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Bush, Clausewitz, and the Grand Strategic Imperative:

Keeping Political Ends Primary

By

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Introduction

As President George W. Bush relinquishes the reigns as Commander-in-Chief to President Barak Obama, it is fitting to reflect on how the country will remember President Bush in years to come. Whether or not one agrees with his decision to commit U.S. forces to military action against Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath Party regime in Iraq, it is clear that Bush's legacy will largely be determined by how Iraq turns out – whether as a stable, free, and peace-loving democracy or something short of that. There is certainly plenty of room for continued improvement in the conditions on the ground and ample time for the political, security, and economic situation to yet deteriorate. Yet, since "The Surge" and the change in U.S. counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq, developments in Iraq have taken a fundamentally and undeniably positive turn. It appears that a favorable outcome is plausible, if not likely. The future of the "Global War on Terrorism" under the Barak administration must and will certainly deviate in certain facets from that pursued by Bush. One of the primary ways in which Barak must differ from Bush is that he must implement a Clausewitzian perspective whereby political

objectives clearly guide all his grand strategic decisions.¹ During the pre-surge years, President Bush did not follow Clausewitz's grand strategic imperative of first setting a clear political end that determines the means used to reach it. The consequences were several lost years, fighting for a free, stable, and democratic Iraq with resources and means incommensurate with that end. Bush began to get it right with his new plan for Iraq. Obama must do likewise, despite a severe economic recession at home and abroad.

The Case of Iraq

Prewar Planning and a Mistake in Organization:

Although the administration did make mistakes in its assessment of the post invasion environment, the State Department had properly assessed much of the situation and did develop a plan for Iraqi reconstruction. State outlined their plan in a massive document known as the Future of Iraq Project. They developed it from August 2002 to April 2003 with consultation from other agencies. Similar to Dobbins, the report predicted many of the problems that we have since seen occur in Iraq. The report recommended Debaathification, but not to include the entire administration since the current institutional structure in Iraq was important for maintaining social order. The report also recommended gradually reducing the Iraqi Army by half, eventually using the element that was left for drug smuggling and fighting terrorism. The project highlighted how much the UN sanctions against Iraq had crippled the country and increased corruption. It emphasized the difficulty and the importance of fixing this situation soon

¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 88-89.

after the invasion and suggested that oil revenues pay for it.² In hindsight State seems to have had a good assessment of the situation. Paul Bremer and the CPA would have done well to follow its recommendations.

The main reason that the Future of Iraq Project recommendations were ignored was that Secretary Rumsfeld outbid the State Department and received the President's nod for the Defense Department to be the lead agency for the reconstruction effort in Iraq.³ This was a problem because it meant that the U.S. military, as the organization with the most people on the ground in Iraq and as the designated lead proponent, would be the de facto head for all nation-building efforts in Iraq. This is problematic because the military is designed to fight and win our nation's wars, but it is not designed to accomplish the myriad of other tasks inherent in nation-building. Instead of simply being in charge of the security situation and providing a stable environment in which political, economic, civil administration, and humanitarian tasks could be undertaken, the military was the final authority on all decisions. Secretary Rumsfeld, like the military, approached the problems and tasks in Iraq from a defense perspective and therefore an operational one, rather than from a strategic political perspective. This hierarchy reverses Clausewitz's principle of political objectives determining the military means.⁴

That this happened and the manner in which it happened is both insightful and troublesome. There is little explanation for it other than the power of personality and the dynamics of political relationships. Secretary Powell did not enjoy the same access to the

² The National Security Archive, "New State Department Releases on the 'Future of Iraq' Project," available at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB198/index.htm>, accessed March 14, 2008.

³ Bob Woodward, *State of Denial*.

⁴ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 87-89, 605.

