



THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS OF FAILURE IN IRAQ: A RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION

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This article examines the course of the disastrous U.S. reconstruction of Iraq from the invasion through the fall of 2006. It locates the source of America's many failings not only in the ignorance that governed the Bush Administration's assumptions about the ease of postwar reconstruction and the absence of appropriate or realistic planning that resulted, but also in a series of equally mistaken decisions by the Bush Administration, the Coalition Provisional Authority, and the U.S. military in the years that followed. It argues that the political deadlock, security vacuum, and absence of a functional Iraqi economy today are all the result of these problems and that only dramatic changes in U.S. policy—not the tactical tinkering that the Bush Administration has engaged in over the past 18 months and that many of its critics continue to recommend today—have any chance of undoing the damage of this long chain of needless mistakes.

It never had to be this bad. The reconstruction of Iraq was never going to be quick or easy, but it was not doomed to failure.¹ Its disastrous course to date has been almost entirely the result of a sequence of foolish and unnecessary mistakes on the part of the United States.

Perhaps at some point in the future, revisionist historians will try to claim that the effort was doomed from the start, that it never was possible to build a stable, let alone pluralistic, new Iraq in the rubble of Saddam Hussein's fall. However, that is decidedly not the view of the experts, the journalists covering the story, or the practitioners who went to Iraq to put the country back together after the 2003 invasion. Americans returning from Iraq—military and civilian alike—have proven unanimous in their view that the Iraqis desperately want reconstruction to succeed and that they have the basic tools to make it work, but that the United States has

consistently failed to provide them with the opportunities and the framework to succeed.² Indeed, perhaps the most tragic evidence of this unrealized potential is that even three-and-a-half years after Saddam's fall, with Iraq mired in a deepening civil war and no sign of real progress on the horizon, over 40 percent of Iraqis still clung to the belief that Iraq was headed in the right direction—with only 35 percent saying it was headed in the wrong direction.³

If Iraq does slide into all-out civil war, the Bush Administration will have only itself to blame. It disregarded the advice of experts on Iraq, on nation-building, and on military operations. It staged both the invasion and the reconstruction on the cheap. It never learned from its mistakes and never committed adequate resources to accomplish either its original lofty aspirations or even its later, more modest goals. It refused to believe intelligence that

contradicted its own views and doggedly insisted that reality conform to its wishes. In its breathtaking hubris, the Administration engineered a Greek tragedy in Iraq, the outcome of which may plague us for decades.

IGNORANCE AND ARROGANCE

The invasion of Iraq was born of a great many different ideas. As former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz noted in an interview with *Vanity Fair*, the threat of Saddam with weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) was simply the one threat upon which all of the senior members of the Bush Administration agreed—and believed that it could be used to justify the war to the public.⁴ Not all of these ideas were foolish. Some of their rationales for war were quite reasonable: the international consensus that Saddam had reconstituted his WMD programs—which turned out to be entirely mistaken but was considered “incontrovertible”⁵ at the time;⁶ the fact that Saddam was one of the most brutal tyrants of the previous sixty years; the fact that his ambitions ran directly counter to those of the United States—and his efforts to achieve them had destabilized the Persian Gulf for twenty-five years; and the problem that the world was losing interest in keeping him bound by sanctions, as evinced by the postwar revelations of the Volcker commission concerning the corruption and manipulation of the Oil-for-Food program by the Iraqi government to secure the political support of France, Russia, and China, among other countries.⁷

However, there were also a great deal of unreasonable ideas, and unfortunately these unreasonable ideas were not only part of the justification for the war, but also became critical elements of the Administration’s prewar thinking about postwar

reconstruction. Some in the Bush Administration had convinced themselves that Saddam was the source of all of the ills of the Middle East and that, therefore, any progress on any issue in the region first required Saddam’s removal. This was a key piece of the neoconservative support for Laurie Mylroie’s bizarre claims that Saddam was responsible for the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, as well as a number of other attacks.⁸ Likewise, during the 1990s, this author personally heard individuals who would later become senior Bush Administration officials insist that Saddam’s opposition had doomed American efforts to make peace between the Arabs and the Israelis in the 1980s. In so doing, they simply dismissed all of the evidence that no Arab leader except Hosni Mubarak had been more supportive of the peace process than Saddam during that period. This was the basis of the neo-conservative refrain that “the road to Jerusalem runs through Baghdad.” Likewise, this mistaken conviction was part of the reason that Washington quickly shifted its attention from Afghanistan to Iraq, in the belief that Saddam somehow stood behind both the Taliban and al-Qa’ida. It is certainly the case that Administration figures regularly played fast and loose with the paltry evidence suggesting any kind of relationship between Saddam and bin Ladin, but it is also the case that they did so because they were certain that it existed, even if there was no evidence to support it and most of the evidence available suggested the opposite.⁹

As bad as some of these rationales for war may have been, far more damaging was the way in which these rationalizations influenced the Administration’s senior leadership regarding the necessity and demands of postwar reconstruction. At bottom, many in the Administration—and

virtually all of those leading the march to war—simply did not believe that a major effort at reconstruction was necessary. United States Central Command (CENTCOM), the military command responsible for the war, was told to prepare for humanitarian contingencies such as refugees, but little else. Both the CENTCOM commander, General Tommy Franks, and the office of the Secretary of Defense made clear that they wanted to reduce the American military presence in Iraq as quickly as possible, and if there were any serious efforts at nation-building to be made, they were determined that someone else do it.¹⁰ Rumsfeld and other members of the Administration, including even the President, had made it clear that they did not believe that nation-building was the sort of operation in which the U.S. military should be involved.¹¹ Other members of the Administration, particularly those close to Iraqi National Congress (INC) leader Ahmed Chalabi, saw no need for a major American reconstruction effort, because they hoped to turn the country over to Chalabi and have him run it for the United States.¹²

