



## **FAILING TO MEET EXPECTATIONS IN IRAQ: A REVIEW OF THE ORIGINAL U.S. POST-WAR STRATEGY**

By Carlos L. Yordan\*

*The American-led Coalition's post-war efforts have become the subject of much controversy in Iraq and in the United States. This investigation argues that one explanation for increasing anger with these efforts stems from an overly optimistic post-war strategy that promised more than it could deliver.*

Overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime was relatively easy. Although the American-led coalition faced heavy resistance from *fedayeen* fighters in some southern Iraqi towns, the war aims were successfully accomplished.

The same cannot be said for the post-war strategy. Armed opposition against coalition troops, continued acts of sabotage, increasing economic problems, a deteriorated infrastructure, and an uncertain political environment have complicated the U.S. belief that it could transform Iraqi society in a relatively short amount of time. In fact, Jay Garner who directed the planning and the execution of post-war reconstruction efforts until mid-May, described the mission as "three months up and out."<sup>(1)</sup> Garner's Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Affairs (ORHA) aimed at quickly stabilizing Iraq and then transferring power to an Iraqi interim administration in this time period.

It is clear that the U.S.-led coalition will be in Iraq for the foreseeable future and its Coalition Provisional Administration (CPA) will directly govern Iraq until July 1, 2004 at least. The decision to establish the Iraqi Governing Council was aimed to increase the CPA's legitimacy. While this Council has increased its profile in post-war politics, its decisions have to be

approved by L. Paul Bremer III, the CPA Administrator. Many Iraqis, though satisfied with Saddam Hussein's ouster and recent capture, have expressed their frustration with the CPA and its decisions. For instance, a survey published by the National Democratic Institute and others conducted by the Gallup organization document how many Iraqis feel that the CPA is not responsive to their needs, while some want the U.S.-led coalition to leave the country. Many Iraqis also feel cheated by the whole process. They do not see coalition troops and administrators as liberators, but as occupiers.<sup>(2)</sup>

American support for the Bush administration's post-war strategy has also waned. Most Americans still argue that the United States should stay involved in Iraq. However, a growing number of Americans have demonstrated "increasing pessimism about the reconstruction effort," while many more want the UN or another multilateral body to assume responsibility for post-war Iraq.<sup>(3)</sup> In many ways, Americans are coming to the realization that they will be financially responsible for Iraq's reconstruction, security, and political transformation for several years. The U.S. Senate has held a number of hearings on post-war developments and senators from both political parties have strongly

expressed doubts concerning the Bush administration's efforts, describing them as unrealistic.(4)

While it is clear that changing attitudes toward the Bush administration's post-war strategy will further complicate the CPA's future work, it is important to understand why Iraqis and Americans have pressured Washington to find new ways of securing Iraq's transformation. What factors explain these changing attitudes in the United States and in Iraq? This investigation argues that one significant factor is the Bush administration's decision to publicize an unrealistic reconstruction strategy that promised more than it could deliver. Americans were told that the U.S.-led coalition could transform Iraq into a democracy as a first step to reform the Middle East at relatively low costs and in a short amount of time. Before and during armed hostilities, Iraqis were told that the coalition was going to liberate the country, not occupy it.

This investigation provides an in-depth review of the Bush administration's plans for post-war Iraq. A blueprint detailing the U.S. plan was never unveiled. Because of media interest, bureaucratic wrangling, and congressional pressure, Bush administration officials publicized aspects of its post-war strategy in congressional hearings, press conferences, and key policy speeches. In this way, the focus of this investigation is not to provide a detailed review of the many events that have taken place since Garner landed in the country or since Bremer was appointed the CPA's administrator. The focus is the strategy as presented to the American people before the end of the war on May 1, 2003. Accordingly, the intention is to show the assumptions and the political process that shaped the U.S. post-war plan. While this investigation argues that many of the problems encountered by the CPA in Iraq should not only be blamed on unforeseen

developments, but also on U.S. officials' lack of foresight and unwillingness to present a strategy that could tackle worst-case scenarios, it is important to emphasize that this analysis is based on public statements and documents. The Bush administration's confidential internal documents and inter-agency discussions may have addressed these issues differently, and so a more complete analysis will have to wait until those documents are declassified.

### **MAIN ACTORS AND THE STRATEGY'S GENERAL OBJECTIVES**

The Iraqi regime's alleged weapons of mass destruction program and connections with terrorist organizations, plus its repeated defiance of UN Security Council resolutions, convinced many officials in the Bush administration that a policy of regime change was the only way to guarantee that Iraq would not pose a threat to the region and U.S. interests. Saddam Hussein's refusal to resign meant that he would have to be removed militarily. The Bush administration then had to plan not only a war strategy, but also a post-war plan to stabilize and reconstruct Iraq after the regime was removed.

Planning for post-Saddam Iraq started in late summer 2002, but was not formalized until January 20, 2003, when Bush ordered ORHA's creation, appointed Garner as its director, and released \$15 million to fund its efforts.(5) As lead agency in the planning process, ORHA, which was part of the Department of Defense, coordinated the activities and synchronized the interests of those departments involved in post-war issues. ORHA meetings included representatives from the following departments and specialized agencies: State, Treasury, Justice, Energy, Agriculture, the Agency for International Aid, and the Office of Management and

Budget. ORHA officials were also in contact with their counterparts in coalition countries, especially with officials in the United Kingdom and Australia. ORHA's planning efforts were directed towards four functional areas: humanitarian relief, reconstruction, civil administration, and communications, logistics, and budgetary support.(6)

By February 11, 2003, senior administration officials were sent to inform the U.S. Senate's Foreign Relations Committee of the principles guiding the coalition's post-war reconstruction strategy. According to Senator Richard Lugar, the hearings were supposed to answer the following questions:(7)

1. Who will rule Iraq and how?
2. Who will provide security?
3. How long might U.S. troops conceivably remain?
4. Will the UN have a role?
5. Who will manage Iraq's oil reserves?

Although Marc Grossman, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, and Douglas Feith, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, provided answers to these questions, the Committee's members were not satisfied with their responses.