President that Secretary Rumsfeld did.⁵ Powell technically outranked the Defense Secretary by holding the senior Cabinet position. It is likely that Rumsfeld's prior experience as the Defense Secretary during the Ford administration was responsible for his ability to more adeptly navigate Washington's political channels and demand the ear of the President with greater frequency, greater skill, and to greater effect. The result was that he was able to secure favorable decisions for himself and the Department of Defense. The problem was that it was sometimes at the expense of Powell, the State Department, and more importantly the nation. The squabble over who would lead the U.S. post invasion effort was not settled by the President's designation of the Defense Department as having the lead. There continued to be a last minute power struggle between Rumsfeld and Jay Garner, the initial American envoy to Iraq following the invasion. Instead of recognizing the need to bring in staff for Garner from all pertinent agencies, Rumsfeld insisted on providing him all of his staff from the Defense Department. This was true even when Defense was not the agency best suited to fill a position and even when Garner was already in Kuwait preparing to take a convoy into Iraq.⁶

The State Department should have had the lead to coordinate the host of nation-building activities, for which it is better suited than the military. The State Department in general and one of its subordinate organizations, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), should have exerted greater engagement in meeting the needs of the Iraqi people. These organizations should have brought the people, the money, and the equipment necessary to do the work or to hire Iraqi contractors to do the reconstruction work. Instead, military commanders served as make shift mayors for their

⁵ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack*.

⁶ Bob Woodward, *State of Denial*, p. 129.

local communities, contracted, and oversaw the work that was being done. Time doing this took away from their work securing the towns and areas for which they were responsible. It is true that these activities do contribute to security by gaining the trust of the local citizens. It is also true that security concerns were a big part of why the State Department was not more involved. Security levels in Iraq did not permit State Department officials to travel around Iraq unescorted.

However, it was also a problem that State could not get substantial numbers of quality people to go to Iraq.⁷ This is because Iraq duty is dangerous and because, until recently, State's policies did not allow obligatory deployment of its people to combat zones. Secretary Condoleezza Rice's new policy overturning this outdated practice is a positive step, but occurred too late to make a difference during the decisive early stages of the post invasion nation-building efforts. So, instead of an integrated effort among the major contributing organizations (State, Defense, USAID, Treasury, CIA, and NGOs), the missions of other organizations shifted to the military.

On a microscopic level the result was that the military did tasks for which they were not the experts. On a macroscopic level the result was that the U.S. made military means the only means of accomplishing an unclear political aim—a mistake that has proven extremely costly. This happened because President Bush, not wanting to repeat the mistakes made by President Lyndon B. Johnson's micromanagement during the Vietnam War, took a hands-off approach, preferring to defer decisions on the direction of

⁷ Associated Press, "With Shortage of Volunteers, U.S. State Department to Order Diplomats to Serve in Iraq," available at <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,305616,00.html>, October 28, 2007, accessed May 4, 2008.

the war to the generals on the ground. Bush mistakenly continued this approach until implementing the “surge.”⁸

Other Challenges and More Mistakes:

Recent years has seen the exodus of many of Iraq’s upper and middle classes.⁹ Without these individuals to form the backbone of their civil society, Iraq is finding the internal dimensions of the nation-building task more difficult. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA)’s policies of Debaathification and dismissal of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) further exacerbated this problem by removing the leadership from Iraqi institutions and crippling their ability to function or protect themselves. It stripped them of a ready made stability force which would have been extremely useful during the initial post invasion days when there was a period of time during which ISF could have secured Iraq’s borders and prevented terrorists, foreign fighters, those stirring up sectarian violence, and criminals from establishing substantial footholds in the post-Hussein vacuum. While the process of vetting the 485,000¹⁰ Iraqi Army personnel would have been challenging, the alternative has proven significantly more costly.

The past few years have seen major American efforts to train up a new force to replace the one that Paul Bremer let go.¹¹ These units are vital for Iraq to protect itself from internal and external threats, but it must be a dependable force. Lieutenant General

⁸ President George W. Bush, “*President’s Address to the Nation*,” 10 January 2007, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html>, accessed May 4, 2008.

⁹ R. Nolan, “*Global Views: Iraq’s Refugees*,” June 12, 2007, available at http://www.fpa.org/topics_info2414/topics_info_show.htm?doc_id=509313, accessed May 4, 2008.

