

Who Will Govern Iraq?

By Mark Sedra | April 2003

With Baghdad having fallen and the territorial consolidation of Iraq near at hand, discussion of the postwar period has intensified dramatically. The debate has provoked splits at various levels, within the United Nations, within the vaunted “coalition of the willing,” and even within the U.S. government. The acrimony that has surrounded this debate shows that even with victory in the war assured, winning the peace will be a more arduous task. How Iraq is governed and rebuilt in the first two years following the war’s conclusion may determine whether, in the rhetoric of the Bush administration, it is transformed into a beacon of democracy for the Arab world or, as many Middle East experts and observers fear, it sparks a wave of violent and destabilizing unrest in the region. In light of the monumental significance of this enterprise, it is important to examine the potential models for postwar governance in Iraq and to assess their effectiveness and impact. An examination of public statements issued by policymakers who will shape the postwar dispensation, along with an analysis of previous cases of post-conflict state building—such as post-World War II Germany and Japan, the Balkans in the 1990s, and, most recently, Afghanistan—provides a basis upon which to construct models of governance for Iraq. The model ultimately implemented will vary significantly from the theoretical constructs presented in this paper. However, the purpose of this analysis is not to predict the shape and structure of the postwar administration; it is intended to elucidate the demands and dangers of the postwar environment as a guide to state building.

U.S. Neoconservative Model

The U.S. neoconservative model refers to the plan for postwar government designed by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). It involves the establishment of a U.S. military occupation led by a high ranking U.S. military official, which will remain in place for an indefinite period. Lieutenant-General Jay Garner, a former army chief of staff and president of an arms company that provides crucial technical support to U.S. missile systems, was hand-picked by the DoD to serve as the occupation’s military governor. Garner was appointed to lead the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), established in late January 2003 by a presidential directive to coordinate all U.S. planning for the post-war period in Iraq. This body gradually assumed the role of occupation government-in-waiting. The occupation government will consist of 23 ministries and three regional coordination offices, all headed by Americans. Each U.S. administrator will be provided with four Iraqi advisors, the majority of which will emanate from exile groups. In a concession to critics of the plan, Pentagon officials have indicated that

some “soft ministries” such as health and education may be placed in the hands of Iraqis in the immediate aftermath of the war.

The main uncertainty regarding this plan regards the size and duration of the military occupation. DoD officials, such as Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, have emphatically rejected the notion offered by a number of defense experts and military figures, that a large force, consisting of more than 200,000 troops, would be required over a multi-year period to facilitate Iraq’s political transition. In February 2003, Gen. Eric K. Shinseki, an influential military official, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that several hundred thousand U.S. troops would be needed to govern post-war Iraq. Wolfowitz later disparaged the assessment referring to it as “wildly off the mark.”

The occupation force will likely be supplemented by an international stabilization force under the auspices of the U.S. occupation authority. The U.S. has already approached several pro-U.S. European countries about the possibility of contributing to such a force, including

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Denmark, Spain, Italy, Poland, Latvia, and Estonia. General Garner has supported Wolfowitz's contention concerning the size of the force and has indicated that the occupation will last no more than 4-5 months. Contrary to such optimistic appraisals, it will likely require 100,000-200,000 troops over a period of 5-10 years to achieve the stated U.S. objectives.

Under this framework the U.S. military would be responsible not only for governing postwar Iraq, but for distributing humanitarian aid and overseeing the country's reconstruction. The UN and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) would be largely relegated to an advisory role in the area of humanitarian relief. Similarly, prominent states such as Germany, France, Russia, and China would be, for the most part, frozen out of the reconstruction process.

The Pentagon would seek to pay for the occupation and rebuilding of Iraq with American tax dollars, aid from coalition powers, private sector investment, and Iraqi oil revenues. An American oil executive would be appointed to supervise Iraqi oil production, and the industry would be liberalized to allow U.S. companies to gain a dominant stake in it.