To make matters worse, officials at the Department of Defense (DoD), the Office of the Vice President (OVP), and some at the National Security Council (NSC) decided that the State Department was “against” the war and would sabotage their plans to run Iraq the way they saw fit and to install Chalabi in power. They worked assiduously to retain complete control over the meager work on postwar reconstruction that was being done and to exclude State Department personnel, offices, and input. Thus one of the many Catch-22s of U.S. prewar planning for postwar Iraq is that while neither the military nor the civilian leadership of the Pentagon was interested in nation-building, they were absolutely

determined to exclude those agencies that were both more willing and more able. While State’s capacity to handle postwar reconstruction and nation-building probably would also have proven inadequate without massive international cooperation, it was still orders of magnitude beyond what DoD possessed. Instead, the Defense Department put together a small team (about 200 people at the time of the invasion) led by retired Lieutenant General Jay Garner to handle postwar reconstruction—at least temporarily—until a presidential envoy could be appointed.¹³ Garner was not even asked to head this postwar transition team until January 9, 2003, a little more than two months before the start of the war. He was prevented from cooperating with Central Command planners, and many of his requests for key personnel were denied. Garner and his team wanted desperately to do the right thing, and some were quite able, but they started with everything stacked against them. Once again, this was particularly true with regard to the intellectual foundations of the Administration’s approach to war, which underlay all of the planning. Most of the Administration’s chief Iraq hawks shared a deeply naïve view that the fall of Saddam and his top henchmen would have relatively little impact on the overall Iraqi governmental structure. They assumed that Iraq’s bureaucracy would remain intact and would therefore be capable of running the country and providing Iraqis with basic services. They likewise assumed that the Iraqi armed forces would largely remain cohesive and would surrender whole to U.S. forces. While the Administration does not seem to have intended to use the Iraqi army to secure the population, they believed that because it would remain cohesive, there would be little threat from disgruntled

soldiers joining organized crime or insurgent groups, as actually happened.¹⁴

As has been documented by many other authors, the result of all this was a fundamental lack of attention to realistic planning for the postwar environment. As it was assumed that the Iraqis would be delighted to be liberated—with no allowance either for those who opposed the invasion, those glad but wary of U.S. intentions, or those simply looking to take advantage of the dictator's fall to grab as much loot as they could—little thought was given to security requirements after Saddam's fall. This was carried over into a larger dearth of planning for the provision of security and basic services in the mistaken belief that Iraqi political institutions would remain largely intact and therefore able to handle those responsibilities—especially after America's Iraqi friends (particularly Chalabi) were installed in Baghdad in Saddam's place. Although senior military commanders decided that the State Department would be responsible for reconstruction, thereby alleviating themselves of any responsibility for it, the Department of Defense prohibited Garner's team from interacting with Franks's staff, while also working to minimize its cooperation with the State Department. Across the board, planning was disjointed, inadequate, and unrealistic.¹⁵

NEGLECT AND STUBBORNNESS

All of these bad ideas—the products of arrogance and ignorance—began to bear tragic fruit during and immediately after the invasion of Iraq. There were certainly problems with the operation itself. The assumption that virtually no Iraqis would fight proved inaccurate. Most did not, but enough did to create some serious

headaches for commanders throughout the chain of command. There were too few Coalition troops, which meant that long supply lines were vulnerable to attack by Iraqi irregulars, and the need to mask entire cities at times took so much combat power that it brought the entire offensive to a halt. American technology at times fell victim to simple Iraqi countermeasures—such as barrages of small arms fire that effectively neutralized the fearsome Apache attack helicopters that the United States had hoped would pulverize Iraqi mechanized formations. Nevertheless, the invasion itself was, overall, a remarkably successful operation, resulting in the capture of Baghdad and the fall of the regime in a little less than four weeks.¹⁶

Yet the invasion was not the war. It was merely the beginning of the war. Unfortunately, the prewar planning guidance handed down from the civilian chiefs in the Department of Defense now dictated what the military forces on the ground did and did not do, and that meant that they did far too little.

Almost immediately, the mistaken assumptions and inadequate planning for postwar Iraq began to plague U.S. actions. Combat units found themselves in charge of large urban areas with no sense of what to do, whom to contact, or how else to get help. As no orders were issued to the troops to prevent looting and other criminal activity—since it was mistakenly assumed that there would not be such problems—no one did so. The result was an outbreak of lawlessness throughout the country that resulted in massive physical destruction coupled with a stunning psychological blow to Iraqi confidence in the United States, from neither of which has the country recovered.

It was at that moment, in April 2003, that the United States created the most

fundamental problems in Iraq. At that point, having torn down Saddam Hussein's tyranny, there was nothing to take its place; nothing to fill the military, political, and economic void left by the regime's fall. The result was that the United States created a failed state and a power vacuum, which even as of this writing has not been properly filled. That power vacuum and that failed state allowed an insurgency to develop in the Sunni tribal community of Western Iraq, left the Shi'a communities to be slowly taken over by vicious sectarian militias, spawned organized crime rings across the country, and prevented the development of governmental institutions capable of providing Iraqis with the most basic services such as clean water, sanitation, electricity, and a minimally functioning economy capable of generating basic employment. The persistence of these problems over time led to the emergence of low-level civil war in Iraq, and it now threatens to plunge the country into a Bosnia- or Lebanon-like maelstrom.

Compounding the problem, the Administration concurrently took a number of steps that discouraged those who might have helped them to address these failings by helping to build new political, economic, and security institutions in Iraq capable of replacing Saddam's fallen regime. Such capabilities were resident in segments of the UN bureaucracy and, to an even greater extent, in scores of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have assisted in nation-building around the world in the past. However, the Bush Administration's stubborn insistence that the United Nations be denied overall authority for the reconstruction, and that the international community conform to American dictates in Iraq effectively denied the United States their assistance.

It is not true, as many seem to believe, that the Administration simply barred the United Nations and other states from participating in the reconstruction. However, Washington did impose conditions on that involvement that made it unattractive for the UN, international NGOs, and a long list of foreign governments to participate. Even countries that disagreed with the United States on the decision to invade Iraq were eager to assist with the reconstruction—indeed some, like Germany, hoped that their fulsome participation in reconstruction would help assuage the anger that their opposition to the war itself had created in the United States. Unfortunately, another pathology of the senior leadership of the Bush Administration was that most of them shared an abiding antipathy to the UN and other international organizations. This, coupled with their ignorant but adamant belief that a major reconstruction effort would be unnecessary in Iraq, hardened them in their stand-offish approach to the UN and other members of the international community. Washington insisted that the reconstruction be headed by an American and that all UN and international personnel be integrated into the American effort.

However, neither the UN, the international NGOs, nor many other governments were interested in working under these conditions. Most UN bureaucrats disliked the Bush Administration (if not the United States altogether) and the invasion of Iraq to begin with. Moreover, they and members of the Security Council were loathe to make the UN subordinate to the United States given both the greater resources and success of the UN in nation-building operations in the past.¹⁷ The United Nations provided only a small staff of several hundred people and most of the NGOs either stayed away or

sent only small numbers of personnel themselves. To its credit, the United Nations did send one priceless commodity: Sergio Vieira de Mello, an outstanding international administrator who had headed the successful effort to stabilize East Timor in the years before the invasion of Iraq. To the extent that the United Nations and the rest of the international community participated meaningfully in the reconstruction of Iraq in the days after the fall of Baghdad, it was largely because Sergio de Mello was determined to make it work. When de Mello was killed in August 2003 by a truck-bomb attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad, the Secretariat immediately reduced its presence in Iraq to little more than a skeleton crew on the grounds that the United States, which had insisted on retaining complete control of the effort, was failing in its most basic task: providing the security that was the *sine qua non* of any reconstruction efforts.