¹⁰ LTC (ret.) Oliver North reported that this was the number of soldiers in the Iraqi Army when Paul Bremer disbanded it in Spring 2003. He reported this in March 2008 during his “*War Stories*” segment on Fox News when commemorating five years of Americans fighting for freedom in Iraq.

¹¹ Hannah Hickey, “*Bremer defends disbanding Iraqi army as the ‘most important decision I made.’*” April 27, 2005, available at <http://news-service.stanford.edu/news/2005/april27/bremer-042705.html>, accessed on May 4, 2008.

(retired) William Odom and Lawrence Korb offered another view of training ISF. They believe that training more ISF is counterproductive because they lack a sense of national identity. Iraqi soldiers and police may use the training they receive from American soldiers and marines to fuel more civil violence by abandoning their units and joining militias or independently carrying out vendettas they have harbored and are now equipped to act on.¹² This scenario is possible, but the earlier decision to release ISF left America with few plausible alternatives to training a new group of ISF. The U.S. could hypothetically provide Iraq with a surrogate security service indefinitely or leave Iraq without its own security capability; neither of these, however, are realistic options.

The Surge and a New Plan:

The recent change in tactical and operational means to establish a secure and stable Iraq has been known simply as the “surge” because of its predominant feature, a surge of approximately 30,000 additional U.S. troops and the training of another 100,000 Iraqi Security Forces. President Bush announced this plan in January 2007. It involved more soldiers and more marines who arrived in Iraq largely between March and August 2007. They were primarily positioned in and around Baghdad and in the western province of Al Anbar, respectively.

President Bush’s strategic objective was for the Iraqi government to make the important decisions necessary to take the country forward politically in the “breathing space¹³” that the additional troops would provide by increasing security in the most

¹² LTG (ret.) William Odom and Lawrence Korb, “Training local forces is no way to secure Iraq,” *Financial Times*, July 19, 2007.

¹³ President George W. Bush, “President’s Address to the Nation,” 10 January 2007, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html>, accessed May 4, 2008.

troublesome and most critical areas of Iraq. This was an excellent decision and a significant shift from Bush's previous strategy because by it he demonstrated for the first time since the invasion of Iraq a Clausewitzian understanding of first determining the overarching political objectives and then matching appropriate means to accomplish those ends. The new strategy also meant that the President's strategy was based for the first time on correct assumptions about the conditions on the ground and what they required.¹⁴ Along with the new strategy Bush appointed a new top general in Iraq, General Petraeus.

General Petraeus agreed with the new strategy and was the man in charge of implementing it. In addition to more manpower, General Petraeus outlined a new means of their tactical employment. The new tactics coincided with those he had just outlined in the Army's new counterinsurgency manual, FM 3-24.¹⁵ The new operational philosophy was a return to counterinsurgency principles long understood and employed by the U.S. Army Special Forces. Now all of the U.S. ground troops in Iraq utilize them. Petraeus' new tactics involved a greater dispersion of troops among the Iraqis. It moved American and Iraqi soldiers from a few heavily protected enclaves to many smaller patrol bases. These were run at the company and platoon level instead of at the battalion, brigade, or higher level, as had previously been done. The plan recognized that an increased tactical presence would hinder the operations, planning, and safe dwelling of insurgents, terrorists, and those fomenting sectarian violence.

¹⁴ National Security Council, *Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review: Summary Briefing Slides*, January 2007.

¹⁵ FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency, available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf>, accessed May 4, 2008.

General Petraeus' operational concept centered on proven counterinsurgency strategy of securing the hearts and minds of the local populace by orienting security missions toward a population based security strategy instead of a target based security strategy. This is important because it recognizes that long term success is contingent upon securing the support of the local population. If the majority of citizens feel safe, they will have a more favorable impression of their government and of U.S. involvement in their country. They will also be more likely to provide information leading to further arrests of bad characters.