After order is established, authority would be incrementally transferred to an Iraqi interim government consisting primarily of Iraqi exile groups favored by the Pentagon. On April 15, 2003, the U.S. military convened a meeting of Iraqi opposition groups in the southern city of Nasiriyah to select an Iraqi leader to work alongside the occupation regime. The meeting, which assembled internal and external opposition factions, resulted in a 13 point plan of action beginning with the imperative that "Iraq must be democratic." Perhaps more important than the results of the meeting was the conspicuous absence of the two main Shi'a opposition groups, the Supreme Council for Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and *Da'wa Islamiyah* or Islamic Call. The two groups, which enjoy considerable grassroots support among Shi'ites in Iraq, boycotted the event to protest U.S. domination over the process. The ire of these groups as well as many other Iraqi opposition leaders has also been provoked by the Pentagon's promotion of exile groups such as the Iraqi National Congress (INC). Over the past two weeks the Pentagon has ferried members of the INC, including their controversial leader

Ahmed Chalabi, into Iraq so they can solidify their position in the country. Although Chalabi did not attend the Nasiriyah conference he is being touted by many Pentagon officials as the leader of the interim Iraqi administration.

Although Donald Rumsfeld and his fellow neoconservatives at the Pentagon resolutely believe that this strategy can achieve the stated U.S. objective of creating a democratic Iraq and would spark a democratic domino effect in the region, the model's only advantage is that the massive U.S. military presence it entails would fill the security vacuum left by the fall of the Ba'ath regime. Unfortunately, even this advantage is negated by the violent backlash in Iraq that a U.S. military presence would undoubtedly provoke, a reaction that has already begun to materialize in cities across the country.

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A number of factors make this model untenable. First, it ignores internal political dynamics in Iraq. The war has illustrated that although a large portion of the Iraqi populace may detest Saddam Hussein, the prospect of a U.S. military occupation is no more palatable. U.S. military and political leaders have continually underestimated the potency of Iraqi nationalism. Mounting civilian casualties coupled with

longstanding mistrust of the U.S. due to its pro-Israeli posture have stirred anti-American sentiment, creating a dangerous atmosphere for an occupying force. Unlike Afghanistan, where a large majority of the population welcomed the arrival of American soldiers after the fall of the Taliban, Iraqis will likely remain suspicious and hostile. A report by the U.S. Army's War College entitled *Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario* aptly warns that although the occupation "will probably be characterized by an initial honeymoon period during which the U.S. will reap the benefits of ridding the population of a brutal dictator," it is unlikely that this grace period will last very long, as "most Iraqis and most Arabs will probably assume that the U.S. intervened in Iraq for its own purposes." The jubilation of the Iraqi people immediately after the fall of Baghdad, marked by poignant images of Iraqis celebrating atop the ruined symbols of the Ba'athist regime, should not be misinterpreted as an endorsement of a continued U.S. presence. Once the reality of occupation sets in, the euphoric mood of the Iraqi people will likely shift to suspicion. The chants at a 150-person-strong demon-

stration protesting the U.S.-sponsored meeting of Iraqi opposition leaders in Nasiriyah, which included slogans such as “no to Saddam and no to America” and “no to occupation,” clearly demonstrate growing Iraqi unease over the U.S. presence.

Demonstrators outside the conference expressed concern that the Nasiriyah meeting was not representative of the Iraqi population. Many Iraqi leaders who traveled to the venue to participate in the conference were denied entry by the United States. A member of the outlawed communist party who was turned away at the gates of the conference by U.S. soldiers said “It can’t represent the political and social parties and movements inside the country, and I can prove it because nobody from the inside opposition is attending the conference.” The U.S. refusal to divulge the names of those who attended the event, another example of the Pentagon’s secretive approach to the reconstruction process, has done little to assuage the fears of Iraqis. The U.S. “announced that all the opposition parties could attend the conference, but only those supported by them attended” one Shi’a leader complained.

The unwillingness of Shi’ite groups, who represent more than 60% of the population of Iraq, to cooperate with the U.S.-supported political process will obstruct the reconstruction process and complicate U.S. efforts to erect a legitimate transitional administration. According to A. William Saami, a Middle East expert for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “U.S. officials don’t have a lot of traction in the Shi’ite community in Iraq... this is going to get worse before it gets better.”

