Center for American Progress

Strategic Redeployment 2.0

A Progressive Strategy for Iraq

Lawrence Korb
Brian Katulis

Progressive Ideas for a Strong, Just, and Free America

Strategic Redeployment 2.0
A Progressive Strategy for Iraq

By Lawrence Korb and Brian Katulis

May 2006

Executive Summary

More than three years after President Bush declared the end of major combat operations in Iraq in front of a "mission accomplished" banner, the Bush administration's open-ended commitment of troops to Iraq continues to undermine U.S. national security.

The Bush administration's mistakes in Iraq — invading for the wrong reasons and without enough troops to secure the country — have left us with no good options. President Bush's "stay the course" strategy in Iraq is unsustainable. The costs — more than 2,400 American military personnel killed and 18,000 wounded, more than $300 billion spent, and U.S. ground forces stretched to the breaking point — have not made Americans safer. While we understand the impulse of a growing number of Americans to call for immediate withdrawal, including Republicans like William Buckley, founding editor of the *National Review* and Democrats like John Deutch, we believe that an immediate withdrawal increases the probability of permanently destabilizing Iraq and the Middle East.

In our earlier report on Iraq, we made the case for a responsible exit from Iraq as part of a balanced threat-based global strategy to make Americans safer.[1] In the six months since our report was issued, events in the region have strengthened the case for making the shift to this reasonable approach for dealing with Iraq more effectively and transferring resources to other national security priorities.

In Iraq, a new constitution and elections for a permanent Iraqi government have given Iraqis an historic opportunity to take control of their own destiny. Iraqi security forces, now numbering more than a quarter of a million, have taken the lead in more operations. Yet violence in Iraq not only increased but has turned inward, with sectarian killings surpassing deaths from terrorist bombings and militias threatening to splinter the country. Squabbling among Iraq's leaders following the December 2005 elections has created a political stalemate and vacuum unlikely to be resolved by a new government.

At the same time, outside of Iraq, Afghanistan is facing a resurgent Taliban and Al Qaeda, and the Palestinian territories are slipping into further chaos and extremism. International terrorist networks like Al Qaeda have continued their attacks from Kabul to Amman.

[1] Strategic Redeployment: A Progressive Plan for Iraq and the Struggle against Violent Extremists, by Lawrence Korb and Brian Katulis, The Center for American Progress, September 30, 2005.

These challenges demand a balanced and comprehensive strategic redeployment from Iraq that by the end of 2007 will:

- Restore the strength of U.S. ground troops;
- Make a necessary strategic shift in meeting the global threats from Islamist extremists and terrorist networks, especially in Afghanistan;
- Prevent large numbers of U.S. troops from being caught in the middle of a civil war in Iraq;
- Avert mass sectarian and ethnic cleansing in Iraq;
- Provide the political space for Iraq's elected leaders to strike a power-sharing agreement;
- Empower Iraq's security forces to take control;
- Get those Iraqis fighting primarily to end the occupation to lay down their arms and end their support for the insurgency;
- Motivate the United Nations and global and regional powers to get more involved in Iraq;
- Give the United States the moral, political, and military power to deal with Iran's attempt to develop nuclear weapons; and
- Prevent an outbreak of isolationism in the United States.

To strike the right balance, expectations must change to fit today's grim realities. The Bush administration must recognize that Iraq is not yet a real democracy nor will it be anytime soon, and it is not going to trigger a wave of democracy in the Middle East. Americans need and deserve a clear exit strategy for Iraq that spells out how much longer American troops will be involved in large numbers and what it will cost. Iraq's leaders need to understand that the United States is not going to serve as a crutch indefinitely and that no one is going to solve their problems for them.

The end goals of this strategic shift are clear: to protect the American people at home and abroad; to get Iraq to the most stable position as quickly as possible; to make sure Iraq's tensions do not spill over into a regional conflict; and to turn the tide against extremist Islamists. To accomplish this, the United States must implement a policy of strategic redeployment that has five parts:

1. Undertake Military Redeployment. The United States should reduce its troop presence at a rate of about 9,000 per month from its present level of about 130,000 to 60,000 by the end of 2006, and to virtually zero by the end of 2007. This would be done by not replacing the troops finishing the year-long deployment on a one-to-one basis. The troops remaining in Iraq through 2007 would focus on training Iraqi security forces, eradicating terrorist cells, providing logistical support to Iraqi security forces, and providing border security. All National Guard units would return in 2006 to stand ready to respond to potential natural disasters and terrorist attacks on the homeland.