Feith and Grossman presented five core objectives, which would guide the administration's post-war plans:

1. Liberation of Iraq's citizens;
2. Destruction of its weapons of mass destruction programs;
3. Eradicate Iraq's "terrorist infrastructure";
4. Preserve the country's integrity; and
5. Commence Iraq's economic and political reconstruction.

Specifics on the strategy were not yet released, but an overall picture was presented. Grossman and Feith explained that while aspects of the strategy had been

developed before OHRA's creation, many of the specifics were still being developed. The interagency and international planning process was just in its first weeks and it would take more time to provide more accurate answers to the many questions Committee members had raised. For instance, they made clear that sale of Iraq's oil would be used to pay for reconstruction efforts, but they lacked the details of how they would administer the oil industry.

On February 26, 2003, President Bush delivered his first speech on Iraq's future at an event sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute, which was also transmitted to the American people. While the President echoed some of Grossman and Feith's views and their five core objectives, he went a step further, locating the future post-war efforts in the context of American history:

America has made and kept this kind of commitment before--in the peace that followed a world war. After defeating enemies, we did not leave behind occupying armies, we left constitutions and parliaments. We established an atmosphere of safety, in which responsible, reform-minded local leaders could build lasting institutions of freedom. In societies that once bred fascism and militarism, liberty found a permanent home.(8)

President Bush explained that his government would not "determine the precise form of Iraq's new government." But, he made it clear that it would "ensure that one brutal dictator is not replaced by another."(9) Even though President Bush explained that the Iraqi people would be guiding reconstruction efforts, he explained that these efforts would allow the United States to accomplish other crucial objectives: the eradication of terrorism in the Middle East, the restart of the Israeli-

Palestinian peace process, and the reform of oppressive governments in the region.(10)

It was clear that the main objective was to transform Iraq's political and economic system according to Western principles. Some experts noted that this would take a long time. The President stated that the United States would "remain in Iraq as long as necessary, and not a day more." Grossman, however, predicted on February 11 that the United States would achieve many of its post-war objectives in two years, although members of the Bush administration dismissed these views as the war got underway.(11) As stated before, Garner believed that the operation's objectives could be accomplished in three months. For this to work, Garner and other officials, such as Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, argued that Iraqis and their leaders had to actively participate and cooperate with the Coalition after the regime was toppled.(12)

U.S. officials saw themselves as liberators and believed that they could convince Iraqis of their benevolent intentions. Vice President Dick Cheney was asked by Tim Russert of NBC's Meet the Press: "If your analysis is not correct and we're not treated as liberators but as conquerors, and the Iraqis begin to resist, particularly in Baghdad, do you think the American people are prepared for a long, costly, bloody battle with significant American casualties?" Cheney answered: "Well, I don't think it's likely to unfold that way, Tim, because I really do believe that we will be greeted as liberators." He continued by stating: "Various groups and individuals, people who have devoted their lives from the outside to trying to change things inside Iraq.... The road we get on the people of Iraq is there is no question but that they want to get rid of Saddam Hussein and they will welcome as

liberators the United States when we come to do that."(13)

Cheney explained that the Bush administration was closely working with Iraqi groups in exile. How would people in Iraq react to U.S. actions? To make sure Iraqis saw the United States as a liberator, the U.S. military jammed Iraqi airwaves and transmitted important messages to the Iraqi people, including some of the President's speeches.(14) Probably the most important was Bush's address of March 19, 2003 informing the American people that military actions had started. He stated: "We come to Iraq with respect for its citizens, for their great civilization and for the religious faiths they practice. We have no ambition in Iraq, except to remove a threat and restore control of that country to its own people."(15)

As diplomats searched for a peaceful solution to the crisis, the Department of Defense was closely working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other international agencies that had worked in Iraq to "locate humanitarian sites, key infrastructure, cultural and historic sites and to protect them to the extent that's possible."(16) Including these factors into military planning was important for two reasons. First, the Bush administration wanted to minimize destruction and reduce reconstruction costs. Second, it intended to lessen the suffering of the Iraqi people to secure their cooperation once the regime was toppled. This meant that quick delivery of humanitarian relief would be a key aspect of post-war efforts, especially in the weeks following the end of hostilities.

It was clear since the beginning that humanitarian efforts would be under UN control. Humanitarian international law specifies that UN agencies have responsibility for providing humanitarian relief, regardless if the UN has authority over reconstruction efforts. The UN's

Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance and its Inter-Agency Standing Committee have responsibility for the coordination of these efforts.(17) Authority over military affairs, civil administration, and economic reconstruction rested in the hands of the American-led coalition, directed by ORHA and under the authority of U.S. Central Command and its commanding general. This is not to say that the UN would not have a role in these other areas. One of the biggest problems at the time was that the United Kingdom wanted to secure a larger role for the UN. While many news reports at the time suggested that the United States was willing to grant the UN a role in establishing a new Iraqi government three months after the cessation of hostilities, U.S. government officials, though saying they welcomed the UN's cooperation, never confirmed this claim.(18) This was probably one of the most puzzling aspects of the post-war strategy.

Another source of confusion was the role of the civilian administrator. Some U.S. officials suggested that ORHA's director would not hold this position. Instead, it was reported that the President would appoint a senior diplomat or an accomplished politician, such as a state governor or former department director. It was clear that increased bickering between the Department of Defense and Department of State was having a negative impact on the planning process. The conflict between Defense and State was not only limited to who was to become civil administrator, but it also included the UN's role in postwar Iraq, as noted above. In fact, although Grossman and Feith's testimonies before Congress were quite similar and they seemed to have been speaking in one single voice, the departments' heads were in conflict over the diplomatic strategy and the postwar plan.(19)

While noting the guiding principles and actors involved in the planning process, the increasing struggle for power between Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and the general objectives of the U.S. post-war reconstruction strategy, it is important to provide a detailed review of this strategy's elements.(20) In many ways, part two of this investigation provides answers to the questions posted by Lugar on February 11, 2003, which Feith and Grossman had failed to answer fully.