A further goal of the new plan is expressed in three words: "Clear, Hold, and Build."¹⁶ The surge troops and Petraeus' new tactics constitute the "clear" portion of the plan. The "hold" phase involves holding the security gains garnered during the "clear" phase, even after authority for a sector's security is transferred to Iraqis. The "build" phase entails building upon the security gains to do the other work of nation-building. This means improving local civil administration, making infrastructure and reconstruction improvements, and fostering political progress and the development of an enduring civil society.

The State Department chipped in with the advent of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). Secretary Rice began the PRT program in November 2005, but the teams are now an integral part of the build phase of the new American plan in Iraq. PRTs operate in all eighteen provinces of Iraq and involve primarily civilian elements, but coordinate their actions with the military brigade who has responsibility for the area in which they are working. PRTs focus on three of the five portions of Dobbins' plan for

¹⁶ "Strategy for Victory in Iraq: Clear, Hold, and Build," March 20, 2006, available at <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rln/0,14223.htm>, accessed May 4, 2008.

successful nation-building: political institutions and democratization, civil administration, and economic reconstruction.¹⁷ The PRTs relieve the military of some of its additional duties and enable it to focus on the security mission – a task for which it has been trained and for which it is well equipped. Although all the details have yet to surface, the initial assessment is that PRTs have been successful in furthering the nation-building effort.¹⁸

There are signs that the surge is working. Until recent violence around Basra this spring, the security situation had returned to 2004 to 2005 levels in most quantifiable measures. This included number of attacks, number of Iraqi and American casualties (military and civilian), and Iraqi displacement. The level of oil production has nearly returned to prewar levels. There is \$100 million per year going from Baghdad to the average Iraqi province (compared to \$0 in 2004). And Iraq's global rank for corruption is at its lowest level since 2003.¹⁹ These indicators demonstrate that the surge has produced favorable results.

The real measure of the surge's success, however, is not the improved security situation now. That is an indicator of tactical or at best operational success. Strategic success will be measured in two parts. The first factor is whether the Iraqi Security Forces are robust enough to maintain the security gains when the surge troops are redeployed from Iraq. This will test their competence, their will, and their loyalty. The result will either prove President Bush correct for pursuing this mid-course correction in strategy or prove LTG (ret.) Odom and Mr. Korb correct in their assessment that the

¹⁷ Provincial Reconstruction Teams Fact Sheet, March 20, 2008, available at http://iraq.usembassy.gov/pr_01222008b.html, accessed May 4, 2008.

¹⁸ General (ret.) Barry McCaffrey, "General McCaffrey Iraq AAR," available at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/12/general-mccaffrey-iraq-aar/>, accessed May 4, 2008.

¹⁹ Jason H. Campbell and Michael E. O'Hanlon, "The State of Iraq: An Update," March 23, 2008, available at http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/0309_iraq_ohanlon.aspx, accessed April 24, 2008.

training of the ISF was a mistake because Iraqis' true loyalties lie along tribal, ethnic, and religious lines rather than with the national government.

The second lasting measure of success is whether the Iraqis take the remaining and most important political steps and compromises necessary to unite their country. This is largely out of American control—beyond diplomatic leveraging to pressure the Iraqi executive and their legislators. Several developments demonstrate the beginnings of a national identity and increased political competence. On February 13, 2008, the Iraqi government conducted a logrolling maneuver²⁰ to pass important legislation that constituted an important compromise between the various ethnic groups over contentious issues, including the level of power for the central government. The 2008 offensive in Basra demonstrates that Maliki will not cater to Shiites and their militias on all issues. And five of the eleven political benchmarks have arguably been achieved.²¹ One of the main things that is yet to be accomplished in the political arena has always been one of the largest and most difficult issues—oil revenue sharing. This issue and outcomes on the status of Kirkuk and continued negotiation over the power balance between the central government and the provinces will determine whether Iraq is politically viable over the long term.

A Look Back and A Look Ahead

What went wrong?