Most Iraqi exile leaders, even those closely associated with Washington, have summarily rejected the prospect of a long-term American military presence. At a recent conference of prominent Iraqi dissidents in London, a respected former Iraqi foreign minister, Adnan Pachachi, stated that “Iraqis will not accept foreign occupation of their country.” Pachachi is one of many exiles calling for a UN-led transitional authority with an independent Iraqi executive composed of internal opposition figures and exiles. Sayed Mohammed Baqer Al-Hakim, the founder of SCIRI, delivered a more ominous warning in a recent interview to the Egyptian publication *Al-Ahram Weekly*. He declared:

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We will not accept an American military ruler in Iraq when there should be a national government representing all of Iraq’s political forces. Any other arrangement will have grave consequences for the Americans, because Iraqis are a dignified people who will not accept foreign rule under any circumstances. I cannot stress enough that the Americans would be committing a grave mistake. (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, April 3-9, 2003)

Even the U.S.-funded INC, led by the charismatic yet controversial Iraqi exile Ahmed Chalabi, has argued against a prolonged U.S. occupation. In late March, an INC spokesperson stated bluntly that “no Americans should run Iraqi ministries.” The INC favors the creation of a provisional government led by Chalabi. The Pentagon has assured Chalabi a role in the occupation government but has not specified what form it would take.

Iraqi aversion to U.S. occupation is ubiquitous and has been channeled into intensifying demonstrations and civil unrest.

On April 18, 2003, after Friday prayers, tens of thousands of Iraqis joined in a demonstration demanding U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. The organizers of the demonstration, the largest since the U.S. capture of Baghdad, called themselves the Iraqi National Movement and claimed to represent both Shi’ites and Sunnis.

It is unlikely that the Iraqi people will accept Chalabi as a legitimate leader, particularly if he is installed by an American occupation force. He has not lived in Iraq since 1956, apart from a short period of organizing resistance in the Kurdish North in the 1990s, and has very little popular support inside the country. “Chalabi left Iraq years ago. He doesn’t know how the Iraqi people think and live” a former anti-Saddam Hussein activist told a reporter of the *Christian Science Monitor*. Chalabi has been the darling of the Pentagon since 1998, when Congress, at the request of the DoD, allocated \$97 million to the INC to organize the anti-Saddam Hussein resistance. The INC was the only group that received U.S. funding for this purpose. Convicted (in absentia) for fraud by a Jordanian court regarding his business dealings as chairman of the Petra Bank of Jordan, Chalabi’s character and integrity have been repeatedly brought into question. Kanan Makiya, a professor of Middle East Studies at Brandeis University and an Iraqi dissident, succinctly expressed the concerns of many Iraqis over the appointment of U.S. clients such

as Chalabi by stating that the U.S. “cannot and should not work through Iraqi-American amateurs with no real inside experience of the country, bypassing those elements of Iraqi society that have struggled for years and paid a heavy price.” Yet, it seems unlikely that the Pentagon will heed such warnings. According to one U.S. government official: “The Pentagon keeps pushing ahead—they’ve been relentless in their pursuit of a policy, which is to take these guys from the outside, led by Chalabi, and make them the next government of Iraq.”

On April 16, 2003, U.S. Special Forces escorted Ahmed Chalabi and members of the Free Iraqi Forces (FIF), the military wing of the INC, into Baghdad. The move was ostensibly made to help fill the security vacuum and establish the roots of a nascent Iraqi security force, but, in actuality, its purpose was to bolster the INC’s bid for the country’s leadership.