### **ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY**

On March 11, 2003, the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee decided to hold another hearing on post-war Iraq. Even though Garner and other U.S. officials were supposed to attend it, they cancelled at the last minute. Instead, experts from think tanks, relief organizations and academic organizations presented their views of some of the challenges the United States was to face in post-war Iraq. The hearings were important for two reasons. First, the experts' testimonies started to show some of the plan's weaknesses. Second, Committee members expressed their frustration with the Bush administration's unwillingness to inform them of the plan's components. In fact, Senator Christopher Dodd angrily said that he learned of key decisions, such as the awarding of reconstruction contracts to some U.S. companies, through the media.(21)

Before providing a detailed review of the Bush administration's post-war strategy, it is important to summarize some of the experts' concerns regarding the plan. First, the Bush administration did not share enough details concerning the financial costs of post-war efforts, or specifics on how to transform Iraq. Second, they criticized the Bush administration for not doing enough to gain support from

international organizations and key allies. Finally, there was a feeling that many of the scenarios presented by U.S. officials were too optimistic and that they did not do full justice to the immense challenges the U.S.-led coalition was likely to face in Iraq.(22)

Keeping these criticisms in mind, this analysis is divided into four sections. Section one reviews the U.S. response to humanitarian issues, while the second will pay close attention to the administration of Iraq. The third section examines plans to reconstruct Iraq's economy and infrastructure and section four considers the U.S. military's role in post-war Iraq.

#### *Humanitarian Efforts*

The provision of humanitarian aid usually takes place in the first months after a war's end. The objective is usually the delivery of basic commodities to reduce suffering and help people reconstruct their shattered lives.

Before the war commenced, the international community foresaw a great humanitarian disaster. Humanitarian relief agencies estimated an internal displacement of 2 million people. They also predicted that 1.5 million Iraqis were going to flee to neighboring countries. Because the war would disrupt the UN's Oil-For-Food program, these agencies predicted that up to 10 million Iraqis would need emergency food assistance in the first days of the war.(23) According to these reports, children would be the most vulnerable sector of the population. More significantly, the war was likely to put added pressure on Iraqi hospitals and health clinics, many of which lacked adequate supplies of medicines and equipment to treat injured civilians and soldiers.

Although the UN was to coordinate the humanitarian mission, the United States took a number of steps to prevent a

potential crisis. This was important because international relief NGOs and intergovernmental organizations do not operate in the midst of hostilities. As stated before, an important American objective was to reduce the suffering of the Iraqi people in order to convince them that the war was not directed against them, but against the regime. This had worked in Afghanistan, so many military and civilian officials made a special effort to include leaders of American NGOs, those specializing in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, in the planning process.

As a first step, the Bush administration released funds to a number of international bodies and NGOs, so they could prevent any humanitarian disaster. For instance, \$15 million was given to the UN High Commission for Refugees to prepare refugee camps in countries neighboring Iraq. The World Food Program received \$5 million and \$2 million was provided to the UN Children's Fund.(24) The U.S. government also stockpiled supplies for up to a million people in Kuwait, Jordan, and other Persian Gulf countries. These included: water bottles, medicine, blankets, rolls of plastic sheeting for emergency shelter, and so forth. The Department of Defense also stored around 3 million humanitarian daily rations in Kuwait and other neighboring countries.(25) Each ration is equivalent to three meals per person for one day.(26)

As stated above, the UN bodies and relief NGOs also played an important role in humanitarian efforts, though the Department of Defense attempted to assume complete control of these efforts. Nevertheless, the United States gave InterAction, an umbrella group representing the interests of 160 American humanitarian and development NGOs, office space in CENTCOM's headquarters in Tampa, Florida. InterAction, which has its main office in Washington D.C., also

participated in planning meetings. These decisions secured InterAction's support and willingness to execute the Bush administration's humanitarian relief strategy, although it is important to note that InterAction was also critical of U.S. efforts. Regarding UN bodies, U.S. officials needed their cooperation because an important element of this strategy was the delivery of food, water, and medicine via the infrastructure developed by the UN's Oil-For-Food program.

The centerpiece of the U.S. humanitarian strategy was the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) program. Created in January 2003, the team coordinated humanitarian activities in post-war Iraq. This team did not deliver humanitarian aid, but facilitated the process. Made up of 62 civilian and military officials, the team was headquartered in Kuwait City. It had three mobile field offices, which reported to the DART leader, Michael Marx. These field offices were "embedded" in the military force. Once U.S. troops determined an area to be secured, the team would be deployed to assess the situation; provide logistic support and transportation; and fund NGOs and international relief organizations' delivery of humanitarian aid, basic health care, shelter, and clean water to Iraqi civilians.<sup>(27)</sup> One of its strengths was the team's statutory grant-making authority, which allowed it to fund humanitarian efforts rapidly without having to seek approval from USAID personnel in Washington.<sup>(28)</sup>

The team's mission ended on August 1, 2003. However, it played a vital role in long-term reconstruction. Because the team's members were deployed once U.S. troops captured key towns, it quickly evaluated the state of hospitals, sanitation systems, schools, and other key infrastructure, informing officials

responsible for reconstruction efforts of projects that needed critical attention.

Because of UN sanctions against Iraq, many U.S. relief NGOs did not establish a presence in the country. Even though DARTs have the authority to fund any humanitarian agency, regardless if it is or is not an American one, many Bush administration officials preferred U.S. funds be used to finance the operations of U.S. NGOs. By mid-February 2003, the National Security Council had ordered the Department of State, USAID, and the Department of Treasury to provide "blanket licenses" to these organizations. In order to support these efforts, the Bush administration earmarked \$52 million to fund these efforts and gave the DART access to the USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance's emergency budget, if more money was needed.

While attempting to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe and reduce the suffering of the Iraqi people, humanitarian relief was a core objective of the U.S. postwar plan. As an USAID paper explained, "delivery of assistance will emphasize rapidly demonstrated improvements in the quality of life for Iraqis. It aims to quickly show that Iraq will move to democracy and economic growth, and is the framework for communicating a vision that can gain both internal and international support."<sup>(29)</sup> U.S. officials and generals understood that they had a small window of opportunity to convince Iraqis that the U.S.-led coalition was there to liberate them from an oppressive regime and to garner their support for the more controversial aspects and difficult tasks of the post-war strategy, which are discussed below.

