

Iraq After War: The Challenge of Securing the Peace

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One year after the war in Iraq, critical questions about Iraq’s future remain. An important debate continues in the United States and abroad about how the post-war period in Iraq should be handled, who should be in charge, and what the goals should be. What follows is a framework of policy “Options” that frame the current debate. They are designed to help you think about a range of possible policy options and the ramifications of each.

The four options provided are not intended as a menu of choices. Rather, they are framed in stark terms to highlight very different policy approaches. Each option includes a set of criticisms against it. These are designed to help you think carefully about the trade-offs of each.

After you have had a chance to consider each of the options presented, we encourage you to articulate your own considered judgment on this issue. You may want to borrow heavily from one of the options presented, combine ideas from several, or take a new approach altogether. As you frame your “Option 5,” think about the following questions:

- What U.S. interests are at stake in this issue?
- What is the history of U.S. relations with Iraq? With the Arab world?
- How is the rebuilding effort perceived by the various groups in Iraq? By the Arab world? By our western allies? By other parts of the world?
- How important should the welfare of the Iraqi population be in determining U.S. policy?
- What effect does U.S. policy toward Iraq have on the war on terrorism? On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
- What bearing does this issue have on our relations with other rogue states with/without weapons of mass destruction?
- What steps should the United States take in the coming weeks and months?
- What should our long-term goals be?
- What values are important to you?
- What are the pros and cons of this option?

OPTION 1 — The U.S. should take advantage of the opportunity before us to rebuild Iraq in a way that protects our interests.

Iraq is free of Saddam Hussein’s brutality and the world is free of the threat posed by his weapons of mass destruction. When the world community was unwilling to deal effectively with this threat, we took the lead and brought together a “coalition of the willing.” But make no mistake, this was a U.S.-led and almost completely U.S. financed operation. We won the war. We have earned the right to rebuild Iraq in a way that reflects our national security interests. Today, disorder and uncertainty characterize post-war Iraq. In an effort to bring order to Iraq, we must exert control over all security, intelligence, and infrastructure. We must continue our all-out effort to find Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction and destroy them. If there is reason to believe that former Iraqi leaders have seeped into nearby countries such as Syria or Iran, we should pursue them there as well. After determining who is a threat and who is not, we should engage Iraqis in the public service positions they formerly held in order to get the country up and running again. We should reconstitute Iraq’s police and security forces. For the foreseeable future, these forces must be under U.S. control. We should provide immediate access to medical supplies and restore health care facilities in order to address the public health needs of war-torn Iraq. We should determine quickly the country’s infrastructure needs and award contracts for rebuilding Iraq to those whom we trust—predominantly American companies. It is of paramount importance that we rebuild Iraq’s oil industry in order to pay for reconstruction in Iraq and ensure a steady supply of oil to world markets. Finally, we should install Iraqi leadership in Iraq as quickly as possible—leadership we can trust. Stability in this troubled region is a national security issue for the United States and we have no choice but to control the rebuilding of a stable Iraq.

Underlying Beliefs

- As the driving force in the war with Iraq, we have the right to determine the peace.
- Only strong U.S. leadership can create a stable Iraq that is not a threat to our interests.
- The United States has the right to take the initiative to eliminate tyrants who threaten us or the rest of the world.

Goals

- Protect U.S. economic and security interests in the region.
- Ensure that no weapons of mass destruction from Saddam Hussein’s Iraq can get into the hands of our enemies—either other states or terrorists.
- Demonstrate to other rogue states that we do not intend to allow them to threaten U.S. interests.

U.S. Policies to Achieve these Goals

- Find and destroy any Iraqi weapons of mass destruction that still exist.
- Assess infrastructure needs and award contracts to American companies to oversee the rebuilding effort.
- Encourage the United Nations to stay out of our way so that we can rebuild Iraq as we determine necessary.
- Restart Iraq’s oil industry in order to pay for reconstruction efforts and ensure a steady flow of Iraqi oil to world markets.
- Hunt down and prosecute criminals from the former Iraqi government.
- Identify leaders whom we can trust and then provide support to help them gain control of the country.

Arguments Against

- Insisting upon control of the rebuilding process in Iraq demonstrates American unilateralism and fans the flames of anti-Americanism in Iraq, in the region, and around the world.
- If the U.S. takes control of rebuilding efforts in Iraq we will be viewed as occupiers and this will undermine any U.S. efforts at democratization in the region.
- If we choose to control and profit from the rebuilding effort in Iraq it will lend credence to the arguments of those who accuse us of imperialism in the region and will leave us with no credibility in any kind of peace initiative in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- When we decided not to present a second resolution to the UN Security Council and announced in early March that we would go to war without UN support, we created a rift between ourselves and the UN. If we do not cooperate with the UN and the international community in the rebuilding effort, we will be further isolating ourselves.
- If we are not team players in the rebuilding of Iraq we will be straining relationships that are needed for the war on terrorism.

OPTION 2 — The U.S. should rebuild Iraq and establish a democracy there as part of a strategy for sustainable peace in the Middle East.