Assuming the decision for war, the fundamental problem was that the administration did not have one clear political aim. The political objectives were

²⁰ Jason Gluck, "Iraq's Unheralded Political Progress," *Foreign Policy*, March 2008, available at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4236&print=1, accessed April 24, 2008.

²¹ Jason H. Campbell and Michael E. O'Hanlon, "The State of Iraq: An Update," March 23, 2008, available at http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/0309_iraq_ohanlon.aspx, accessed April 24, 2008.

incongruous and each required different means to achieve them.²² This led to the employment of means not best suited to accomplish what over time has become the only political goal—a democratic Iraq. In addition, State should have led the post invasion reconstruction instead of Defense. This and America’s poor organization for nation-building meant we were not ready to win the peace that followed the war. As for the smaller yet still significant mistakes the U.S. has made, I succinctly state below what I cover in more detail in other areas of this paper:

1. Miscalculation on the number of troops that would be required for post invasion stability.
2. Disbanding the Iraqi Army and police forces.
3. Debaathification.
4. Abu Ghraib and other horrible incidents.
5. Employing a target based security strategy versus a population based security strategy. This strategy entailed staying in military enclaves versus dispersing into smaller and more numerous bases among the people.
6. A poor public relations campaign that does not consistently register well with Americans or Iraqis and is beat by insurgent and terrorist propaganda.
7. Employing too narrow a view of the “the global war on terrorism,” or the “struggle against violent extremists.” This view results in too heavy a focus on the *military* aspects of the struggle instead of on the intelligence, law enforcement, financial, public relations, and the long term battle of *ideas* and of *values*.

It is striking to notice that all of these, except for the notable exception of numbers four through and six, have been primarily political in nature. Abu Ghraib and other similar abuses are horrific and have been terribly damaging to nation-building efforts in Iraq. They also tarnished America’s image in the world. However, these are

²² Chris Angevine, a joint Law – International Relations graduate from Yale University and a Fulbright Scholar, mentioned this in a talk we had about Professor Odom’s take on what went wrong in the Iraq War.

not reflective of the entire U.S. military and it has pursued justice for the wrong doers.²³ As for number six, General Petraeus addressed this mistake with his new operational methods and progress is being made with security gains and regaining the trust of the Iraqi people.

Keeping Sight of the Political Context, in Clausewitzian Fashion:

President Obama needs to publicly redefine victory in Iraq in a political context. Bush and his administration often spoke of “winning in Iraq” or achieving “victory in Iraq,” but their terminology was imprecise. What is victory and at what level are they referring to victory? Political victory, and hence success in Iraq, means a viable (preferably democratic) Iraq able to govern and protect itself without external assistance. This should be America’s current aim in Iraq and what victory means. The President agrees. A White House document that accompanied the surge indicates that the current U.S. strategic goal is “a unified democratic federal Iraq that can govern itself, defend itself, and sustain itself, and is an ally in the War on Terror.”²⁴ The problem is that it is has not been well communicated to the American public. This understanding of victory was largely lost when President Bush speaks of “winning in Iraq.” The context is often tied to the military and the correlation with the broader political context for America’s nation-building in Iraq is lost in the discussion about the ebb and flow of the security situation.

²³ At least twelve soldiers have been convicted of various charges related to the Abu Ghraib incident, all including dereliction of duty. More information is available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu_Ghraib_torture_and_prisoner_abuse#Courts-martial,2C_nonjudicial,2C_and_administrative_punishment, accessed May 4, 2008.

²⁴ National Security Council, “*Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review: Summary Briefing Slides*,” January 2007.

The new administration under President Barak Obama needs to shift focus from American military Generals to the political process. Prior to the surge, President Bush adopted an approach of regularly indicating that he would simply follow the recommendations of the commanders on the ground in Iraq who understood the security situation. His point, understandably, was to make decisions based upon the facts on the ground. Bush did not want to cater to domestic political calls for what he saw as artificial timelines for bringing troops home. He believed that a troop drawdown must be attached to the conditions on the ground. The theory behind this is sound. Coupled with Bush's motivation to avoid micromanaging the military, one can understand Bush's laissez faire approach toward his Generals.

