

Iraq: The Challenge of Securing the Peace

“Iraq: The Challenge of Securing the Peace” is a Teaching with the News online resource published by the Choices Program at Brown University in September 2004 and revised in March 2005. It was replaced in spring 2006. Online resources are updated frequently.

Readings, Extension Activities & Additional Web Links for Teaching with the News resources are available from the Resources section of the Choices Program web site.

www.choices.edu/resources

Copyright - Choices for the 21st Century Education Program, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University All rights reserved. Permission is granted to photocopy for classroom use. Information on this and other resources from the Choices Program is available online at www.choices.edu.

OPTION 1 – Build a stable Iraq to protect U.S. interests.

Iraq is free of Saddam Hussein’s brutality and the world is free of the threat posed by this ruthless dictator. Yet a post-war Iraq that continues to be dominated by chaos poses a security threat to the United States. The lack of order in Iraq creates space in which terrorism and anti-Americanism can flourish. With thousands of U.S. soldiers stationed across the Middle East, we cannot afford to lose an area as significant as Iraq to extremism. When the world community was unwilling to deal effectively with the threat of Iraq, we took the lead. While important international partners joined us in the war against Saddam Hussein, this was nonetheless a U.S.-led and almost completely U.S.-financed operation. We have earned the right to rebuild Iraq in a way that reflects our national security interests. The recent elections in Iraq are an important step toward stability. They would not have happened without U.S. leadership. Likewise, the newly elected Iraqi government is not capable of establishing control alone. Order must be established and U.S. forces will be needed to do this. In the near term we must bring more U.S. forces into Iraq to exert control over all security, intelligence, and infrastructure. Although we should work with the new Iraqi government to develop and train Iraqi police and security forces as well as other public service officials, we cannot wait for them to develop the necessary capacity. We must act quickly and decisively to put down the continuing insurrection and regain control of Iraq. We must remain a presence in Iraq to ensure that no nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons programs can take root. We should continue to look to American companies to take the lead in rebuilding Iraq’s infrastructure. We should pay particular attention to rebuilding Iraq’s oil industry in order to pay for reconstruction in Iraq and ensure a steady supply of oil to world markets. To establish order in Iraq, we must address the public health, education, water, and sanitation needs of the country. Stability in this troubled region is a national security priority for the United States. We must control the rebuilding of a stable Iraq, even if it means distancing ourselves from the international community and alienating those in Iraq who may want to establish a form of government that will not serve U.S. interests.

Underlying Beliefs

As the driving force in the war with Iraq, we have the right to determine the nature of the peace.

Only strong U.S. leadership can create a stable Iraq that is not a threat to our interests.

We did the right thing in going to war in Iraq. The United States has the right to act preemptively to eliminate tyrants who threaten us or the rest of the world.

Goals

- Establish lasting order in Iraq in order to protect U.S. economic and security interests in the region and those of our friends and allies, especially Israel.
- Ensure a long-term U.S. presence in the new Iraq—or a relationship with any government that gets established there—so that we can monitor any growing security threats.
- Demonstrate to other rogue states that we do not intend to allow them to threaten U.S. interests with WMDs or terrorist tactics.

U.S. Policies to Achieve these Goals

- Increase U.S. troop strength in Iraq and then use this increased military force to defeat the insurgents in Iraq.
- Cultivate relationships with Iraqi officials whom we trust to support our interests.

Work with trusted Iraqi officials to see that American companies get first priority to oversee the rebuilding effort.

- Build up Iraq's oil industry in order to pay for reconstruction efforts and ensure a steady flow of Iraqi oil to world markets.
- Persuade the international community to join us in implementing our policies in Iraq. However, if their support is not forthcoming, this should not deter us from our mission.

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. This will only increase the risk of terrorism against us.
- Iraq's reconstruction efforts must be led by Iraqis. If the U.S. retains control of rebuilding efforts in Iraq we will continue to be viewed as occupiers and this will undermine any U.S. success in democratizing the region.
- When we decided to go to war in Iraq without the support of the UN and many of our traditional allies, we created a rift between ourselves and most of the international community. If we do not reverse this decision and cooperate now with the UN and the international community in the rebuilding effort, we will be further isolating ourselves and straining relationships that are needed for the war on terrorism.
- 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 colonialism or imperialism in the region and will leave us with little credibility in promoting a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- By insisting upon U.S. leadership in post-war Iraq we will be straining relationships with countries whose cooperation we need for the war on terrorism.
- As long as we remain in Iraq, Americans will continue to be killed.

