, they are not the first to hold this “Orientalist” view. Faced with the same task, Gertrude Bell wrote in 1920: “If only we could manage to install a native head of the state.”<sup>[18]</sup> She went on, a week later, to state that, “The theory is that we’re going to set up a government agreeable to all; the drawback [is] that such a government doesn’t exist.”<sup>[19]</sup> The British solution was to import a king, Faisal I, from Mecca. The real problem for the U.S. Government is not that an Iraqi Mandela does not exist; the problem is that there is no Faisal—a man who is accepted by the Iraqis and, at the same time, poses no threat to U.S. interests in the region. Any Sunni Arab or a Kurd will not be accepted by the Iraqis, because they will not agree to return to minority rule, which could only be sustained by oppression. Therefore, we are back to Ms. Bell’s quandary: “if you’re going to have anything like really representative institutions...you would have a majority of Shi’ahs.”<sup>[20]</sup> This will run against the second criteria since, as far as Washington is concerned, any Shi’i leader in Iraq is *a priori* guilty of being closer to Iran than to the United States.

Given this poverty of choices, the United States has moved in all directions and ended up with no particular direction. In the past five years we have seen U.S. support of democracy and its antithesis, tribalism; secularism and theocracy; constitutionalism and arbitrary politics; rule of law and contempt to the law; de-Ba’athification and re-Ba’athification; disarming the militias and tolerating the militias; fighting the insurgents and backing the insurgents; to give only a short list of inconsistencies. This experimentalism is directly caused by the lack of faith in the Iraqis and is also directly causing the lack of substantial progress in Iraq.

The drawback in Iraq is that after the military victory that resulted in the removal of a brutal dictator, a political victory by replacing him with a decent government did not ensue. Instead, factions within the U.S. Government kept their eyes on each other and let the Iraqi ball bounce all over the field. Just as Iraqis began to recover from the plunders of Ambassador L Paul Bremer III and, following two elections and a constitutional ratification, a fatal setback was set off by Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad’s imposition of a “national unity” government which included politicians and parties who stood for anything but national unity. Worse of all, this imposition represented the first act to undermine a constitution whose ink was still fresh. As a result, it took

the Iraqis several months to finally form a government that failed to reflect the constitution or national unity. The ministers represent and serve their own parties and social groups first and always, on the watch of a prime minister who possessed no actual oversight power on their performance—not to speak of the horrific corruption. Once again, Iraqis were sent back to despair and forced to embrace their tribes and militias, whose menace was tolerated simply because they outperform the incompetent government.

On January 10, 2007, President Bush said, “The situation in Iraq is unacceptable to the American people—and it is unacceptable to me. Our troops in Iraq have fought bravely. They have done everything we have asked them to do. Where mistakes have been made, the responsibility rests with me.”<sup>[21]</sup> This statement was as true then as it was true three years earlier, but it would have made a world of difference had it been said in 2003. Part of the problem, of course, was that the American people did not actively unveil their judgment on the situation in Iraq in the 2004 election, which was interpreted as a mandate for the Iraq policy.

The U.S. election of 2006 brought several positive changes that gave a chance to correct the Iraq policy: the departure of Former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, which in turn facilitated the appointment of a general who called for more troops; the replacement of Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, who was resented by many Iraqis for what they perceived as his political bias toward the Sunnis;<sup>[22]</sup> and the first declaration by President Bush that “we’re not winning, we’re not loosing,” instead of the over-confident pre-election statement, “Absolutely, we’re winning.”<sup>[23]</sup> As a result, a policy contrary to that of Rumsfeld’s began to take shape. More troops were deployed to secure Baghdad and some other hot areas in the past months, which resulted in a significant reduction of violence in the city. But, unless true measures are adopted to sustain it, this reduction is temporary. Furthermore, it is not enough, as of now, to create a feeling of safety in the capital, or any other place in Iraq, because the terrorists are still able to strike at will in any place and at any time; and they do.

Contributing to the general lack of confidence in the future of Iraq’s security is the fact that the surge is supposed to end very soon. The post-surge circumstances will not have changed from the time before the surge to prevent the return of the terrorists and the criminals to the streets of Baghdad. The question that needs to be asked now is, “What is the post-surge plan?”

## The Problem Can Be the Solution

The security problem in Iraq at this time is the weakness of Iraq’s military and security forces. Niceties aside, there is no true commitment on the part of the United States, or anyone else, to make Iraq a strong country. Iraqi forces are still untrained, poorly equipped and confused. This lack of commitment should not surprise anyone, because Iraq is still a suspect, just like it was in Saddam’s days. A strong military, which is what it takes to accomplish true security, is not on the immediate agenda.