In retrospect, the meager participation of the international community was an important factor in the many failures of reconstruction. The United Nations, through its various agencies, can call upon a vast network of personnel and resources vital to various aspects of nation-building. One of the greatest problems the United States faced was that it simply did not have enough people who knew how to do all of the things necessary to rebuild the political and economic systems of a shattered nation. The UN, in contrast, had worked with thousands of people with such skills in Cambodia, Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. Had the UN asked those people to help in Iraq, they probably would have come. In contrast, they proved mostly unwilling to answer the same call from the Bush Administration, especially when Washington rudely and repeatedly emphasized that reconstruction

in Iraq would be done their way and no other. The ability to tap into a much larger network of people with desperately needed skills, by itself, was a crucial virtue of the UN that was lost to the United States out of sheer hubris.¹⁸

PANIC AND HASTE

It did not take long after the fall of Saddam's regime for reality to intrude upon the pipe dreams of the Administration. It quickly became clear that Iraq's governmental apparatus had largely collapsed. The people had all gone home and most were not reporting to work. The buildings had been ransacked by looters. The equipment had largely been stolen or destroyed. Many of the files had been destroyed, stolen, or acquired for other nefarious purposes. A comprehensive survey undertaken by the new Iraqi minister of water resources after he took office in late 2003, found that the ministry had lost 60 percent of its equipment—from pencils to massive dredgers—in the looting.¹⁹ The Administration did look briefly to Ahmed Chalabi and his INC to fill the void, flying Chalabi and 400 of his personnel into al-Nasiriyah early in the war. However, the paltry numbers of followers that Chalabi could scrape together compared to what he claimed, and the increasing evidence that those on the inside did not know or care for him, made it impossible to simply hand the reins of power to Chalabi and expect that he could manage the state. What's more, it was equally clear that the United States lacked the personnel with the expertise to step in and fill these roles—and the international community, which did have such personnel, was not willing to provide them unless the Administration agreed to major changes in its handling of the postwar reconstruction.

The result was a sort of panic in both Washington and Baghdad, as it became apparent that postwar realities were radically different from the Administration's prewar expectations. Initially, the panic took the form of criticism of Jay Garner. In essence, the first response of those in Washington who had devised the vision for the threadbare postwar reconstruction was to blame Garner for not being up to the task. They whispered to the press that it was his execution and not their unrealistic expectations and inadequate preparations that were to blame.

Not surprisingly, Garner was soon on his way out. He was relieved of his charge in June 2003, and replaced by the more senior and more politically savvy L. Paul Bremer. Yet Bremer knew even less about Iraq when he took charge than Garner had, having never handled operations there before and not even having had the benefit of Garner's few months of pre-planning to get a sense of the country. Bremer's early remarks upon arrival in Baghdad were largely focused on the need to privatize Iraqi industry. It was as if he had inherited leadership of an Eastern Europe nation that had just shed Soviet-style Communism—and not an Arab country suddenly freed from war, comprehensive sanctions, and a near-genocidal dictatorship.²⁰ However, Bremer had another problem to deal with: Washington's demands.

The manifest problems in Iraq—from the looting and anarchy, to the persistent insurgent attacks, to the lack of any progress in restoring basic services—coupled with the lack of progress in finding WMDs, were putting a serious damper on the Administration's ability to claim that it had truly "liberated" Iraq and would quickly be able to leave it a stable, prosperous state. Washington began to put intense pressure on its small, but constantly

growing, staff in Baghdad to produce results, and fast. The result was a series of mistaken decisions in the summer and fall of 2003 that further crippled the reconstruction effort.²¹

The best known of these decisions was the disbanding of the Iraqi military and security services. This decision actually requires a bit of explanation in order to understand the problematic facets of it. As Bremer and his senior staff have repeatedly argued, and not incorrectly, "the Iraqi Army disbanded itself." As noted above, and as should have been expected, during and after the war, most Iraqi soldiers simply went home. Thus, to some extent, the decision merely reflected the reality of the situation. Moreover, the Administration's critics are probably wrong in their contention that the Army could have been used to maintain order, and so take the place of the missing Coalition soldiers who should have been there to do so. The Iraqi Army was Saddam's Army—and his security services even more so—and it is very unclear how the population would have reacted to an American decision to use them to clamp down on civilians after the regime's fall. In this author's conversations with Iraqis both inside and outside Iraq since the end of the war, there certainly have been those who suggested that since most of the conscripts were Shi'a and merely following orders, the people would have accepted them as enforcers of law and order after Saddam's fall. However, far more have suggested the opposite. Bremer's team heard the same thing, and an important element in their decision to disband it was to try to send a signal to the people that the old regime was gone, and the Coalition would be starting again from a clean slate to create new institutions without the taint of Saddam.

While this rationale was understandable, it did not mean that the decision was

faultless. In fact, there was a major problem, albeit one principally derived from the poor prewar planning rather than from mistakes made by Bremer's team in Baghdad. This was the failure to entice, cajole, or even coerce Iraqi soldiers back to their own barracks or to other facilities where they could be fed, clothed, watched, retrained, and prevented from joining the insurgency, organized crime, or the militias. During its various forays into nation-building in the 1980s and 90s, the United States learned the importance of a Disarm, Demobilize, and Retrain (DDR) program for any reconstruction effort. The purpose of such a program is to take the soldiers and officers of the old army and put them into a long-term program of transition so that they can eventually be reintegrated into the society with the skills needed to find themselves jobs as civilians.