The war with Iraq is over and Saddam Hussein is no longer in power. The people of Iraq are now free of the tyranny of Saddam Hussein and the region and the world are free of the threat of his regime's acts of aggression and destructiveness. As the leaders of the coalition to liberate Iraq, it is now our responsibility to follow through with our commitment to help the Iraqi people build the institutions of democracy. Disorder and uncertainty characterize post-war Iraq. It is a country of competing factions and lacks any history of democracy. Regional leaders are already vying for leadership. Building democracy in Iraq will not be easy, but our experiences in post-war Japan and Germany prove that democracies can be built. We must focus first on establishing order and getting the rebuilding process moving forward. After determining who is a threat and who is not, we should put as much control as we can in the hands of Iraqis and help them to get the public service sector up and running again. We must provide the necessary assistance to Iraqis to rebuild their oil industry as this will be a key source of ongoing funding for the reconstruction effort in Iraq. We must work with Iraq's emerging new leadership to find and dismantle anything that remains of Saddam Hussein's biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons programs. Finally, for democracy to be sustainable, we must assist the development of civil society over the long term and help the different groups in Iraqi society to overcome ethnic, religious, and other differences. As soon as feasible, we should support free and fair elections. An American presence is likely to be needed for many years. The price will be high but the goal is worth the cost. A democratic and prosperous Iraq will be a model for the rest of the Middle East and ultimately a trusted partner of the United States.

Underlying Beliefs

- We fought the war with Iraq in order to free the Iraqi people of Saddam Hussein's brutality and establish democracy in a place where tyranny has reigned for decades. It is our responsibility to follow through with the process of democratization in Iraq.
- Only strong U.S. leadership can create an Iraq that is stable, prosperous, and democratic.
- With enough support, democracy can happen anywhere. A free and democratic Iraq in the middle of the Arab world is a treasure worth paying for.

Goals

- Demonstrate our commitment to democracy and a better life for the people of Iraq.
- Establish a democracy in Iraq and use this as a foundation for the spread of democracy throughout the Middle East.
- Ensure that whatever remains of Saddam Hussein's biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons programs is found and dismantled.
- Position the United States to be able to play a leadership role in settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict even-handedly.

U.S. Policies to Achieve these Goals

- Reconstitute and train the Iraqi police force in the principles of democratic policing .
- Work with the emerging Iraqi government to locate and dismantle whatever remains of Saddam Hussein's biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons programs in accordance with previous UN resolutions.
- Provide the resources to help Iraqis restart their oil industry as quickly as possible so that the funds from this can be used to rebuild their country.
- Provide assistance to and cooperate with those Iraqis committed to realizing democratic ideals, by supporting constitutional reform, rule of law initiatives, institution building and civil society.
- Help the Iraqis to redesign the curriculum for their schools so that students learn to be participants in a democracy.

Arguments Against

- If the U.S. is going to decide what kind of government should be established in post-war Iraq, we will be viewed as occupiers and vulnerable to claims of imperialism. Unilateral U.S. actions, even for an admirable cause like establishing democracy, will fan the flames of anti-Americanism in the region.
- Investing heavily in democracy-building in Iraq may disrupt longstanding Iraqi authority structures and provoke violence against U.S. troops or turn Iraqis against other Iraqis.
- Rebuilding Iraq and establishing a democracy there will be a costly, long-term commitment with no promises of success. We can't afford it.
- By going to war against Iraq without the support of the UN, we have created a rift between ourselves and our European allies. If we are not going to further isolate ourselves from the international community, we need to work with the UN to help Iraqis rebuild their society and establish the form of government that they choose.
- By taking the lead in post-war Iraq we will be straining relationships with countries whose cooperation we need for the war on terrorism.

OPTION 3 — The U.S. should throw its support behind the UN as the legitimate international body to oversee the rebuilding of Iraq.

Saddam Hussein has now been deposed. Yet most Iraqis, even those who hated Saddam Hussein, do not trust the motives of the United States and are fearful of a U.S. occupation force in Iraq. This is a fear that is shared by many others in the region and beyond. The United Nations must take the lead in Iraq. They and they alone will have the international legitimacy to carry out the difficult tasks of rebuilding Iraq. For rebuilding efforts to succeed, the U.S. must cooperate with the UN and put its economic and security resources behind this effort. The United States should collaborate with the UN to replace U.S. troops with UN peacekeepers as quickly as possible. Until order can be restored, infrastructure rebuilt, and legitimate Iraqi leadership identified, the UN should be supported as the legitimate force to take over as the civil authority in Iraq. The UN must also take charge

of efforts to find and dismantle Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Any effort led by the U.S. will not be trusted in the climate of post-war Iraq. We should support the return of UN weapons inspectors to lead this effort. Although the U.S. lacks legitimacy as a leader in the rebuilding effort, we are the only body with the economic and military strength to effectively support a UN-led effort of this magnitude. Only by serving in a supporting role to the UN can the United States escape the label of "imperialist power" and demonstrate we believe in cooperation on the world stage. Together, the UN with the active support of the U.S. can demonstrate to skeptics in the Arab world that the interests of the Iraqi people will be heard and that the international community is committed to the creation of a society that reflects the will of the Iraqi people.