In his recent testimony before Congress, Lt. Gen. Martin Dempsey argued that Iraq should have the number of troops it needs, but not more than that.<sup>[24]</sup> But, what is this number? Initially, it was estimated in 2003 that Iraqi forces would be, by 2006, as low as 40,000, excluding the police force—hardly enough to secure one Iraqi province. Nevertheless, at that time, Walter Slocombe, a senior Coalition Provisional Authority official, “said the new military would theoretically be able to defend Iraq from invasion.”<sup>[25]</sup>

After the rise of the insurgency, the objective number of military and police was set at 325,000 (134,700 Military and 188,300 Police). The irksome reality is that Iraq needs four times this number in order to achieve stability. Without domestic violence, Saddam Hussein employed a military of 400,000 troops in peace time to keep order and deter an outside attack, with the flexibility to raise the number to a million in war time. When the number of Saddam’s police,

security police and other forces are added to the math, it should become clear that the current force objectives will never produce security in Iraq without a long-term commitment of foreign forces. This is exactly the assessment of Lt. General Dempsey, who said, in a recent interview: "For some time Iraq will continue to need assurances from the United States in terms of its external security."<sup>[26]</sup> The General's assessment was confirmed by the Declaration of Principles, which was agreed to by President George W. Bush and PM Nouri al-Maliki on November 26, 2007. In the section on security, the first principle stipulates that the United States "provides security assurances and commitments to deter any external aggression targeting Iraq and violating its sovereignty and its territory, water or space."<sup>[27]</sup> As this declaration is a prelude to "a formal agreement defining long-term relations between the two nations,"<sup>[28]</sup> Lt. Gen. Dempsey's statement that not before the end of 2008 that the Iraqi "...force begins to look like that of a fully sovereign government," becomes an understatement of some sort. The national defense of Iraq will become the business of the United States for quite a while. Iraqi sovereignty will never be complete and no future Iraqi government can claim legitimacy and independence, as the experience with Britain proved throughout the first half of the 20th century.

Meanwhile, the plan to handle Iraq's current military and police deficiency is both misguided and dangerous. It is built on outsourcing the job of Iraq's inadequate troops to the tribes and, in some limited cases, the insurgents! Fighting one element of the insurgency by empowering another insurgency element is an untenable method of counterinsurgency, especially when both elements have the same stated goals: to kill as many Iraqis and Americans as it takes to regain control of Iraq. The same can also be said about the empowerment of tribal elements. The tribal sheikhs do not put their lives and those of their men on the line because of pro-Americanism or because of some Iraqi patriotic sentiments. They do so to enhance their own positions in the constant struggle with local rivals over territory and prestige, not to mention personal gains. A similar policy of reliance on the tribes brought dire consequences to the Ottomans in the 19th century; it exploded in the face of the British administration of Iraq in the early 20th century; and it will lead to the same now.

The objective of "an Iraq that does not constitute a threat to its neighbors" must not be understood in pure military terms. Otherwise, the old, threatening, Iraq would be replaced by a new Iraq that is constantly threatened by its neighbors. The concept of an Iraq that is at peace with its neighbors must be found on a democratic, stable and strong Iraq. The solution is to have enough forces in Iraq to end the violence and provide stability. Since a substantial increase of U.S. forces is not a possibility, both logistically and politically, the only solution—which also happens to be the right one—is to re-institute the military conscription in Iraq.

## **Military Conscription in Iraq**

Military conscription in Iraq was mistakenly abolished after the toppling of Saddam's government. It was established by an elected Iraqi parliament in the 1930s and was kept on the books by every subsequent government.<sup>[29]</sup> Re-instating conscription in Iraq will tackle a complex of problems in the country. Most importantly, it will provide the number of troops desperately needed for the upcoming years. This will reduce the security dependence on U.S. forces, many of whom went through three tours of duty, and some are on their fourth tour. Indeed, this is the only viable plan for the post-surge period.

Conscription will also change the current lopsided make-up of the Iraqi forces, wherein the Shi'a are over-represented. Consequently, insurgency propagandists brand all Iraqi soldiers and officers as "collaborators with the U.S." or as "militias loyal to the governing parties." A military conscription will undermine this claim and restore the old status of the Iraqi soldier. For once, there is a chance for the Iraqi military to be a true national institution in a country with a dire need for some institutions that transcend the sects and ethnic groups. This can be done only when the military includes all Iraqi groups through a return to conscription. Furthermore, with every recruit

added to the Iraq forces, the number of Iraqis who join the insurgency, or choose a criminal path for economic reasons, will decrease.

In addition to conscription, a return to the previous laws concerning soldiers' commitment to their units is essential for a successful military in Iraq—in today's Iraq, "it is not illegal for an Iraqi soldier to abandon his unit or go AWOL."<sup>[30]</sup> This is why many soldiers simply desert their units when asked to fight and, in other cases, insist on serving in a specific location but not elsewhere. In May 2006, "dozens of [soldiers in the Anbar province] declared that they would refuse to serve outside their home areas." And a year earlier, "more than 15,000 other Iraqi soldiers and police officers deserted, forcing the training effort essentially to start over with new practices designed to increase the retention of recruits."<sup>[31]</sup> Still, no policy exists to prevent the recurrence of such conduct. According to Lt. Gen. Dempsey, of the Iraqi Security Forces that were ordered to support the plan to secure Baghdad, "some units didn't want to fight," while there was "one case where several senior leaders at the lieutenant colonel and major level spoke out against the mission [in Baghdad] and advised their soldiers not to deploy," contributing to other reasons behind the loss of 35%-40% of the units' authorized strength.<sup>[32]</sup> Iraqis need to confront this flaw in their military if they wish to operate independently to provide internal security and/or defend their country against an external threat.