But the Generals need strong strategic leadership setting the proper parameters for what the political aim is, and subsequently what their mission is. The various aims touted for the Iraq War entailed different missions for the military. Three of the top reasons for invading Iraq were regime change, dismantling their weapons of mass destruction program, and instilling a democratic regime. These three political aims all require significantly different military missions.²⁵ For instance, a military operation could potentially accomplish the first two objectives with little external assistance and in months. On the other hand, the third objective takes years and requires much more than merely a military operation, but a long term, well coordinated interagency effort. President Bush failed to provide appropriate strategic leadership because he failed to provide military leadership a clear political aim. A clear "political purpose (which is) the

²⁵ Chris Angevine, a joint Law – International Relations graduate from Yale University and a Fulbright Scholar, mentioned this in a talk we had about Professor Odom's take on what went wrong in the Iraq War.

supreme consideration²⁶ is necessary for Generals to develop a military mission which fits that objective. When provided, the political aim enables war to be one appropriate means of reaching the end, simply “the continuation of policy by other means.”²⁷

The President did change commanders in Iraq and of the U.S. Central Command prior to implementing the surge, thereby illustrating his role as Commander-in-Chief. Yet since the surge, Bush has continued to publicly elevate General Petraeus more so than Ryan Crocker, the American ambassador to Iraq. The result is that America views General Petraeus as a potential savior of the U.S. endeavor in Iraq, but hardly knows who Ambassador Crocker is. This is problematic because it shifts the focus onto the military—with accompanying expectations that they will be able to accomplish the job alone—and away from the political realm, where the lasting work is to be done. Bush’s rhetoric probably does not reflect his true priorities, but merely the context of the current situation and a favorable manner by which to sell the surge. It is an effective tactic because it elevates the military, shifts focus and responsibility from Bush, and capitalizes on the respect and support that the American public has for the U.S. military. However, combined with Bush’s failure to articulate a clear political aim, it is troubling. At worst, these things are an indication that Bush still does not understand Clausewitzian grand strategic principles. At least, it sends a wrong signal to the American public that the military situation is ultimately the driving force in Iraq, when in reality the political situation both in Iraq and in the U.S. should be what shapes the military’s involvement.

Organizing for Nation-Building:

²⁶ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 87.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Professor and strategist Thomas Barnett offers a possible solution to America's poor organizational structure for nation-building. His plan is meant to organize for mission accomplishment, facilitating winning the long term nation-building fight that the U.S. currently faces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo. He advocates splitting the U.S. military into two elements, a Leviathan Force and a Systems Administration Force. The first would have the mission of winning American wars; the second of winning the peace. The first would tear down networks; the second would build them. The former would retain the bulk of American conventional military capability, particularly heavy armor units and Special Forces. A mix of light infantry and psychological operations units would comprise the latter, along with elements from the State Department and other agencies. The Leviathan Force would not be subject to the ICC, while the Systems Administration Force would.²⁸

Barnett's idea for restructuring and redefining the mission of various elements involved in America's nation-building endeavors offers a unique approach and one that the country should strongly consider. While his concept is not without fault and he does not offer enough details to make the concept implementation ready, he does base his ideas on developing a more fitting approach to matching ends with appropriate means. His transformation—in organization and mission—would better equip America to meet global needs. It also provides a solution to current U.S. weaknesses by better utilizing existing American capability. Finally, Barnett's concept could form the basis of a

²⁸ Thomas Barnett, "The Pentagon's New Map for War and Peace," February 2005, available at <http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/view/id/33>, accessed March 23, 2008.

strategic compromise between the EU and the US in the “Long War”²⁹ against terrorism. The two actors may be able to resolve some of their post 9/11 differences over perspectives for waging the war against terrorists and reach common ground on important values to uphold and a methodology for so doing.