OPTION 2 – Support UN leadership in post-war Iraq.

Saddam Hussein has been deposed, sovereignty—at least in name—has been restored to Iraq, and democratic elections have been held. However, chaos reigns. Just as the UN and other international institutions played an important role in the recent elections, so too international involvement will be needed to restore order and rebuild infrastructure. Most Iraqis, even those who hated Saddam Hussein, do not trust the motives of the United States and are fearful of U.S. domination in their affairs. This fear is shared by many others in the region and beyond. We must turn to the United Nations to take the lead in Iraq. They alone have the international legitimacy to carry out the difficult tasks of helping the Iraqi leadership to establish order, develop civil society, and rebuild the country.

We alienated the international community by going into Iraq before UN weapons inspectors had concluded their inspections. Now we know that the UN weapons inspectors were right; while Iraq did have aspirations of developing them, they did not have weapons of mass destruction. The UN was successful in stopping the program then; it is in the best position to take responsibility in the future. Although the U.S. lacks legitimacy as a leader in the rebuilding effort in Iraq, we are the only body with the economic and military strength to effectively support an international effort of this magnitude. For rebuilding efforts to succeed, the U.S. must cooperate with the UN and put the full force of its economic resources behind this effort. We should collaborate with the UN to replace U.S. troops with UN peacekeepers as quickly as possible and provide substantial support to this effort. Only by serving in a supporting role to the UN in Iraq can the United States escape the label of “Imperialist power” and demonstrate that we believe in cooperation on the world stage. By working together with the UN we 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 working with the Transitional National Assembly to create a society that reflects the will of the Iraqi people. We must cooperate with the UN, even if it means working through different processes or on different time frames than the United States alone would have chosen.

Underlying Beliefs

- International cooperation under the auspices of the UN is the only way to ensure international legitimacy for establishing democracy and rebuilding Iraq after war. Any efforts led by the U.S. will not be trusted in the climate of post-war Iraq.
- As the nation that led the way to war with Iraq, we have a responsibility to invest resources in the rebuilding effort. If we allocate those resources through the UN rather than trying to control it ourselves, our investment will have a better chance of success and more likelihood of attracting additional contributions.
- Security is increased through international cooperation. Insisting upon doing things our way will only alienate others and ultimately make us less secure.

Goals

- Establish order and support the development of stable governance in Iraq.
- Internationalize the effort to put Iraq back on its feet and avoid the costs and consequences of an American dominated rebuilding of Iraq.
- Strengthen regional and international cooperation on security issues.

U.S. Policies to Achieve these Goals

- Commit U.S. economic and security resources to a UN-led effort to rebuild Iraq.
- Demonstrate that we are prepared to turn over leadership in the rebuilding of Iraq to the international community.
- Make the transition as quickly as possible from U.S. combat forces to a multinational peacekeeping force.
- Cooperate fully with the UN Security Council in making policy about the future of Iraq.

Arguments Against

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.

The UN is slow and ineffective and cannot act quickly enough to alleviate the suffering and establish order in Iraq. The U.S. is there and has the ability to act quickly.

- 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?

- There is no indication that the UN as a whole is prepared to take on this responsibility. Many member states were opposed to the war in the first place, and the chaotic and violent nature of the present situation may entail more risk and cost than the UN can handle.
- It would be dangerous to step back from our involvement in the midst of the current chaos.

OPTION 3 –Work with the Iraqi government to rebuild Iraq and establish a democracy.

The war with Iraq is over, Saddam Hussein is no longer in power, and Iraq has succeeded in holding its first free general election in fifty years. The Iraqis who voted took a brave step towards building the democratic state they desire. However, democracy has not yet taken root. Disorder and chaos characterize post-war Iraq. As the leaders of the coalition that removed Saddam Hussein from power and liberated Iraq, it is now our responsibility to follow through on our commitment to help the Iraqi people build the institutions of democracy. Building democracy in Iraq will not be easy. It is a country of competing factions and lacks a tradition of democracy. We must stand firmly behind the newly elected Transitional National Assembly in Iraq and work with them on their terms to establish order and get the rebuilding process on a firm footing. We should do anything needed to help the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly to remain on schedule in electing the state presidency council, drafting a constitution and staying on track for parliamentary elections. Although the Transitional National Assembly will need substantial support from our military forces in order to quell the insurgency and establish order, the sovereignty of Iraq and its people must be respected. We must also provide the necessary assistance to Iraqis to rebuild their oil industry, as this will be a key source of ongoing funding for their reconstruction effort. For democracy to be sustainable, we must assist in the development of civil society over the long term and help the different groups in Iraqi society to overcome ethnic, religious, and other differences. An American presence is likely to be needed for many years. The price will be high but the goal is worth the cost. Iraq will be a model for the rest of the Middle East and ultimately a trusted partner of the United States. A democratic government in Iraq, even if it does not make U.S. interests its top priority, is the key to securing peace in the Middle East.