#### *Civil Administration*

Plans to administer the country after the defeat of Saddam Hussein's regime were so vague that when the war ended, the ORHA

seemed to be crafting and executing a strategy at the same time. As stated before, it was not clear whether the Bush administration was going to keep Garner as the civilian administrator or appoint a senior official. How long would the U.S.-led coalition administer Iraq? An answer was never clear, but the Bush administration wanted to establish an interim Iraqi government, a constitutional commission, and organize elections so a new representative government could start administering Iraq. In this way, the United States foresaw a short period, where U.S. administrators assumed control over civilian affairs and then would start to transfer authority to an interim government, culminating in the total transfer of power to democratic institutions.

In February 2003, Grossman believed that it could take up to two years for the total transfer of power. For Garner, as noted before, the time expected was only a few months. Even though the Bush administration had different timetables, it was agreed that ORHA would have to administer Iraq in the short-term. Before the war started, the priority had not really been how to establish a democratic government. Officials never spoke of a blueprint guiding these efforts. The main concern was to make sure that post-war instabilities could be minimized to allow U.S. officials to find ways of transforming Iraq into a democracy. For this reason, the U.S. government prevented the Iraqi National Congress and other exiled opposition groups from forming a government in exile.<sup>(30)</sup> U.S. officials felt that the main exile groups, though strongly supported by the Pentagon, did not represent Sunni interests.<sup>(31)</sup> Also, Iraq's neighbors, which had a stake in the future of Iraq, argued that these groups did not meet their interests.

For this reason, Zalmay Khalilzad, Bush's special envoy to the Iraqi opposition, met with exiled Ba'th party Sunni leaders to invite them to join with other groups to create a more representative government in the future. In early 2003, Khalilzad met with Adnan Pachachi, Iraq's former UN representative, and Wafiq Sammarai, who was Saddam Hussein's liaison between the Central Intelligence Agency and his intelligence services. In light of these advances, unsurprisingly, many exiled Iraqis and groups questioned Washington's willingness to transform Iraqi society.

To complicate matters, Rumsfeld announced in a news conference that the United States would use existing Iraqi government structures to administer the country. Whereas the long-term plan included the reform of these institutions, Rumsfeld pointed out that these structures and Iraq's civil servants could help the United States to stabilize Iraq quickly, provide basic services, and start reconstruction of infrastructure.<sup>(32)</sup> Their participation would also allow them to play a vital role in post-war Iraq, sending the message that Iraq would remain in Iraqis' hands. Shortly after the Rumsfeld press conference, U.S. officials explained that some of the country's ministries would be disbanded or overhauled after the cessation of hostilities. For instance, the Ministry of Information, which had transmitted Saddam Hussein's views, would be reformed so it would encourage and support Iraqi independent media organizations, while the Republican Guard would be dismantled. The strategy also included a role for USAID in the reform of the following ministries: public works, health, finance, agriculture, and education.<sup>(33)</sup> As discussed in the next section, USAID was also given the authority to establish sub-national political



institutions, but ORHA officials never really explained how they would do this.

Most of Iraq's 2 million civil servants, including police officers, teachers, bureaucrats, judicial personnel and local government officials, would be allowed to keep their jobs, as long as they did not have any close connections with the Ba'th party and its inhumane acts. However, senior positions were either to be filled by U.S. government experts or Iraqi experts living abroad. To convince Iraqis that the United States wanted them to play a leading role in the new Iraq, USAID and the Pentagon recruited many of these Iraqi experts and offered them six month contracts to direct the work of these ministries or to assist U.S. administrators in running the country.(34) Even more controversial, the Pentagon stated that it would not disband Iraq's regular army of 300,000 soldiers, which would guarantee the country's territorial integrity and support reconstruction efforts.(35)

Noting that Iraqi opposition groups felt threatened by some of these moves, the Bush administration assured them that they would play a vital role in postwar developments. Not entirely convinced by U.S. plans, leaders of the opposition groups met and created a "leadership committee" that would represent their visions of post-Saddam Hussein Iraq and potentially serve as the basis of a provisional government once the war ended.

Apart from administering the country, ORHA officials explained that they would organize a judicial council to help U.S. administrators revise existing Iraqi laws and propose new ones to draw foreign investment, protect human rights, and modernize the country's political and economic system. In addition, U.S. officials explained that they would work with different NGOs and international bodies to train new political parties and organize elections. Grossman explained

that these tasks would be in line with some of the strategies developed by the Department of State's "Future of Iraq Project." Started in March 2002, the project brought U.S. officials and Iraqi opposition leaders together to consider ways of reforming Iraq once Saddam Hussein's regime was toppled. The project consisted of 17 working groups; each composed of 10-20 Iraqi experts on different subjects, including: civil society capacity-building, media reform, economic policy, education, democratic issues, transnational justice and so forth.(36) Even though the project's working papers were secret, the U.S. government's insistence that these would be used to transform Iraq reassured Iraqi opposition leaders that they would play a vital role in post-Saddam Hussein Iraq.

Another source of controversy was funding for these initiatives. Rumsfeld's insistence that the United States would pay the salaries of Iraq's public workers until the Iraqi state would be able to generate enough income via taxation and oil sales raised many eyebrows on Capitol Hill. Administration officials explained that they would use the over \$1 billion worth of frozen Iraqi assets in U.S. banks to fund these efforts. (37) Rumsfeld also explained that the United States would be asking the UN, which held \$10 billion from Iraqi oil sales, to transfer these funds to the Coalition to pay for civil administration, humanitarian aid, and economic reconstruction.(38)

#### *Economic Reconstruction*

While economic reconstruction efforts tend to be long-term in nature, they receive a lot of media attention because Iraq possesses the world's third largest oil reserves (after Saudi Arabia and Canada). Working under the ORHA umbrella, USAID argued that the overall objective of the strategy was to bring "Iraqi facilities to a modestly improved pre-conflict level.