In Iraq, there was no DDR program, nor could one have been pulled together overnight. Doing so would have required places to put those Iraqis (their barracks had been bombed in some cases; looted in every case), money to pay, feed, and otherwise care for them; personnel and supplies to train them; and additional troops to guard them (in both senses of the word). As a result, the Coalition had nothing to offer former Iraqi soldiers and (particularly) officers, who had once enjoyed privileged positions in their society. By abruptly disbanding the military and security services without a DDR program, the United States turned as many as one million Iraqi men loose on the streets with no money, no way of supporting their families, and no skills other than how to use a shovel and a gun. Not surprisingly, many of the Sunni officers were humiliated by how they were treated and went home to their tribes in al-Anbar province and joined—along with their sons, cousins, and nephews—the

burgeoning Sunni insurgency. Equally unsurprisingly, many of the rank and file were quickly recruited by the insurgency, by militia leaders, or by organized crime. The result was a massive boost to the forces of instability in the country.²²

Although the decision to disband the Army without a DDR program is the best known of the rushed decisions made during the summer and fall of 2003, it was hardly the only one, and two other important ones bear mentioning. The first of these was the decision to accelerate massively the training of the new Iraqi Army. When Major General Paul Eaton was given responsibility for setting up a training program in Iraq for the New Iraqi Army, he was told that his goal was to have nine trained battalions (about 10,000 to 12,000 men) at the end of twelve months. This was a realistic goal, and Eaton's plan was fully capable of achieving it. However, soon after the program had started running, Eaton was suddenly ordered to accelerate his training program so that he could produce twenty-seven battalions in only nine months.²³ The reason for this was that the Administration had realized that they were desperately short of troops to fill the security vacuum the United States had created when it toppled Saddam's regime. However, rather than mobilize and deploy additional American soldiers—or do what would be necessary to secure greater participation in the Coalition by other nations—Washington's response was to have Eaton start pumping out as many Iraqi troops as he could, heedless of the fact that the accelerated programs would inevitably produce Iraqi soldiers who were neither properly trained nor fully committed to the mission.

This problem became even more severe with the creation of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) in the fall of 2003. The

purpose of the ICDC was to provide local militia forces—like those used successfully in many other counterinsurgency and stability operations around the world—as adjuncts to the national military forces. Again, the basic idea was sound. However, in Washington’s fever to churn out more Iraqi soldiers to hold up as proof that no more American or other foreign forces were needed, the Administration insisted on a breakneck pace that virtually eliminated any ability to vet personnel before they were brought into the ICDC. At the same time, training time was cut to just two or three weeks. Not surprisingly, the ICDC turned out to be a total debacle: It had virtually no combat capability, was thoroughly penetrated by the insurgents, militias, and organized crime, and collapsed whenever it was committed to battle.

The last key mistake made in that summer of panic was the decision to create an Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), which laid the foundation for many of Iraq’s current political woes. The experience of nation-building in other states over the past twenty to thirty years left the experts convinced that the process of political reconstruction could not be rushed. In most of these situations, the problem was that there was no readily available pool of leaders who genuinely represented the people. This was especially true in Saddam’s Iraq, where he had effectively “decapitated” the population by killing or co-opting any person with the charisma or stature to lead segments of the population and so pose a threat to his rule. In all of these societies, it took years to allow new leaders to emerge from the people. Such men and women had to feel safe enough to want to lead, they had to become known to large groups of people (large enough to get elected to some new position), and then they had to demonstrate their ability to lead

in the new systems. What this suggested was the requirement for a period of three to six years of political transition during which sovereignty and ultimate stewardship of the decision-making process resided in an external force—ideally a UN-authorized “high commissioner” or the like, backed by international security forces and NGOs skilled in political and economic reconstruction. These experiences of nation-building had demonstrated that when the process of turning control of the government back to the indigenous population was rushed, the old elites and anyone else with guns inevitably took over the government by buying or bullying the electorate.

Thus, the experts on reconstruction generally urged the inclusion of Iraqi voices in the decision-making process, but not the turning over of decision-making authority—or the appearance of it—to any Iraqi group. Instead, the focus was on a longer timeframe of building a new political system from the ground up over a period of years, during which time an international coalition, blessed by the UN, would retain sovereignty and only delegate authority to new Iraqi political entities as they became ready.²⁴

To some extent, that was the intent of some Americans in Iraq. Both State Department personnel and U.S. military officers—particularly those who had served in the Balkans and witnessed UN and NGO personnel in action there—began establishing local governing councils all across Iraq as part of such a bottom-up approach of building local governance capacity first, before moving on to provincial and then national levels. However, the unhappiness of Iraqis, Americans, and others with the course of reconstruction after the fall of Saddam, coupled with the desire of Ahmed Chalabi

and his allies to see him installed in power, led Washington to insist on a change. Rather than allowing the bottom-up process the time it needed to succeed, they short-circuited the process and instead opted for a top-down approach, in which a new council of Iraqis (what became the IGC) would work with a fully-empowered American viceroy—Bremer—to run the country.²⁵ It was a combination of wanting to put the Iraqis out in front so that they would take the heat for the mistakes and problems of reconstruction (some of which were inevitable), and wanting Chalabi in charge even though it had become apparent that he could not get himself elected dog-catcher of Baghdad if he were forced to actually work his way up in a process of bottom-up political reconstruction.²⁶

As a result, the United States created the twenty-five-member IGC and gave it an important role in guiding reconstruction. However, because Washington had not allowed enough time—let alone created the circumstances—for genuinely popular figures to emerge, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) simply appointed twenty-five Iraqi leaders well-known *to them*. Some, like the Kurdish leaders Jalal Talabani and Mas'ud Barzani, truly did represent their constituency. Others, like Shi'a leader 'Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, were at least respected in their community, even if they could not necessarily be trusted to speak for it. Most could not even claim that. Most were entirely unknown—a State Department poll found that only seven of them were known well enough for 40 percent or more of the population to have any opinion of them, positive or negative. In some cases, like Chalabi, they were genuinely disliked. In other cases, the choices were equally unfortunate, because they were nothing more than militia leaders. Many of them used their positions on the

IGC to engineer their own further political and military (and financial) aggrandizement, so that membership on the IGC became a ticket to political power for those who might otherwise have had none.

The seeds of a great many of Iraq's problems lay in this arrangement. The IGC set the tone for later Iraqi governments, particularly the transitional governments of Ayad Allawi and Ibrahim Jaafari that followed. Many of the IGC leaders were horribly corrupt, and they stole from the public treasury and encouraged their subordinates to do the same. They cut deals with nefarious figures, many in organized crime. They built up their militias and insinuated them into the various security services. They used the instruments of government to exclude their political rivals from gaining any economic, military, or political power—particularly Chalabi, who gained control of the de-Ba'athification program and used it to exclude large numbers of Sunnis from participating in the new Iraqi government.²⁷ Because they wrote the first Iraqi constitution, the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), this became a document largely suited to their own interests and not necessarily those of the country; and because the TAL became the basis of the subsequent constitution, the constitution carried over some of these problems, while leaving many key issues ambiguous, since delegates could not reach a consensus between what the TAL espoused and what was actually best for Iraq.