The U.S. neoconservative plan fails to adequately take into account regional resistance to a U.S. occupation. Tension between the U.S. and the Arab world—already high due to America’s support of Israel, the ongoing war on terror, and the Iraq war—will overflow if a long-term occupation of Iraq is instituted. An occupation will spark widespread resistance among the Iraqis and could conceivably stimulate an upsurge of support for terrorist activity throughout the region. Oil, in the eyes of many Arabs, will be the test that reveals Washington’s true long-term intentions. As a former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia has stated, oil “has become the symbol of colonial power, which all the countries of the region have experience with.” U.S. efforts to aggressively assert control over the Iraqi oil industry would confirm the belief harbored by many Arabs that the U.S. has imperialist designs on the Middle East. If such a scenario unfolds, the apocalyptic warnings of Egyptian President Mubarak, that the U.S. war will produce “one hundred bin Ladens,” and that of Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa, that the war will open the “gates of hell,” may yet come to pass.

The war, which has already killed thousands of Iraqi soldiers and civilians, has awakened and radicalized the Arab world. Joseph Cirincione, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, has astutely recognized that although the battle scenes beamed to the

U.S. public by the likes of CNN make the war appear noble and heroic, “in the Arab world, it looks like a slaughter.” According to Cirincione, “the American public does not understand the level of hatred growing in the Muslim world as a result of this war.” This antipathy would only be amplified by an occupation, which could come to be viewed as an attack on Islam that must be universally resisted. Moscow’s experience in Afghanistan, which resulted in the ignominious withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989, illustrates the power of such perceptions to rally and unite the Arab and Muslim worlds.

The economic and material costs of any unilateral enterprise could also make it prohibitive in the long term.

Reconstructing Iraq will likely cost up to \$25 billion per year over a five-year span. Coupled with the cost of maintaining troops in the country, estimated by the Pentagon to be \$2 billion a month, it is clear that this is a burden that Washington will be reluctant to incur without external support. Contrary to reassurances offered to beleaguered U.S. taxpayers, the Iraqi oil industry, whose infrastructure has been

severely degraded by a decade of sanctions and war, will only cover a small portion of the costs of reconstruction. It is estimated that Iraqi oil will be capable of generating \$14-16 billion per year in revenue after the war.

Complicating Iraq’s economic situation, described by one economist as “a basket case,” are its external debts and reparations. Iraq’s external debt amounts to more than \$100 billion and the compensation claims lodged against Baghdad from the 1990-91 Gulf War total more than \$200 million. “Unless debt and reparations are dealt with properly, Iraq is basically bankrupt,” according to Rubar Sandi, an Iraqi-American investment banker. The country will require an aid and debt relief program as ambitious as the Marshall Plan, if it is to overcome these economic obstacles.

Recognizing the dangers of a prolonged occupation, 52% of Americans have indicated that the UN should be in charge of governing a postwar Iraq, according to a poll conducted by the University of Maryland’s Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA). However, with the military directing the humanitarian and reconstruction operation, there is little chance that the UN will be involved on a significant scale. Mark Malloch Brown,

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head of the UN Development Program (UNDP), has made it clear that UN aid workers would not serve as sub-contractors for the U.S. military. “It’s not a mission where we can subordinate to military occupiers,” Malloch Brown recently stated. He and other leaders of aid agencies have urged the U.S. to hand over the humanitarian operation to a UN coordinator. “To have the UN in charge would not only use its expertise to the fullest, but it would allow a broader multilateral coalition,” said Kenneth Bacon, president of Refugees International.

In practice, the U.S. military has very little experience in delivering humanitarian aid on such a large scale. According to InterAction, a coalition of 160 U.S. humanitarian aid groups, it “would be the first time the American military has been in direct control of relief operations.” The group has criticized the DoD’s dominance of the reconstruction agenda, arguing that it “complicates (InterAction’s) ability to help the Iraqi people and multiplies the dangers faced by relief workers in the field.”