Underlying Beliefs

- International cooperation under the auspices of the UN is the only way to ensure international legitimacy for rebuilding Iraq after war.
- As the nation that led the way to war with Iraq, we have a responsibility to invest resources in the rebuilding effort.
- Security is increased through international cooperation. Insisting upon doing things our way will only alienate others and ultimately make us less secure.

Goals

- Avoid the costs and consequences of an American occupation of Iraq.
- Restore the governance of Iraq to the people of Iraq as soon as possible.
- Ensure that any biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons programs developed under Saddam Hussein are identified and dismantled in accordance with UN resolutions.
- Strengthen regional and international cooperation on security issues.

U.S. Policies to Achieve these Goals

- Support the installation of UN civil authority in Iraq.
- Support efforts to bring UN weapons inspectors back into Iraq.
- Commit U.S. economic and security resources to a UN-led effort to rebuild Iraq.
- Cooperate fully with the UN Security Council in making policy about the future of Iraq.
- Support the use of the UN oil for food program to help finance post-war programs in Iraq.
- Make the transition as quickly as possible from U.S. combat forces to a multinational peacekeeping force.
- Support UN efforts to assist the Iraqi people in drafting their new constitution.

Arguments Against

- The UN is slow and ineffective and cannot act quickly enough to alleviate the suffering in Iraq. The U.S. is there and has the ability to act quickly.
- We do not need UN weapons inspectors getting in the way of our efforts to find and dismantle Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. The politics and bureaucracy of the UN will only slow the process down.
- If the UN is in charge and we are contributing, we could find ourselves footing most of the bill for policies and programs that run counter to our own interests.
- If the UN is in charge there are no guarantees that democracy will be built because, as an international body with membership from all kinds of nations, the UN has never expressed an interest in this.
- Other UN members (such as France and Russia) want the UN involved in the rebuilding of Iraq in order to ensure that they realize some of the economic gain from the effort. They were unwilling to take the risks associated with the war; why should they reap the benefits?

OPTION 4 — The U.S. should step back from any leadership in the region and encourage others to help Iraq rebuild.

Saddam Hussein is no longer in power. We can stop worrying about weapons of mass destruction in his hands. Now it's time to encourage others in the international community to take over the leadership role in Iraq while we bring our troops home safely and refocus our attention on our faltering economy and our own security at home. Our policies in the Middle East have fanned hatred of the United States and increased our vulnerability to more terrorism. As the attacks of September 11, 2001 demonstrated, our high-profile foreign policy programs have bred resentment against us and created enemies who are intent on doing us harm. We must remember that we still face the threat of new terrorist attacks. Additionally, by remaining in post-war Iraq our troops become vulnerable to reprisals from individual terrorists and angry Iraqis. We could lose more troops in the peacekeeping phase than we did during the war. We must step back from any leadership role in Iraq—whether on our own or through the UN. Let others take responsibility for maintaining stability in this troubled region. The huge quantity of resources needed to rebuild Iraq could be better used here at home, particularly for homeland security and our faltering economy. We should bring our troops home and turn our attention to our own needs.

Underlying Beliefs

- We fought the war because our economic and security interests were threatened by Saddam Hussein and his weapons of mass destruction. Remaining in Iraq now, however, runs counter to our security interests.
- We have so many needs here at home that we cannot afford to expend our resources in other areas of the world.
- Meddling in the affairs of other nations and peoples inevitably creates resentment against us and makes us less secure as a nation.

Goals

- Reduce our visibility and military presence in the region to avoid becoming a target of further terrorism and violence.
- Bring our troops in Iraq home safely.
- Focus our attention and resources on the ailing U.S. economy.

U.S. Policies to Achieve these Goals

- Begin procedures to bring troops home from Iraq and surrounding countries.
- Reduce our dependence on Middle East oil by encouraging American oil companies to invest elsewhere and by promoting alternative sources of energy and energy conservation.
- Scale back our involvement in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- Redirect our resources to address economic and security needs here at home.

Arguments Against

- Leaving Iraq at this moment, without a civil authority in control, will allow Iran and Syria—two nations that sponsor terrorism—to step into the vacuum and create a regime that is hostile to the United States.
- Poverty and disorder, left unaddressed, will be a breeding ground for further terrorism. As the ones who led the war on Iraq, the United States will be the focus of this.
- We have risked American lives and gone to tremendous expense to rid the world of Saddam Hussein and make room for democracy to take root in Iraq. If we leave now the opportunity to establish democracy in the heart of the Middle East will be lost.

- Having damaged Iraq's infrastructure and thrown out its government, we have a moral obligation to rebuild the country. The international community does not have the resources or desire to rebuild Iraq in the absence of U.S. involvement.
- Oil is a security concern. If we abandon Iraq now and leave the reconstruction to others, our access to oil from this region will be at the mercy of the international community.