This last point raises another problem that resulted from the creation of the IGC: the marginalization of a number of important Iraqi communities, most notably the Sunni tribal segment of the population. The IGC itself included only one Sunni tribal leader, and he was not widely respected in his own community. As a

result, the Sunnis saw the IGC as an American instrument for turning the country over to the Kurds and the Shi'a. The Sunnis became increasingly concerned as the members of the IGC and their followers set about using their new positions to steal, expand their political and economic power, and further discredit Sunnis through de-Ba'athification—all the while filling government jobs with their own cronies. All of these strategies had been previously employed by the Sunnis themselves under Saddam, thus, the Sunnis became convinced that in the new Iraq they would be oppressed just as they had once oppressed the Shi'a and the Kurds. More than anything else, this conviction fed the Sunni-based insurgency.²⁸

Not everything that Bremer's CPA did was a mistake, however. In November 2003, Bremer and his team appear to have recognized the Frankenstein's monster that had been created in the IGC—something that Bremer reportedly opposed from the start. As a result, they fashioned a new approach to Iraqi participation in the reconstruction and the development of the Iraqi political sector, called the November 15 Agreement for the date that it was finally accepted. The November 15 Agreement received a lot of undeserved bad press. This accord was a very complex formula to produce a new Iraqi legislative and executive body through a bottom-up process of caucuses. The reason for the complexity was that it was designed to exclude the unpopular exiles and militia leaders who had been brought into the power structure through the creation of the IGC and allow for genuinely popular leaders to be elected to new regional and national political bodies.²⁹

It is unclear just how well it might have worked, but it was a clever effort to repair the damage done by the creation of the

IGC. Unfortunately, its very complexity doomed it. Those members of the IGC who knew they could not get elected in a truly representative system began lobbying heavily with their allies in Washington and in the Green Zone in Baghdad. Meanwhile, the Shi'a militia leaders convinced Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani—the *Marja-e Taqlid al-Mutlaq*, the most revered figure in Shi'a Islam and the spiritual leader of the Iraqi Shi'a community—to oppose the November 15 Agreement based on the spurious claim that because it did not include direct elections, it was therefore undemocratic and a plot to prevent the Shi'a from realizing their rightful place in Iraqi society. It is far more likely that Sistani just did not understand the agreement and its complex caucus system and allowed various other leaders in the Shi'a community to manipulate him into opposing it because it was a threat to their new power and wealth. Tragically, Sistani's opposition and Washington's machinations doomed the November 15 Agreement, America's best chance to derail the pernicious political system inaugurated by the creation of the IGC in the summer of 2003.

DENIAL

Unfortunately, the mistakes did not end there. As bad as the Administration's prewar assumptions were, as tragic as it was that General Franks and his command did not see the need to stabilize the country, and as badly as the mistakes of the CPA were in compounding these problems, there were still more to come, and these too became critical components in the overall problems besetting the reconstruction.

In 2004-05, the Bush Administration largely convinced itself that the problems besetting Iraq were not as great as their critics claimed. While recognizing that

reconstruction had turned out to be more demanding than they had anticipated, they convinced themselves that the problems of the country were simple and straightforward, and so could be addressed by a limited number of simple steps. Of greatest importance, they convinced themselves that solving Iraq's problems did not require any difficult political, economic, or military decisions, and no matter how much the evidence diverged from their theories, they refused to accept reality and give up their theories. In particular, throughout 2004-05, Administration officials believed that the problems besetting Iraq were almost entirely the fault of the Iraqi insurgency, which they maintained was largely driven by al-Qa'ida and by a small number of former regime figures. They insisted that once Iraq held fair and free elections to constitute a new legislature, this would undermine the legitimacy of the insurgency, causing it to wither away, and thus alleviating—if not eliminating—all of the problems.

Unfortunately, none of this was true. Moreover, by insisting that all of the problems of the country were caused by the insurgency—rather than that all of the problems of the country were helping to fuel the insurgency—and that, especially in 2004 and early 2005, the insurgency was really about al-Qa'ida operatives and former regime “dead-enders,” the United States concentrated its efforts in the wrong places and on the wrong problems. As a result, the United States not only failed to quash the insurgency, but allowed the rest of the country to fall effectively under the control of sectarian militias and organized crime.

A major manifestation of this fatally misguided approach lay in the realm of military operations. In both counterinsurgency and stability

operations,³⁰ the best course of action is to blanket the entire country with a thick layer of security personnel to protect the population and make it difficult—if not impossible—for insurgents, militias, and criminals to harm the civilian population. That was the strategy that the U.S. military attempted to employ in Iraq immediately after the invasion. However, while numbers are always soft in warfare, historically it has required a rough ratio of twenty security personnel per thousand of the population to create such security in both counterinsurgency and stability operations.³¹ Even if one allows that the 70,000 Peshmerga are more than adequate to secure Kurdistan, the rest of Iraq would still require roughly 450,000 troops to achieve such a ratio. It is clear that there were never going to be 450,000 troops available to adequately blanket the entire country,³² at least not until many years into the future when much larger numbers of competent Iraqi troops would be available. The United States was never willing to commit more than about 150,000 troops, and the Coalition allies never produced more than 20,000. Even by 2006, the actual number of Iraqi troops capable of contributing meaningfully to this operation was probably around 60-80,000.

This gap, and the fact that the Administration had no intention of providing the numbers of troops they required to actually make such a strategy work, became apparent to American military commanders in late 2003. At that point, they faced a choice: They could either concentrate the troops they had available on the areas of insurgent activity to try to snuff them out, or they could concentrate those forces in and around Iraqi population centers to try to protect them against insurgents and criminals. Unfortunately, but not unexpectedly, the

American military commanders made the wrong decision: They chose the former, rather than the latter.

In conventional warfare, the goal is to go on the offensive, take the fight to the enemy, focus on killing “bad guys,” and put the enemy on the defensive. In unconventional warfare—including counterinsurgency and stability operations—the only way to win is to do the exact opposite: remain mostly on the defensive, focus on protecting “good guys,” and create safe spaces in which political and economic reform/reconstruction can take place—thereby undermining popular support for the “bad guys.” The U.S. military, and particularly the U.S. Army, has never liked unconventional warfare. The small number of officers who understood it were typically relegated to the special forces and rarely ever rose to prominent command positions. Those who did rise to the top were those steeped in the principles of conventional warfare, which Army ideology insisted was universally applicable, including in unconventional operations, even when centuries of history made it abundantly clear that this was not the case.