Final Thoughts:

The problem is a political one at its core and one that the U.S. now has little direct control over. America can set the conditions for success for Iraq, to include substantial assistance on the security front—both in direct terms on the streets and in training Iraqi Security Forces, both of which the U.S. continues to do. However, political progress on contentious issues is up to the Iraqis. The Iraqis’ logrolling on February 13, 2008 offers hope on the political front in Iraq,³⁰ but much remains to be done to demonstrate that the success experienced a year ago was not an isolated incident.

In a general sense, what the U.S. can and must do is facilitate Iraqi ownership of their country. The transition in U.S. presidents can facilitate this shift in security responsibility. President Obama’s statements during the campaign to withdraw U.S. combat forces within sixteen months of taking office³¹ adds pressure to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and his administration to rapidly prove they are able to well govern and secure their country without massive amounts of U.S. military forces. Obama can increase political leverage with Maliki and even give the latter better bargaining power

²⁹ Michael Howard, “*What’s In A Name?: How to Fight Terrorism*,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2002, available at <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20020101facomment6553/michael-howard/what-s-in-a-name-how-to-fight-terrorism.html>, accessed May 4, 2008.

³⁰ Jason Gluck, “*Iraq’s Unheralded Political Progress*,” *Foreign Policy*, March 2008, available at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4236&print=1, accessed April 24, 2008.

³¹ Senator Barack Obama, “*Obama-Biden Website: War in Iraq*,” available at <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/iraq/>, accessed January 19, 2009.

with his fellow Iraqi leaders by making elements of future aid conditional on successful achievement of certain political, security, and economic benchmarks. In the meantime, Obama must focus on the grand strategic imperative. He must clearly and consistently communicate the political aim, continue allocating appropriate means toward its accomplishment, and adapt those means as conditions change.

Specifically, America needs to continue the population based security strategy, while realizing it is a means toward the end and not the end in itself. The U.S. should increase the number of PRTs and their resources to bolster their capability. The work they do is critical to long term success by contributing to better security, to an improved economy, and to better governance. We need to continue training, equipping, and transferring greater authority and responsibility to ISF, while preparing a thorough plan for a responsible and phased withdrawal of the surge troops. The U.S. should plan for withdrawing more units, but we should not execute further withdrawals until conducting a reassessment after the initial drawdown is complete.

We must also engage the regional powers that can help Iraq develop a Westphalian sovereignty.³² We need to encourage nations in the Middle East to develop a Regional Security Pact.³³ The Pact needs to address political and diplomatic, economic, security, and humanitarian dimensions. It will not be easy to negotiate, but it is a realistic way to address Iran's negative involvement in Iraq. It is realistic because each state in the region has a stake in preventing the explosion of a regional conflict and an even greater humanitarian crisis than has been experienced to date. Despite the costs, challenges, and our past mistakes, the U.S. cannot afford to abandon Iraq, or to continue

³² Stephen Krasner, "Sovereignty, Organized Hypocrisy," p. 11–20.

³³ Professor Jolyon Howorth, during his *Europe, the U.S., and the Iraq Crisis* class at Yale University, April 24, 2008.

indefinitely at our current levels of military and financial involvement.³⁴ Based on his extensive campaign rhetoric to the contrary, we can expect President Obama to withdraw the bulk of U.S. forces from Iraq by the mid-term election in two years or before. As he does so, he should follow the general policy guidance I have outlined, while maintaining the Clausewitzian imperative of keeping political aims at the forefront of U.S.' grand strategic objectives. This constitutes the best and most realistic opportunity for a stable, sovereign Iraq. These factors will be key to Obama's ability to successfully negotiate the transition of American forces out of Iraq, and they will be central to Bush's ultimate legacy.

³⁴ This is true in a military sense because of the toll that repeated deployments take on military personnel, their families, and enlistment. It is also true financially. Although the U.S. could sustain financial support for current levels of involvement in the Iraq War for a long time, it cannot do so indefinitely and certainly not without significant tradeoffs in the level of financial support available for domestic programs. This is especially true in light of the ongoing U.S. and global recessions.

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