Complete reconstruction to the economic and institutional capacity of 1980 (conditions prior to the Iran-Iraq war) [would] require years of public investment."(39) It is important to note that when USAID says pre-conflict level, it means prior to March 2003 and not the start of the 1991 Persian Gulf War, when a great deal of Iraq's infrastructure was destroyed by coalition forces. While getting Iraq's infrastructure to pre-war levels was estimated to take as long as 18 months (a target the administration was actually poised to meet on time), USAID officials gave priority to smaller projects that could "ensure at least a minimally functioning society."(40)

Operating under emergency procurement mechanisms, USAID approached a chosen set of major American construction companies to bid on reconstruction contracts totaling \$900 million. Representing the first stage of post-war reconstruction, the contracts included the repair of roads, bridges, hospitals, religious sites and schools. It also included another set of contracts to restock hospitals, update Iraq's water treatment and delivery systems, restore electrical power and the operations of oil refineries, and open Iraq's main commercial port at Umm Qasar.(41)

USAID also prepared a set of secondary contracts. These included: administration of Iraq's seaports and international airports; management of hospitals; warehousing and trucking of essential construction and humanitarian material; and the repair of telecommunication systems. After much public criticism and British objections to the award of primary contracts to U.S. companies, USAID decided to wait until the end of the war to allow companies to bid for these projects. Nevertheless, USAID officials made it clear that contracts funded by the U.S. government would be mostly reserved for U.S.

companies. However, these companies were free to subcontract their work to foreign countries and they were encouraged to work alongside Iraqi construction and engineering firms.

Other projects, such as rebuilding Iraq's irrigation systems, dams, other key infrastructure, would be handled once the war ended and USAID and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers did more thorough assessments of Iraq's needs. More importantly, the Bush administration did not explain how it was going to reconstruct Iraq's oil industry or what procedures it would use to regulate this important industry, which is an interesting point considering that the Bush administration argued that Iraqi oil sales would fund these reconstruction efforts. The only thing U.S. official said about this issue was that Iraq's oil, as well as other resources, would remain in Iraqi hands. They also assured Iraqis and key allies, such as Turkey, that "no one ethnic or religious group would be allowed to claim exclusive rights to any part of the oil resources or infrastructure."(42)

Apart from the oil controversy, the biggest debate regarding this strategy was the funding of these projects. As mentioned before, ORHA officials believed that oil revenues would be enough to pay for these efforts. Many experts questioned this belief. The UN Development Program estimated that reconstruction of Iraq's infrastructure and oil industry could cost as much as \$30 billion in the first three years.(43) William Nordhaus of Yale University offered another, widely quoted, estimate. He believed it could cost around \$15 billion a year. This figure did not include the stationing of coalition forces, delivery of humanitarian aid, reform of Iraq's political system, payment of Iraq's foreign debt--which totaled \$320 billion--or payment of public workers' salaries.(44)

Moreover, ORHA's analysis was based on Iraq's ability to continue producing no less than 2.8 million barrels a day, which would generate between \$14-16 billion dollars a year.(45) The United States continued to argue that the plan would work, as it believed that the Iraqi oil industry would be able to increase production. Experts questioned this claim, arguing that Iraq's dilapidated oil industry would need \$30 to \$40 billion to modernize the existing infrastructure and to develop new fields.(46)

The strategy for economic reconstruction was as vague as the strategy to set up a civilian administration, which was especially problematic because they were dependent on each other. USAID emphasized that the distribution of aid and funding for reconstruction projects would be "devolved to sub-national levels of government" in Iraq.(47) The Iraqi state would not be responsible for meeting the needs of Iraqi citizens. Instead, local governments, which were to be assembled by USAID officials, working for ORHA and coalition forces, would help USAID and other funding institutions, such as the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, decide what projects deserved especial attention in their communities. While U.S. officials' strategy for civil administration was unclear, the USAID's economic reconstruction strategy was to decentralize Iraq's political system, giving sub-national structures more say in Iraq's economic future. In short, power was to be transferred from Baghdad to outlying areas. It was not clear before the war, or after the war for that matter, if USAID's plans were in line with the Department of State's "Future of Iraq Project."

#### *The Military's Role*

Just before the war started, military planners feared that Saddam Hussein would order the destruction of key

infrastructure and the burning of Iraq's oil wells. CENTCOM commanders understood that how they waged the war would affect postwar efforts. As discussed in part one, military planners vowed to minimize the destruction of key infrastructure. Experts also noted that Special Forces teams would take control of oil fields. Thus, military plans, as seen during the war, emphasized the importance of precision and speed.

Apart from destroying terrorist camps and locating Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction, the Bush administration emphasized that the military would be responsible for the provision of humanitarian aid and the administration of captured towns and cities in the short term, until ORHA officials, DART, and humanitarian relief agencies could start assuming responsibility for these efforts.(48) Civil affairs and military police units were supposed to help the ORHA achieve the transition from military authority to civilian authority, though it is important to remember that the entire postwar strategy was under the authority of the CENTCOM commander.

For the last decade, U.S. military officials and politicians have shown distaste for peacekeeping efforts, but it was clear that coalition forces would also have a wider security role. They would not only be responsible for Iraq's integrity, but they were supposed to provide safety. The two most probable scenarios were widespread looting and revenge killings initiated by one ethnic or religious group against another.(49) While some Americans feared "mission creep," as seen in Somalia, U.S. officials explained that the military would only be doing police work in the short term, as the OHRA wanted Iraq's police force to return to work as soon as possible.

As stated before, Rumsfeld wanted the Iraqi regular army to remain in place and support reconstruction projects by

providing security and manpower. Nevertheless, one of the Department of Defense's news organizations, the American Forces Information Services, explained that the Iraqi army would be transformed and that the Free Iraqi Force, made up of free Iraqis assembled by exiled opposition groups and trained before the war by the U.S. military in Hungary, would serve as its nucleus.<sup>(50)</sup> Thus, the Bush administration maintained that U.S. forces would remain in Iraq until this new army was established.