Thus for nearly all of 2004 and 2005, Coalition forces were inordinately concentrated in western Iraq, romping around the Sunni triangle trying to catch and kill insurgents. The results were disastrous. First, because the insurgents were always willing to flee to fight again another day, these operations had virtually no impact on the insurgency overall, which actually grew stronger as ham-fisted American raids antagonized ever more Sunni tribesmen, convincing them to join the insurgency.³³ Second, because the insurgency grew stronger and stronger over time despite the massive exertions of the U.S. military, Iraqis increasingly began to

see the United States as a paper tiger, with a variety of detrimental consequences. Last, because too many Coalition forces were off playing “whack-a-mole” with insurgents in the sparsely populated areas of western Iraq, the rest of the country was relatively denuded of troops—indeed, there were vast swathes of southern Iraq where one might not see Coalition or Iraqi Army forces for hours if not days—which allowed the militias and organized crime rings to gradually take control over neighborhoods and villages all across the rest of Iraq. Many of the current problems with the virtually unchecked insurgent attacks on the Shi’a, the explosive growth of vicious Shi’a—and Sunni, and Kurd, and other—militias, and the spiraling sectarian violence among them, can all be traced to this mistaken approach.

To make matters worse, not until 2006 did the U.S. military even acknowledge that their strategic concept—and tactics—in Iraq were not working. Despite numerous criticisms from both inside and outside the armed forces arguing that a conventional approach to the unconventional mission of securing Iraq was bound to fail—and was manifestly failing—the military refused to give up its strategy. Only at the start of 2006, when Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli arrived in Baghdad to take over the corps command there, did the U.S. military command in Baghdad devise a true counterinsurgency/stability operations approach to dealing with the security problems of the country. This effort began with what became known as “the Baghdad Security Plan,” which was designed to concentrate large numbers of Iraqi and Coalition troops in Baghdad and employed the proper tactics to secure the capital and allow political and economic reconstruction efforts to begin to take hold there.

It was a brilliant plan, the first that could have actually accomplished what it set out to, but when it was finally approved in the summer of 2006, Chiarelli was given only about 70,000 mostly Iraqi troops—and then mostly Iraqi police, the worst of their security services—not the roughly 125,000 that he would have needed (and reportedly requested). Moreover, Chiarelli's plan called for a fully integrated military and civilian chain of command with adequate numbers of civilian personnel to match their American military and Iraqi civilian counterparts—two more things sorely lacking in Iraq from the very beginning—but none of this was forthcoming. As of this writing, the Baghdad security plan appeared to be enjoying some real success in those pockets of Baghdad where mixed formations of Iraqi and American units were present, but accomplishing little everywhere else. It too seems likely to fail as a result of the too little, too late approach Washington has taken toward the reconstruction of Iraq from start to finish.

At the political level, the United States actually began to do a bit better starting in 2005. The appointment of Zalmay Khalilzad as ambassador to Baghdad to succeed Bremer as the head of the civilian side of the U.S. reconstruction effort proved to be an inspired choice. Khalilzad did not have every skill that one would have wanted for that post—perhaps no mortal could—but he was a superb negotiator, and he understood some critically important basic truths. He knew that the Sunnis had to be brought back into the government to end the insurgency. He knew that real power-sharing arrangements had to be crafted so that the major figures in Iraq would commit to supporting the governmental structure. He also knew that the Iraqi people needed to be provided with basic security and basic services or they would begin to turn to

warlords and militia leaders instead. As a result, he worked tirelessly to force a new national reconciliation agreement that might accomplish the first two goals and to make it possible to have a government that could partner with a new American military approach to achieve the third.

However, this has proven to be a Herculean (perhaps even Sisyphean) labor. The problem derives from the flawed decisions to rapidly create the IGC in 2003—an Iraqi executive body, manned mostly by those best known to the United States—and in doing so adopt a top-down approach to political reconstitution rather than the bottom-up approach that past experiences in nation-building demonstrated to be essential. Having brought exiles and militia leaders into the government and given them positions of power, it became virtually impossible to get them out, and even more difficult to convince them to make compromises. The militia leaders used their positions to maintain and expand their power, at the expense both of their rivals who were not in the government and of the central government itself.

The problem is most easily understood in this way. What was most needed in Iraq by early 2004 and on through 2005 and 2006, were basic security and basic services for the Iraqi people (electricity, water, sanitation, gasoline, as well as jobs, medical care, and in some cases food). The militia leaders exerted their power by laying claim to areas of the country that the government's security forces—and the Americans—could not occupy or patrol. They then built public support by providing the security and basic services that the government could not, explicitly following the model employed so successfully by Hizballah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Palestinian territories. The best way for the

federal government to rid the country of the problem of the militias was to acquire the capacity to provide both the security and the services for the Iraqi people so that they would not have to rely on the militias. However, with the militia leaders *running* the central government, they had absolutely no interest in having it acquire such capacity, because doing so would mean the loss of their own power bases. Thus they had every incentive to continue to use their posts in the government to reward their cronies, steal as much from the public coffers as they could, and otherwise block their adversaries from doing so—without lifting a finger to actually address the most desperate needs of the Iraqi state. Likewise, they had no incentive to cut real deals with their adversaries, particularly the Sunni tribal leaders, because doing so would bring them into the government, giving them access to the same power and graft, and thereby creating a threat to their growing control of the country and its resources.

Khalilzad and his colleagues struggled against this conundrum unflinchingly, but the challenges were enormous. There were too few truly selfless Iraqis devoted to making their nation safe, stable, and strong again, and too many simply looking to line their own pockets as best they could while preventing their rivals from doing the same. Thus, on the political side the United States came to the right idea much sooner than was the case on the military side, but the initial mistakes of the wrong ideas created a set of circumstances that has so far made it impossible to actually achieve what they knew to be the right goals.

CONCLUSIONS

The summary above barely scratches the surface of the many tragic mistakes made in the American reconstruction of Iraq. The

United States has no one to blame but itself. There was so much potential in Iraq. It took so many needless blunders to drive the country to its current state. As of this writing, in late 2006, Iraq is caught in the swift current of a river of American mistakes. They are headed quickly toward the falls, and the leaders the United States put in power in Baghdad lack not just the ability, but even the desire to prevent them from going over. As it was in the beginning, the end of this story is entirely in the hands of the United States. This Iraqi leadership will not save the country. Only a dramatic change in approach by Washington can do so.

In nearly every previous instance of state failure and civil war, observers on the scene and experts elsewhere failed to recognize that they had passed the point of no return—when disaster became inevitable—until long after they had done so. As of this writing, the situation in Iraq seems bleak, but there are still areas of progress that could lead one to be hopeful that all is not lost. In other words, it does not yet look like the point of no return has been crossed. However, it is essential that the United States recognize that it is perilously close. At the very least, we should not assume that the United States has much longer to turn things around.