A multilateral approach that would share the costs associated with reconstruction would be very difficult to achieve under the neoconservative model. European governments, in particular, have openly declared their unwillingness to support a reconstruction agenda dictated by the United States. “A UN resolution will be a prerequisite for the full involvement of the EU in the postwar reconstruction (of Iraq),” Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreou told reporters after a meeting of European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ministers in Brussels. Arab states have joined the EU in advising against a U.S. occupation, and vital regional players such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Egypt have ruled out any involvement in a U.S.-dominated reconstruction process. “Help the U.S. rebuild Iraq? No. Any attempt to impose a regime in Iraq is not seen as a welcome step in this part of the world right now,” declared Nbil Osman, a spokesman for Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Expressing similar sentiments, Iranian president Mohammad Khatami has warned that Tehran would “not recognize any administration other than an all Iraqi government.” Regional and international support is essential to establishing a sustainable government in Iraq; without it, pursuing reconstruction would be like swimming against a strong current.

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The neoconservative postwar model has aroused consternation not only internationally but also within the U.S. government. The U.S. State Department and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) have expressed their suspicions about Chalabi and have vehemently protested the Pentagon’s strict control over postwar planning. Congress has stepped into the fray, rewriting President Bush’s emergency request for \$2.5 billion in reconstruction assistance and barring the money from going to the Pentagon. The House of Representatives has been especially adamant that the money must go to the State Department. “The secretary of state is the appropriate manager of foreign assistance and is so designated by law,” emphasized Rep. Jim Kolbe (R-AZ), a member of the House Appropriations Committee. Despite this controversy, it is widely believed that President Bush will use his influence to give the Pentagon full control, raising the prospect that the U.S. neoconservative model will ultimately prevail.

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Afghan Model

The second model that could emerge in postwar Iraq can be referred to as the Afghan model, because it would resemble in many respects the UN-led system implemented in post-Taliban Afghanistan. In March 2003, a UN task force under the leadership of Rafeudin Ahmed, a former UN Assistant Secretary-General recently appointed as special envoy of the United Nations secretary-general to Iraq, submitted a report to UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette outlining recommendations for UN action in postwar Iraq. The 60-page report was rooted in the premise that “the people of Iraq, rather than the international community, should determine national government structures, a legal framework, and governance arrangements.”

Under the Afghan model, after a brief military occupation, perhaps lasting 90 days, a UN Assistance Mission, like the one established in Afghanistan, would be mandated by the UN Security Council to steer Iraq toward democracy and to coordinate humanitarian and relief activities. A UN approach has been widely endorsed internationally by members of the U.S.-led military coalition Britain and Australia, as well as by the EU, Russian, China, Japan, and the Arab League.

Along with the establishment of a UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), the UN would convene a conference to select an interim Iraqi government. Similar to the Bonn Conference held shortly after the fall of the Taliban, such a gathering would assemble important internal and external opposition figures and groups. The meeting would exclude all political figures perceived to have been tainted by the Saddam Hussein regime. UNAMI would assist the nascent Iraqi administration in governing the country and coordinating the work of UN agencies and NGOs, who would be responsible for the bulk of relief and recovery duties. Control over the Iraqi oil industry would be placed under the jurisdiction of the Iraqi interim government, with the UN and the U.S. jointly retaining an authoritative advisory role. After an interim period of up to two years, during which a Constitution would be drafted through an open and consensual process, UN-monitored elections would be held to choose a broadly democratic government.

The U.S. would retain a military presence, not exceeding 20,000 soldiers, during the interim period before democratic elections were held and a national army was rebuilt. The U.S. troops would be supplemented by a UN-mandated peacekeeping force similar to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The primary U.S. role under this model would be to secure vital resources such as the oil fields, to avert the breakup of the country along ethnic lines, and to prevent regional states from interfering in Iraqi internal affairs. Like in Afghanistan, U.S. influence over the newly established government and the reconstruction process would be strong but integrated into a multilateral framework and orchestrated from behind the scenes.

The principal advantage of this model, in which the UN has a pronounced leadership role, is that it would confer a degree of legitimacy on the political transition and reconstruction process that would be lacking in the U.S. neo-conservative approach. The humanitarian crisis would be more efficiently and effectively addressed under UN stewardship than if it were directed by the U.S. military, which has very little experience in managing large-scale relief operations. Also, awarding the mandate for reconstruction of postwar Iraq to the UN would be a major step toward healing the rifts between Europe and America and would ameliorate some of the damage done to the UN's credibility preceding the war.