USAID also specified that the U.S. military would administer Iraq's airfields and ports in the first months and then transfer them to civilian administrators or the Iraqi government, whichever came first.<sup>(51)</sup> Although the U.S. military supported other post-war initiatives, the biggest debate in Washington was over the number of troops that were supposed to stay in Iraq after the war. U.S. Army Chief of Staff General Erik K. Shinseki told members of Congress that based on his military experience over "several hundred thousands" would be needed. It is important to remember that before becoming chief of staff he was commander of NATO's Stabilization Force in Bosnia. Wolfowitz dismissed the figures stating that these were clearly "way off the mark."<sup>(52)</sup> Even though the Bush administration never offered a clear number, this debate was important for two reasons.

First, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) had estimated that a force of 75,000 troops would cost the United States \$1.4 billion per month.<sup>(53)</sup> Shinseki's numbers meant that U.S. taxpayers would have to pay more for postwar related costs. Second, Wolfowitz wanted to convey the message that postwar efforts were not going to be as costly or as difficult as many critics believed, for at least three reasons. First, he stated that postwar Iraq would not be like

Bosnia or Kosovo because Iraq did not have a history of ethnic hostilities. Second, Wolfowitz was confident that Iraqis would embrace American troops and treat them as liberators, reducing the likelihood of any serious security threat. Third, he stated that countries which opposed the war would want to participate in postwar efforts, thus sharing the costs associated with such a mission.<sup>(54)</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Did the Bush administration answer the five questions posed by the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee in February 11, 2003? Based on public documents and statements, answers were provided, but U.S. officials presented optimistic scenarios intended to dissuade criticism at home and garner Iraqis' support. To accomplish the latter, U.S. officials had to raise Iraqis' expectations by informing them that a better life was around the corner. But in doing so they also sowed the seeds of frustration and mistrust. Many Iraqis today are glad that the United States toppled Saddam Hussein's regime, but they also want to see the material fulfillment of the many promises made. The Bush administration now blames the problems it encounters on Saddam Hussein's lack of investment in public infrastructure and on the massive looting of Iraqi government offices and police stations around the country, though looting was expected to be a problem and UN Development Program reports argued that the country's infrastructure was out of date.<sup>(55)</sup>

Blame should also fall on the postwar plan, especially those elements that explained how the United States intended to reconstruct the economy, establish a civil administration, and provide security. The only areas where the American plan was successful were the prevention of a humanitarian catastrophe and the reconstruction of Iraq's pre-war oil

production capacity. In the former case, the United States was willing to consider the worst-case scenario and it worked hard to prevent it by coordinating U.S. efforts with humanitarian relief organizations, including UN agencies. In the latter, the massive looting and security problems following the war nearly led to a failure in this area as well, and success only came about after 14,000 Iraqi policemen were trained and assigned to protect the oil industry's assets.(56)

The Bush administration's approach to other elements of the overall plan lacked foresight or willingness to use international expertise (developed over years by intergovernmental organizations working in post-war reconstruction efforts in different parts of the world) to tackle the massive challenges associated with the stabilization and long-term transformation of Iraq. This is clearly an important lesson for future postwar operations.

Consequently, the American plan for postwar Iraq did not appreciate the complexities of post-war societies. Too many questions were left unanswered while answers to other queries were too vague. The two key themes were: a) Iraqis would treat U.S. troops as liberators; and b) Iraq's transformation would be quick and relatively inexpensive. Since President Bush declared the end of major hostilities in May 1, 2003, over 350 U.S. troops have been killed by remnants of Saddam Hussein's forces or by Islamist groups. Clearly a significant number of Iraqis are not treating coalition troops and administrators as liberators, but as occupiers. Even if these groups are a minority, their attacks have been extremely devastating, and it should have been clear to the Administration that some groups--especially the country's Arab Sunnis--would see the U.S. occupation as generally against their interests. Of course, the situation could become even worse as the

number of opponents to the occupation would likely increase greatly if other sectors in Iraq come to believe that the United States is not keeping its promises.

If current developments continue, the United States will be faced with a quagmire of major proportions, and Iraqis will become further detached from America's vision of a post-Saddam society modeled on American principles. Ironically, a quick military victory does not guarantee the success of Operation Iraqi Freedom and it will not guarantee Iraqis' or Americans' future support for U.S. post-war efforts. In the end, what matters is the Bush administration's willingness to meet Iraqis' expectations and to support their visions of Iraq. Because the costs of this mission are likely to increase, President Bush should be ready to share authority over post-war Iraq with non-Coalition members or to ask the American people to increase their contributions to guarantee the project's success.

Convincing Americans has not proven to be easy. Many Americans have been dismayed by the high number of troops killed patrolling Iraq's streets and by the fact that reconstruction costs are increasing rapidly. Even though U.S. lawmakers criticized Bush's proposed \$18 billion grant to reconstruct post-war Iraq, they agreed to support the President's proposal in October 2003. Nevertheless, many Americans want to finance future reconstruction efforts through loans, rather than grants. The Bush administration has repeatedly argued that this would anger many Iraqis, but growing budget deficits and the upcoming presidential election may force the United States to change its position in the near future.

In Iraq, even though the CPA has recognized weaknesses in the original plan and even adapted it to meet Iraqis' needs, support for the Coalition's efforts has diminished. Increased bickering between

different political groups concerning Iraq's political future has raised questions about Iraq's long-term stability and unity. Due to a lack of employment opportunities and the growing number of terrorist attacks and rising crime rate, many Iraqis have been forced to rely on sectarian-based organizations for their safety and welfare.(57) If this trend continues, writing a permanent constitution--where more is at stake than the temporary constitution recently signed--will be very difficult and the process could plant the seeds of a future civil war.