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NOTES

¹ For this author's assessment of both the difficulty and criticality of the reconstruction effort, see Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq* (New York: Random House, 2002), pp. 387-410. Notably, this chapter begins with the following words: "The rebuilding of Iraq cannot be an afterthought to a policy of regime change. Instead, it must be a central element in U.S. preparations. It is likely to be the most important and difficult part of the policy, and we would be living with the results or suffering from the consequences for many decades to come. Saddam's overthrow would remove an enormous threat to the vital interests of the United States. However, because Iraq is a pivotal state in one of the most important and fragile regions of the world, what will follow Saddam is of equal importance. It would be a tragic mistake if we were to remove the threat of Saddam only to create some new, perhaps equally challenging, threat in Iraq following his demise."

² For concurring assessments that the reconstruction of Iraq could have succeeded had it not been for a series of unnecessary blunders see, Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq* (New York: Times Books, 2005); Noah Feldman, *What We Owe Iraq: War and the Ethics of Nation Building* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon, 2006); T. Christian Miller, *Blood Money: Wasted Billions, Lost Lives, and Corporate Greed in Iraq* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2006); George Packer, *The Assassin's Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus

and Giroux, 2005); David L. Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2005); Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

³ International Republican Institute, "Survey of Iraqi Public Opinion: June 14, June 24, 2006," July 19, 2006, <http://www.iri.org/mena/iraq/pdfs/2006-07-18-Iraq%20poll%20June%20June.ppt>, downloaded August 20, 2006, p. 4.

⁴ Wolfowitz's statement to this effect originally appeared in an article by Sam Tanenhaus in *Vanity Fair* in May 2003. However, the "quote" used in the Tanenhaus piece was actually a misquotation. What Wolfowitz actually said was, "The truth is that for reasons that have a lot to do with the U.S. government bureaucracy we settled on the one issue that everyone could agree on which was weapons of mass destruction as the core reason, but . . . there have always been three fundamental concerns. One is weapons of mass destruction, the second is support for terrorism, the third is the criminal treatment of the Iraqi people. Actually I guess you could say there's a fourth overriding one which is the connection between the first two. . . ." See William Kristol, "What Wolfowitz Really Said," *The Weekly Standard*, Vol. 8, No. 38, (June 9, 2003).

⁵ The word is, again, Wolfowitz's. See Mark Bowden, "Wolfowitz: The Exit Interviews," *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 296, No. 1 (July/August 2005), p. 114.

⁶ Contrary to the claims of many Administration critics, the government distorted, but did not wholly fabricate, the U.S. intelligence community's assessments. The U.S. intelligence community—as well as those of all of the Western European states, Israel, Iran, Russia, and China—

were nearly unanimous in the belief that by 2003, Saddam had reconstituted his WMD programs. Only a tiny number of analysts dissented from this position, and those that did so tended to be discredited for one reason or another. Of course, the intelligence communities were wrong in this belief, but it is simply not the case that the Bush Administration claimed that Iraq had reconstituted its WMD programs, contrary to the beliefs of the intelligence professionals. Where the Administration exaggerated the conclusions of the intelligence community was in claiming that Iraq had ties to al-Qa'ida, and that Iraq's nuclear weapons program was on the brink (usually described as "one year") of acquiring a nuclear weapon. Ninety percent of the intelligence analysts did believe that Iraq would have nuclear weapons within five to seven years (as reported in the 2002 Special National Intelligence Estimate), but very few believed that Iraq could acquire one within a year. On this set of issues, see Paul Pillar, "Intelligence, Policy, and the War in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (March/April 2005); Kenneth M. Pollack, "Spies, Lies, and Weapons: What Went Wrong?" *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 293, No. 1 (January/February 2004); United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Report on U.S. Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 2004); United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Report on Postwar Findings about Iraq's WMD Programs and Links to Terrorism and How they Compare with Prewar Assessments*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 2006).

⁷ These were my own reasons for believing that a war with Saddam eventually would be necessary—albeit not at the time nor in the manner conducted by the

Administration. In retrospect, the WMD argument was wrong because Saddam had not reconstituted these programs and probably would have required eight to twelve years to acquire a nuclear weapon, by far the most important WMD threat. I believe the other arguments remain sound; however, at this point, whatever benefits were derived in addressing these problems will be entirely outweighed should Iraq slide into all-out civil war, thereby spreading instability throughout the Persian Gulf region. If that is the ultimate outcome of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, then it will be impossible for anyone to argue that it benefited the United States, the Iraqis, or anyone else, no matter how noble (or ignoble) the intentions upon which it was based.

⁸ Jim Woolsey wrote the forward to Mylroie's book, *A Study of Revenge*, (Washington, DC: AEI, 2001), in which she laid out her argument. Paul Wolfowitz provided a dust jacket quote claiming that the book, "...argues powerfully that the mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing was actually an agent of Iraqi intelligence." As a side note, U.S. intelligence experts reviewed Mylroie's work in detail and found it to be not only unsubstantiated, but deeply flawed. For an unclassified assessment of Mylroie's claims by a highly-regarded terrorism expert, see Peter Bergen, "Armchair Provocateur: The NeoCons' Favorite Conspiracy Theorist," *Washington Monthly* (December 2003).

⁹ On the evidence available before the invasion both for and against a relationship between Saddam and al-Qa'ida—and concluding that no meaningful relationship existed—see Pillar, "Intelligence, Policy, and the War in Iraq"; and Pollack, *The Threatening Storm*, pp. XXI-XXIII, 153-58.

¹⁰ On this, see in particular Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, especially pp. 457-96; and Ricks, *Fiasco*, esp. pp. 85-213.

¹¹ For instance, in the second debate of the 2000 presidential campaign, Bush replied in answer to a question about the U.S. mission in Somalia that, “[It] started off as a humanitarian mission and it changed into a nation-building mission, and that’s where the mission went wrong. The mission was changed. And as a result, our nation paid a price. And so I don’t think our troops ought to be used for what’s called nation-building. I think our troops ought to be used to fight and win war. I think our troops ought to be used to help overthrow the dictator when it’s in our best interests. But in this case it was a nation-building exercise, and same with Haiti. I wouldn’t have supported either.” Commission on Presidential Debates, “Transcript: The Second Gore-Bush Presidential Debate,” October 11, 2000, <http://www.debates.org/pages/trans2000b.html>, downloaded, August 22, 2006.

¹² See for instance, Ricks, *Fiasco*, especially pp. 104-05; PBS Frontline, “Interview: General Jay Garner,” from “Truth, War and Consequences,” <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/truth/interviews/garner.html>, downloaded on August 23, 2006.

¹³ Jane Perlez, “U.S. Team Arrives in Iraq to Establish Postwar Base,” *The New York Times*, April 9, 2003.