There is, of course, the past history of abusing the conscription law by the previous regimes; especially the abuses under Saddam Hussein's rule. Saddam Hussein engaged in external wars for eleven of his twenty-two years in power. Throughout these years, conscripts were kept in the service for up to thirteen years,<sup>[33]</sup> with a pay that was hardly enough to cover the soldier's personal expenses, much less to support a family. When the war was over, veterans were thrown out to unemployment and neglect, only to face a recall when another war began. The lives tens of thousands of Iraqi men and their families were shattered by this cruel practice. The new conscription law must take every measure to prevent such abuse. Additionally, the law needs not be permanent. It can be set with an expiration date after seven or ten years and a provision for a review by the Iraqi legislators to keep it on the books or end it according to the circumstances.

## A Plan for Iraq

- The Iraqi Constitution should be sole basis for Iraq's political and legal processes. Having failed to meet its purpose and proven its incompetence, the National Unity Government should be replaced with a government consistent with the Iraqi constitution. The Prime Minister should choose his ministers and have full authority over them. What Iraq needs is a really united and vibrant government in office and a vibrant opposition in and outside the parliament. PM Nouri al-Maliki can form such a government and govern for the balance of his term.
- Iraq's Conscription Law needs to be reinstated and the Iraqi Forces, including the Air Force, should be fully equipped and trained to meet the current and future challenges. Iraq's security should not be compromised for the sake of the political process or to satisfy some local or regional actors. This is the only realistic way to responsibly withdraw the U.S. forces without leaving a vacuum in Iraq.
- Militias, tribal and religious forces, and all other anti-democratic armed groups should not have a place in Iraq. The government must devise a plan to have a monopoly on the possession and use of weapons. As the circumstances allow, subsequent laws can be enacted to permit reasonable possession and use of arms in a manner that poses no threat to law and order.
- De-Ba'athification must be a legal and a political process. The question needs to be addressed at three levels. First, Ba'ath Party members should be accountable for their personal conduct rather than their previous association with the Party; second, the victims of the Party's brutality must see justice done by prosecuting known criminals and fair compensation for their loss and suffering during the Ba'athist rule; and, third, reconciliation may be made with the individuals, but not with the Ba'ath as a party and an

ideology—the ideology of the Ba’ath Party and any similar form of chauvinism must not be permitted in Iraq. All former Ba’ath members can receive political amnesty, as long as this does not preclude any victim from pressing charges against anyone of them for personal crimes committed during their time in power.

- There is a need to activate the Iraqi judiciary and respect its independence. No one in Iraq can be allowed to escape prosecution, especially high profile criminals and terrorists, who are spared for the sake of the “political process.”
- Corruption in Iraq must be combated with the same determination as the insurgency and terrorism. No corrupt politicians or bureaucrats should be spared for any consideration.
- With the exception of the three Kurdish provinces, federalism in Iraq should be applied gradually, starting with the federalism of the governorates. Political and financial powers should be given in a progressive way along with extensive training and capacity building and the necessary steps to assure transparency and accountability. Once the governorates attain the level of maturity as federal unites, they can join each other and cluster as larger provinces (*aqaleem*).
- The reconstruction of Iraq should be given a higher level of consideration. It must not be tied to the “generosity” of the International Community or the regional actors. With a budget of \$48 billion, Iraq is capable of depending on itself. Any extra contributions should be treated as a welcome addition, but not as a sine qua non basis for reconstruction. Along with reconstructing Iraq, there is a need to raise the standard of living for all Iraqis. Whether they are unemployed, or employed with inadequate pay, too many Iraqis do not live with dignity at the present time. This is unacceptable for a country with the second oil reserve in the world.
- Iraqi revenues should be distributed equally among all Iraqis according to a sound and transparent fiscal policy. Any oil laws should be made with the consensus of all Iraqi groups and crafted by professionals and specialists rather than partisan politicians with no knowledge of the long-term consequences of the laws. Iraq’s current vulnerability must not be a justification to surrender its wealth to the multi-national corporations.
- Since none of Iraq’s neighbors can be considered a friend of the Iraqi people, they must not be allowed to influence the political process in the country. The more they interfere, the harder it is for Iraqis to succeed. While the United States cannot make Iraq’s neighbors provide positive assistance, it certainly can deter them from hindering the process. This should go for both U.S. foes and allies.

## About the Author

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16. An online clip is accessible on *YouTube* at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1KGwQ1O88Y> (accessed on Nov. 22, 07). Given Mandela's position on the whole Iraq tragedy, it is highly doubtful that the Bush Administration is "literally" looking for someone like Mandela.
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