The Afghan model also has several drawbacks. "Iraq is not East Timor, Kosovo, or Afghanistan," U.S. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice recently admonished. "Iraq is unique" and requires a different approach, she added. While this appraisal is simplistic and ignores a number of striking similarities, at its core it is accurate. In contrast to Afghanistan, which is largely rural, lacks significant natural resources, and has a population that is predominantly supportive of U.S. engagement—although this is rapidly changing—Iraq is a highly urbanized, resource-rich society with a distinctly anti-American disposition. Apart from questions of the suitability of the Afghan model in the Iraqi context, its effectiveness in addressing the needs of Afghanistan has been challenged by a recent upsurge of insecurity. The slow pace of devel-

opment and security sector reform in Afghanistan currently threatens to undermine the Afghan reconstruction process, which is hardly an endorsement of this model for post-conflict Iraqi governance.

Another problem with the Afghan model concerns security. Since the Iraqi army was so intricately entwined with the Ba'ath Party apparatus, it must be totally dismantled and recreated in

the postwar period. Thus, if the U.S. significantly scales down its military presence, a security vacuum will emerge. A large-scale peacekeeping operation will be needed to fill that security vacuum, even if the U.S. retains a force of up to 20,000 troops in Iraq. Under such conditions, UN, NGO, and military personnel would be dangerously exposed to any violent backlash that may occur. As in Afghanistan, a failure to adequately address insecurity can cripple reconstruction efforts. The lack of a strong military presence could also encourage one or more neighboring states such as Iran, Turkey, or Saudi Arabia to intervene in Iraq, raising the prospect of the country's Balkanization.

Perhaps the most profound problem besetting the Afghan model relates to the precedent it would set. If the UN is given the responsibility of leading the postwar reconstruction effort, it may be implied that states can defy international legal norms without repercussions. By engaging in post-conflict reconstruction, the UN would, in effect, legitimize the U.S. decision to flout the authority of the Security Council, thus seriously eroding the UN's authority.

The consequences of the neoconservative, unilateralist approach, if it is implemented, will be multifaceted and far-reaching. Winning the peace with such a strategy will be long and costly, maybe impossible.

Iraqi Exile Model

The exile model of governance is advocated by numerous Iraqi dissidents and opposition groups and involves a more rapid shift of control to an Iraqi indigenous government and an accelerated democratization process. Under this framework, the UN and international NGOs would serve in an advisory role, spearheading humanitarian and relief operations, while regional and international donor states contribute economic aid and support. U.S. military forces would withdraw, except for a token force, and would have a negligible influence on the emerging government. Opposition militias, such as the Kurdish *Peshmerga*, along with the remaining U.S. forces and a small contingent of UN peacekeepers would provide security. An interim government would be established, consisting of a coalition of opposition groups from inside and outside the country. A de-Ba'athification process would be carried out, and democratic elections would be held within six months. The oil industry might be liberalized to a certain degree, allowing direct foreign investment, but all external involvement would be regulated by the Iraqi government.

Such a model is simply not feasible. The Iraqi opposition is too amorphous and fragmented to be the driving force behind such radical and comprehensive change. The absence of a large U.S. or international military presence would leave a dangerous security vacuum that elements of the previous regime and other extremist groups would likely exploit. Subnational groups, such as the Kurds, Turkomons, and Shi'a, along with regional states, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, would likely take advantage of the central government's initial weakness to pursue their narrow interests in the country.