Underlying Beliefs

- Democracies don't go to war with one another. We will be safer if Iraq is a democracy.
- Now that we're in Iraq we have the obligation to 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.
- Strong U.S. leadership can create the conditions that will allow Iraqis to build a stable, prosperous, and democratic society.
- With enough support, democracy can happen anywhere. Our experiences in post-war Japan and Germany prove that democracies can be built. 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.
- 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

- Provide substantial economic and military assistance to and cooperate with the Transitional Na-

tional Assembly to aid them in realizing democratic goals through constitutional reform, rule of law initiatives, institution building, and the development of civil society.

- Pour the necessary resources into reconstituting and training the Iraqi police force in the principles of democratic policing.
- Provide the resources to help Iraqis upgrade and protect their oil industry as quickly as possible so that they can use funds from this to rebuild their country.
- Help the Iraqis to redesign the curriculum for their schools so that Iraqi youth (currently 50 percent of the population) 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.

The elections of January 2005 were a limited democratic success. The makeup of the Transitional • National Assembly disrupts the longstanding authority structures of Iraq and is likely to provoke more violence against U.S. troops or turn Iraqis against other Iraqis.

- With Saddam Hussein out of power and no WMDs found, Iraq poses little threat to the U.S. We should not allow Iraq to continue diverting attention and resources from the more pressing threats of terrorism and al-Qaeda.
- 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 now to support efforts by the UN and the international community to help Iraqis rebuild their society and establish the form of government that they choose.
- Establishing a democracy in this country with no longstanding tradition of democratic process, a destroyed economy, and intense religious and cultural rivalries will be nearly impossible. Furthermore, a democratic process that we cannot control may well bring leaders to power whose values and policies run counter to our own.
- Helping Iraq to democratize and rebuild will be a costly, long-term commitment with no promises of success. We can't afford it.

OPTION 4 –Step back from any leadership in the Middle East.

Whether the war in Iraq is justified by the search for WMDs, the removal of Saddam Hussein from power, or establishing democracy, our presence in Iraq is now a part of the problem rather than part of the solution. While some may feel that the recent elections in Iraq are a sign that democracy is coming to the region, elections alone are not equivalent to democracy; chaos continues. Meanwhile, we are not helping this situation. Our presence is only attracting insurgents who are making it increasingly difficult for the newly elected Iraqi government to establish control. Moreover, our policies in the broader 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. By remaining in post-war Iraq, our troops have become vulnerable to reprisals from individual terrorists and angry Iraqis, and we are increasing the possibility of attacks on U.S. interests at home and abroad. In addition, involvement in Iraq is costly and distracts U.S. attention and resources from problems within our own country. We must step back from any leadership role in Iraq—whether on our own or through the UN. It's now time to bring our troops home and encourage others in the international community to take over the leadership role in Iraq. We must refocus our resources and attention on our economy and our own security at home, even if it reduces our influence overseas.

Underlying Belief

- Whether we were right or wrong to have invaded Iraq, remaining in Iraq now only serves to fuel anti-American sentiment and feed terrorism. This runs counter to our security interests.
- The situation in Iraq is out of control and unmanageable for the United States military. The U.S. is an outside power and will not succeed in Iraq. To stay longer will be to dig a deeper hole and create a Vietnam in the desert. We have so many needs here at home that we cannot afford to expend our resources in other areas of the world.
- Like any other nation, our first obligation is to our own people.

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 U.S. economy and homeland security.

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, by opening new sources of oil in the U.S. (for example in Alaska), 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 clear governmental authority in control, and with violence and chaos continuing, would likely lead to one of three consequences: (1) other states in the region such as Iran or Syria, which have supported terrorism, might step into the vacuum; (2) civil war might break out among the various internal factions, potentially pitting Sunni and Shia Muslims and Kurds against one another; or (3) a radical Islamic fundamentalist regime might seize control as the Taliban did in Afghanistan.
- The poverty and disorder that are now rampant in Iraq, if 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 these new terrorists.
- 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 without the participation of the U.S.
- The United States is heavily dependent on Middle East oil to supply its energy needs. If we abandon Iraq now, our access to oil from this region will be at risk.