¹⁴ In the spring of 2003, shortly before the invasion, Jay Garner’s military team met with me and two other experts on the Iraqi armed forces to get our advice on how to tackle their new jobs. While the members of Garner’s team were themselves quite competent, they were not experts on Iraq (as they readily acknowledged), and we were stunned by the ignorance inherent in

the planning guidance they had been provided by the office of the Secretary of Defense. In particular, they had been told that one of their greatest challenges would be providing for all of the Iraqi formations that were expected to be surrendering to the United States. I remember telling them, along with one of my colleagues, that they would be quite lucky if they had that problem and that instead, they were much more likely to face a situation where the vast bulk of Iraqi soldiers simply went home once the shooting started. Thus, their most likely challenge would be to convince those soldiers to come back to their barracks, where they could be kept out of trouble and eventually demobilized.

¹⁵ In addition to the accounts cited in note 2 above, see also James Fallows, “The Fifty-First State?” *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 290, No. 4 (November 2002); and James Fallows, “Blind Into Baghdad,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 293, No. 1 (January/February 2004).

¹⁶ On the course of the war itself, see Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics and Military Lessons* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003); Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*; Williamson Murray and Major General Robert H. Scales, Jr., *The Iraq War* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2003); Bing West and Major General Ray L. Smith, *The March Up: Taking Baghdad with the 1st Marine Division* (New York: Bantam, 2003).

¹⁷ On the comparative record of the United States and the UN in nation-building operations, see James Dobbins, John G. McGinn, Keith Crane, Seth G. Jones, Rollie Lal, Andrew Rathmell, Rachel M. Swanger, and Anga Timilsina, *America’s Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2003); and James

Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Keith Crane, Andrew Rathmell, Brett Steele, Richard Teltschik, and Anga Timilsina, *The UN's Role in Nation-Building: From the Congo to Iraq* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2005).

¹⁸ In the spring of 2003, just weeks before the invasion of Iraq, I was invited to spend an afternoon with the officers and other key personnel of the 352nd and 354th Civil Affairs battalions of the U.S. Army. These were the two civil affairs battalions slated to go to Iraq and lead the reconstruction effort, but they claimed that they could not get any support from DoD in terms of expertise on Iraq and what they might expect when they got there. They called me as a private citizen in the hope that I would be willing to provide what their own chain of command would not. One of the many things that struck me about that afternoon was how many of the officers I met asked me whether we would have UN and NGO participation in the reconstruction, which they considered absolutely vital. This was especially true of those personnel who had served in the Balkans. What I heard from them over and over again was that, "We are going to have the UN with us, right? 'Cause in the Balkans, all we did was act as liaison between the UN and the NGOs and NATO forces. We don't know how to rebuild a country, but they [the UN and the NGOs] do."

¹⁹ Kenneth M. Pollack, "After Saddam: Assessing the Reconstruction of Iraq," Analysis Paper No. 1, The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, January 2004, p. 27.

²⁰ Edmund L. Andrews, "Overseer in Iraq Vows to Sell Off Government-Owned Companies," *The New York Times*, June 23, 2003, pg. A.13; Neil King Jr., "Selling Iraqis on Selling Iraq: U.S. Pushes to Put State Firms on the Block, Skeptics Warn of

Unrest," *The Wall Street Journal* October 28, 2003, pg. A4..

²¹ For Bremer's version, see L. Paul Bremer with Malcolm McConnell, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006).

²² Jay Garner has publicly agreed that disbanding the army was a mistake largely because there was no DDR program and so instead it set too many young Iraqi men loose on the streets with no means of support. See for instance, Sydney J. Freedberg, Jr., "Federalism Can Avert Civil War in Iraq: An Interview with Jay Garner," *National Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 7 (February 14, 2004).

²³ Pollack, "After Saddam," p. 12.

²⁴ On this see, James Dobbins, John G. McGinn, Keith Crane, Seth G. Jones, Rollie Lal, Andrew Rathmell, Rachel M. Swanger, Anga Timilsina, *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2003), pp. 184-210; John Hamre, Frederick Barton, Bathsheba Crocker, Johanna Mendelson-Forman, and Robert Orr, "Iraq's Post-Conflict Reconstruction: A Field Review and Recommendations," Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 17, 2003, pp. 4-7; Pollack, *The Threatening Storm*, pp. 406-09; Pollack, "After Saddam," pp. 16-23.

²⁵ Pollack, "After Saddam," p. 23.

²⁶ On Chalabi's unpopularity, see the polling data on the popularity of various Iraqi figures in Dina Smeltz and Jodi Nachtwey, "Iraqi Public Opinion Analysis," U.S. Department of State, October 21, 2003, http://www.cpa-iraq.org/government/political_poll.pdf, p. 8. In addition, during the parliamentary elections of December 2005, Chalabi's political party failed to win a single seat.

²⁷ Pollack, "After Saddam," pp. 14-15.

²⁸ Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Packer, *The Assassin's Gate*, pp. 308-12, 415-17; Anthony Shadid, *Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War*, especially 219-44, 279-315.

²⁹ See Pollack, "After Saddam," pp. 20-24.

³⁰ Stability operations are those military operations employed to deal with a failed state, a state that has just undergone a massive military conflict or natural disaster, or other similar circumstances. As a result of the problems of postwar Iraq, which included a failed state, a nation traumatized by war, and an insurgency, both types of operations were critical to success in Iraq. Many commentators mistakenly tried to argue that only one or the other was relevant. In fact, what made Iraq so challenging was that we had created a situation where both afflictions were present. For a longer discussion of this issue, see Kenneth M. Pollack and the Iraq Policy Working Group of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy, *A Switch in Time: A New Strategy for America in Iraq*, The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, February 2006, pp. 1-3, 9-21.

³¹ Bruce Hoffman, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq," Washington, DC, RAND Corp., June 2004; Kalev I. Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (May-June 2005), p. 9; James T. Quinlivan, "The Burden of Victory: The Painful Arithmetic of Stability Operations," *RAND Review*, (Summer 2003). Available at: <http://www.rand.org/publications/randreview/issues/summer2003/burden.html>. Also, James T. Quinlivan, "Force Requirements in Stability Operations," *Parameters* (Winter) 1995, pp. 56-69. Quinlivan has

demonstrated that stabilizing a country requires roughly twenty security personnel (troops and police) per thousand inhabitants just as COIN operations do.

³² On the problems besetting the Iraqi armed forces in 2006, see Anthony H. Cordesman, "Iraqi Force Development: Summer 2006 Update," Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 23, 2006; and Pollack, *A Switch in Time*, pp. 41-47.

³³ In many ways, poor tactics were just as detrimental to the U.S. counterinsurgent and stability operations as were the inappropriate strategic concept. For longer discussions of these issues, see Pollack, "After Saddam," pp. 13-16, Pollack, *A Switch in Time*, pp. 28-41.