Even though the CPA still plans to start its transfer of power to an Iraqi transitional government by July 2004, Shi'a demands for direct elections have raised questions about the plan's viability. The Bush administration asked the UN to intervene in the matter and an UN fact-finding mission, headed by Lakhdar Brahimi, recently noted that the CPA's proposed system of regional caucuses was a mistake and that direct elections could not be held before June 30, 2004. Thus, the CPA and Iraq's leaders must now find a way of forming a transitional government that can assume responsibility for Iraq until a new constitution is approved and direct elections put a permanent government in place.(58) Whether the CPA will remain in Iraq after the institution of a transitional government or if a UN transitional body will be created after the transfer of sovereignty are questions that still remain unanswered. But it is clear that Washington is coming to the realization that Iraq's transformation will not be easy and that international assistance will be necessary for at least another year. With upcoming presidential elections, there may be an urge for a premature exit. This must be avoided at all costs as this would move Iraq closer to civil war, further destabilizing the Middle East.

Iraq's transformation is still a worthy objective. Even though the CPA has encountered many problems since May 2003, these should not be blamed on unforeseen events. As documented above, blame should rest on the Bush administration's post-war strategy, which failed to appreciate the complexities of post-war societies and the intricacies of Iraqi society. More importantly, the strategy was overly optimistic. It promised more than it could deliver, assuring Americans the attainment of key goals at relatively low costs and raising Iraqis' expectations for higher living standards and a more secure future.

*\*Carlos L. Yordan is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Government at Hamilton College and a Visiting Scholar in the Peace Studies Program at Cornell University.*

#### NOTES

1. Garner's views were cited in Adam Garfinkel, "The Daunting Aftermath: L. Paul Bremer & Co. Have a Different Kind of War on Their Hands," The National Review, Vol. 55 (July 28, 2003), p. 29.
2. Thomas Melia and Brian Katulis, "Iraqis Discuss Their Country's Future: Post-War Perspectives from the Iraqi Street," National Democratic Institute, July 28, 2003  
<[http://www.ndi.org/front\\_page/1626\\_iq\\_focusgroup\\_072503.pdf](http://www.ndi.org/front_page/1626_iq_focusgroup_072503.pdf)>; Richard Burkholder, "Ousting Saddam 'Was Worth Hardships Endured Since Invasion,' Say Citizens of Baghdad," Gallup News Service, September 14, 2003; Richard Burkholder, "Poll of Baghdad: Should Iraq's Reconstruction Be an International Effort," Gallup News Service, October 21, 2003.
3. On Americans' views on post-war Iraq, see: Steven Kull, et al, "Americans on Iraq," Program on International Policy Attitudes and Knowledge Networks, July

23, 2003

<[http://www.pipa.org/OnlineReports/Iraq/7\\_24\\_iraqreport.pdf](http://www.pipa.org/OnlineReports/Iraq/7_24_iraqreport.pdf)> and Claudia Deane, "Despite Capture, Poll Indicates Wariness on Iraq," The Washington Post, December 15, 2003, p. A7. On the U.N.'s role, refer to: Ivo H. Daalder, "Internationalize Post-War Iraq," Brookings Daily War Report, April 7, 2003

<<http://www.brook.edu/views/op-ed/daalder/20030407.htm>> and Barbara Slavin, "UN Agrees to Help US Exit Iraq," USA Today, January 27, 2004.

4. See for instance, Senator Richard Lugar's and Senator Joseph Biden's in: "The Future of Iraq," Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, 108<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., February 11, 2003, pp. 3-9 <[http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/usftp.cgi?IPaddress=162.140.64.21&filename=87678.pdf&directory=/diskb/wais/data/108\\_senate\\_hearings](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/usftp.cgi?IPaddress=162.140.64.21&filename=87678.pdf&directory=/diskb/wais/data/108_senate_hearings)>. [Hereafter referred to as Future of Iraq].

5. Future of Iraq, p. 10.

6. Future of Iraq, p. 4.

7. Future of Iraq, pp. 13 and 20.

8. George W. Bush, "Iraq is Fully Capable of Living in Freedom" in Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf (eds.) The Iraq War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2003) p. 558.

9. Bush, p. 557.

10. Bush, pp. 558-59.

11. Future of Iraq, p. 36.

12. Paul Wolfowitz, "Town Hall Meeting with Iraqi Community," Dearborn, MI, February 23, 2003, <<http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2003/sp20030223-depsecdef0042.html>>.

13. Emphasis mine. Russert's and Cheney's remarks in: E. J. Dionne, "Behind the Failure," The Washington Post, August 22, 2003, p. A22.

14. For a review of these psychological operations, refer to: Nick Grace, "Iraq: Bush Address Underscores Importance of Radio Psyop," Clandestine Radio Watch,

March 17, 2003

<<http://www.schoechi.de/crw/crw128e2.html>>.

15. George W. Bush, "Address to the Nation," Washington, DC, March 19, 2003, <

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/iraq/20030319-17.html>>.

16. Elliot Abrams's remarks can be found in: "Briefing on Humanitarian Reconstruction Issues," February 24, 2003, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030224-11.html>>. [Hereafter referred to as "Briefing on Humanitarian Reconstruction"]

17. For more information, refer to: the UN Office of Coordination and Humanitarian Assistance's website:

<[http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha\\_ol/w](http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/w)>. For an explanation of its authority in Iraq, refer to Michael Marx's remarks in: "U.S. Humanitarian Efforts in Iraq: Briefing by Michael Marx," USAID, Amman, Jordan, April 7, 2003, <http://www.usaid.gov/press/speeches/2003/sp030407.html>.

18. James Bone, "U.N. Leaders Draw up Secret Blueprint for Postwar Iraq," The Times, March 5, 2003.

19. Howard LaFranchi, "Tensions Build Over Postwar Plans," The Christian Science Monitor, April 7, 2003; and Karen DeYoung and Peter Slevin, "Pentagon, State Spar on Team to Run Iraq," The Washington Post, April 1, 2003.

20. For a detailed explanation of this struggle and how it may have hampered planning for post-war Iraq, refer to: David Rieff, "Blueprint for A Mess: How Bush Administration's Prewar Planners Bungled Postwar Iraq," The New York Times Magazine, November 2, 2003.

21. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Iraq: Reconstruction, 108<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., March 11, 2003, p. 8, <[http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=108\\_senate\\_hearin](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=108_senate_hearin)

- gs&docid=f:87833.pdf>. [Hereafter referred to as Iraq: Reconstruction].
22. Iraq: Reconstruction, pp. 50-80.
23. Iraq: Reconstruction, p. 22.
24. Mary E. McClymont, "InterAction Comments on U.S. Plan for Relief and Reconstruction of Iraq," InterAction Statement, February 24, 2003, <<http://www.interaction.org/newswire/detail.php?id=1299>>.
25. Elliot Abrams's remarks in: "Briefing on Humanitarian Reconstruction."
26. For more information refer to: Joe Collins's remarks in: Department of Defense Briefing, "Humanitarian Assistance for Iraq," Federal News Service, February 25, 2003.
27. Elliot Abrams's comments in: "Briefing on Humanitarian Reconstruction."
28. "Briefing on Humanitarian Assistance to Iraqis in the Event of War," USAID, February 25, 2003, <http://www.usaid.gov/press/speeches/2003/sp030225.html>.
29. "Vision for Post-Conflict Iraq," USAID, Washington, DC: Department of State, February 2003, p. 2. A copy of this secret document was posted on CASI's Website: <<http://www.casi.org.uk/info/consequences.html>>.
30. Judith Miller, "Threats and Responses: Hussein's Foes," The New York Times, February 27, 2003.
31. For excellent reviews of Iraq's opposition groups, refer to: Robert Rabil, "The Iraqi Opposition's Revolution: From Conflict to Unity?" Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA) Journal, Vol. 6, No. 4 (December 2004); and Chris Toensing, "U.S. Support for the Iraqi Opposition," Foreign Policy in Focus (January 2003).
32. Rumsfeld comments in: "DoD News Briefing," Washington, DC: Department of Defense, March 11, 2003, <[http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/t03112003\\_t0311sd.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/t03112003_t0311sd.html)>.
33. "Vision for Post-Conflict Iraq," USAID.
34. U.S. Department of Defense, "DoD, USAID Teams Ready to Rebuild Iraq, Provide Assistance," Federal Document Clearing House's Federal Department and Agency Documents, March 11, 2003.
35. Reuters, "U.S. Unveils Rebuilding for Postwar Iraq," The New York Times, March 11, 2003.
36. For Feith's comments on the judicial council and elections, see: Future of Iraq, p. 24; and for Grossman's description of the "Future of Iraq Project," see Future of Iraq, p. 14.
37. John Hendren and James Gerstenzang, "Postwar Plans Shift into Gear," Los Angeles Times, March 12, 2003.
38. Joshua Chaffin and Guy Dinmore, "U.S. Sets Out Its Blueprint for Task of Rebuilding Post-War Iraq," The Financial Times, March 12, 2003.
39. Vision for Post-Conflict Iraq, USAID, p. 2.
40. Iraq is presently producing 2.3 million to 2.5 million barrels a day, compared with 2.8 million barrels a day before the war. Neela Banerjee, "A Revival for Iraq's Oil Industry as Output Nears Prewar Levels," New York Times, March 1, 2004; and USAID, p. 2.
41. Rupert Cornwall, "The Threat of War: First Deals to Rebuild Iraq will go to U.S. Firms," The Independent, March 12, 2003; and Chaffin and Dinmore, "U.S. Sets Out."
42. Future of Iraq, p. 22.
43. Julia Preston, "U.N. Estimates Rebuilding Iraq Will Cost \$30 Billion," The New York Times, January 29, 2003.
44. Figures cited in: Carlos L. Yordan, "Costs of Reconstructing Iraq," The Bangor Daily News, April 26, 2003, <<http://www.bangornews.com/editorialnews/article.cfm/ID/399505>>.



45. Bruce Stanley, "Experts: Oil Wouldn't Cover Iraq Rebuild," The Star Tribune, March 17, 2003.
46. Independent Working Group, Guiding Principles for U.S. Post-Conflict Policy in Iraq (New York, NY and Houston, TX: Council on Foreign Relations and the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy of Rice University, 2002), pp. 10-11.
47. Vision of Post-Conflict Iraq, USAID, p. 1.
48. See Elliot Abrams's comments in: "Briefing on Humanitarian Reconstruction Issues." For an excellent analysis of the military's work in this situation, see: Dennis Murphy, Curtis Turner, and Bob Hesse, "The Day After: The Army in a Post-Conflict Iraq," Issue Paper, Vol. 14, No. 2, Carlisle, PA: Center for Strategic Leadership, U.S. Army War College, December 2002; and Conrad Crane and W. Andrew Terrill, "Reconstructing Iraq: Challenges and Missions for Military Forces in Post-Conflict Scenario," Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, January 29, 2003.
49. Vernon Loeb and Thomas E. Rick, "For Army, Fear of Postwar Iraq," The Washington Post, March 11, 2003.
50. Jim Garamone, "Free Iraqi Forces, Committed to Democracy, Rule of Law," American Forces Information Services, March 14, 2003, <[http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/n03142003\\_200303143.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/n03142003_200303143.html)>.
51. Vision of Post-Conflict Iraq, USAID, p. 5.
52. Shinseki's and Wolfowitz's comments are cited in: Loeb and Rick, "Army Fears."
53. CBO figures were cited by Eric Schwartz's testimony to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee. For more information, see: Iraq: Reconstruction, p. 10.
54. Eric Schmitt, "Pentagon Contradicts General on Iraq Occupation Force's Size," The New York Times, February 28, 2003.
55. For more on this controversy, see Paul Wolfowitz's testimony before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee. US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Stabilization and Reconstruction of Iraq 108<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., May 22, 2003.
56. Neela Banerjee, "A Revival for Iraq's Oil Industry as Output Nears Prewar Levels," New York Times, March 1, 2004.
57. Nicholas Blandford, "The Specter of Sectarian and Ethnic Unrest in Iraq," The Middle East Report, January 7, 2004. <<http://www.merip.org/mero/mero010704.html>>.
58. UN, "The Political Transition in Iraq: Report of the Fact-Finding Mission," New York, NY: United Nations, February 23, 2003, <<http://www.un.org/News/dh/iraq/rpt-fact-finding-mission.pdf>>.