Minimalist Model

In a worst-case scenario, the imposing cost of reconstruction coupled with the potential for violent unrest may prompt the U.S. to implement a minimalist postwar reconstruction strategy. The objective of such a strategy would be to stabilize the country and secure America's vital interests, including the disarmament of the regime

and the safeguarding of oil wells, at a minimum material and human cost. This could involve establishing a client government in Baghdad, maintaining a semi-permanent military presence in oil producing areas, permitting limited Turkish intervention in the North, and allowing regional autonomy along ethnic lines across the country. A similar situation has materialized in Afghanistan, where the U.S. has installed a client government in Kabul, regional warlords hold sway in the provinces, a blind eye is turned to the interference of regional states such as Pakistan, and a modest U.S. military presence is maintained to pursue regional interests, such as the continuing hunt for the remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

The UN and international donors would be confined to a humanitarian role under a minimalist model. The central government would be composed almost entirely of exile groups closely associated with Washington, such as the INC. However, it is also possible that the U.S. would

tolerate the presence of Ba'athist figures as long as they displayed loyalty and agreed not to interfere with U.S. strategic interests. The willingness of the U.S. to tolerate figures associated to the Ba'athist regime has already been illustrated in Washington's decision to employ former Iraqi police officers and bureaucratic officials in Baghdad and Basra. While it is unavoidable that some elements of the previous regime will survive the political transition, it is destabilizing and counterproductive in terms of building public confidence to allow figures who were intimately

involved in the Ba'athist apparatus of repression to secure positions in the new regime.

This model would be disastrous for Iraq and the Middle East. Anti-American feeling and unrest would grow throughout the region, threatening pro-Western regimes and prompting interethnic turmoil in Iraq. A security vacuum would emerge across the country, depriving the central government of any authority outside the capital. Under such conditions a democratic transition would be virtually impossible, and reconstruction would falter.

The UN is best prepared to confront the massive humanitarian and political challenges that lie ahead for Iraq. This does not obviate the need for U.S. involvement; quite the contrary, U.S. engagement, on a political, economic, and military level, is vital for the success of this enterprise.

Likely Model

There are strong indications that the U.S. neoconservative model, perhaps including elements of the Afghan model, will be implemented in postwar Iraq. It is unclear what impact the pleas of Tony Blair, Kofi Annan, and much of the international community in favor of a UN approach have had in Washington, but considering the Bush administration's current aversion to the UN, such pleas will have little effect. Although President Bush has promised that the UN will play "a vital role" in postwar Iraq, this will likely be limited to humanitarian relief and assistance, a position that the UN will find difficult to embrace in the context of a U.S. occupation.

Although Condoleezza Rice has proclaimed that the U.S. "will leave Iraq completely in the hands of Iraqis as soon as possible," actions on the ground seem to contradict such rhetoric. The consequences of the neoconservative, unilateralist approach, if it is implemented, will be multifaceted and far-reaching. Winning the peace with such a strategy will be long and costly, maybe impossible. It will ignite unrest in Iraq and arouse the anti-American passions of the entire Muslim world, creating a fertile ground for terrorism. The long-term reverberations unleashed by such a policy will leave no nation in the region, and perhaps the world, untouched.

In spite of the failings of the Afghan model, as illustrated by the sharp deterioration of security in Afghanistan since the beginning of 2003, the UN provides the most effective mechanism to infuse the postwar order with a semblance of legitimacy and thus minimize the potential for a violent backlash from the population. It is under-

standable that the U.S.-led coalition, having borne the costs and risks of prosecuting the Iraq war, will want to have a central role in forging the postwar dispensation. Establishing a multilateral framework does not prevent the U.S. from exerting such influence. In Afghanistan, the U.S. has wielded more influence than any other party over the fledgling Afghan government, which is viewed in many quarters as a client of Washington.

The UN is best prepared to confront the massive humanitarian and political challenges that lie ahead for Iraq. This does not obviate the need for U.S. involvement; quite the contrary, U.S. engagement, on a political, economic, and military level, is vital for the success of this enterprise. Reconstructing Iraq will be a long and costly effort that would be difficult for any country, even a superpower, to accomplish alone. America's interests will not be served by transforming Iraq into a protectorate; this would only create instability in Iraq and exacerbate tensions along broader regional fault lines. If, as the Bush administration asserts, the primary goal of U.S. policy in postwar Iraq is to create a democratic system, then ceding authority over the reconstruction process to the UN would be the most effective approach to take. The televised conventional war may be over, but the question of whether hostilities will continue depends on the actions taken by the U.S. in the weeks and months ahead.

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