Also, the U.S. should double its troops in Afghanistan and integrate the U.S. forces with NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to create a single unified NATO command headed by an American three-star general. The United States should also station an Army division in Kuwait; place an expeditionary force and a carrier battle group over the horizon in the Persian Gulf to prevent Iraq from descending into chaos; and increase the number of special forces troops in Africa and Asia to deal with terrorists there.

2. Conduct Strong Diplomacy. The United States must shift the central paradigm from nation building to conflict resolution in Iraq. The sooner the United States recognizes that Iraq has become a failing state with a major internal conflict, the quicker it can work with allies to take appropriate diplomatic steps to resolve the conflict and bring peace and stability to Iraq. Working with the United Nations, President Bush should appoint a presidential envoy with the stature of a former secretary of state to organize a Geneva peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations. The conference would bring Iraq's top leaders together in a setting modeled after the Dayton Accords that ended the conflict in the former Yugoslavia or the Bonn Conference on Afghanistan. The conference would aim to broker a deal on such issues as security, militias, and the division of power and oil resources.

3. Launch a Gulf Stability Initiative. The Bush administration should launch a multilateral diplomatic effort to develop a regional security framework for confidence building measures and regional security cooperation among countries in the region. This framework will be helpful not only in dealing with the aftermath of the U.S. redeployment from Iraq, but also with the growing nuclear capabilities of Iran.

4. Put Iraq's Reconstruction on the Right Track. The Bush administration should develop a more focused approach for correcting the mistakes it made to date in its reconstruction efforts in Iraq. It should work to gather more support for international funds to provide emergency humanitarian and economic assistance to Iraq. International reconstruction funds should also offer conditional assistance to governing authorities in Iraq's 18 provinces based on their willingness to make a realistic power-sharing agreement and to root out corruption. Reconstruction and development projects should place greater focus on creating jobs for Iraqis.

5. Counter Extremist Ideology in the Global Battle of Ideas. The United States should develop a realistic strategy to confront falsehoods promoted by its extremist adversaries, especially Islamist extremists. It should move beyond a narrow strategy of democracy promotion focused on elections. The United States should also make key policy shifts — including declaring it does not seek permanent bases in Iraq and intensifying its efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Recognizing New Realities: The Need to Change Direction in Iraq

Events in Iraq and the broader global battle against violent extremists and extreme regimes require the United States to change its strategy for a long war. Nearly five years after the September 11th attacks, the Bush administration continues to pursue a misguided strategy that does not deal realistically and appropriately with the threats facing the United States. We need to examine our policy in Iraq in the broader context of the threats the United States faces today.

A Changed World

The Bush administration does not have the appropriate strategy to combat the threat posed by Islamist extremists who attacked the United States. After removing the Taliban from power in Afghanistan in late 2001 with the support and assistance of the international community and the countries in the region, the Bush administration took a wrong turn. Even though Iraq was contained and growing weaker by the day, the Bush administration diverted resources to a war of choice in Iraq. It went against the wishes of the international community and the countries in the region and left a mission unaccomplished in Afghanistan, the country that served as the base for the September 11th attacks.

The Bush administration does not have the appropriate strategy to combat the threat posed by Islamist extremists who attacked the United States.

This unnecessary shift has severely undermined U.S. efforts in the battle against global terrorist extremists. By invading Iraq without sufficient international support and without a plan for stability, reconstruction, and governance, the Bush administration created a new generation of violent extremists and a new haven and training ground for terrorists where none existed before, undermining our ability to wage the battle of ideas that is taking place in the world today. Global terrorist attacks tripled in the first year after the Bush administration invaded Iraq. According to statistics released by the State Department and the National Counterterrorism Center in April 2006, 11,000 terrorist attacks were conducted in the world in 2005, more than double the incidents in 2004. U.S. intelligence officials cite evidence that Islamist militants in Iraq are training and assisting Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

During the last three years in Iraq, the Bush administration has allowed its enemies to shape the battlefield more than U.S. forces have shaped it. By invading with too few troops against the advice of the Army chief of staff, the

political leadership in the Defense Department made a serious strategic error that created a vacuum filled by Iraqi insurgents and global terrorist extremists. For the last three years, rather than shaping events on the ground, the Bush administration has been largely reactive to the increasingly sophisticated tactics of home grown insurgents and foreign terrorists.

The mismanaged Iraq invasion also opened the door for an unprecedented expansion of Iranian influence and power in the Gulf region. With U.S. troops bogged down in Iraq and U.S. credibility undermined, Iran's government has taken an even harder line, threatening to wipe Israel off of the map and accelerating its nuclear research program. Sold to the American people as an effort to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, the war in Iraq has contributed to their spread by creating incentives for countries like North Korea and Iran to accelerate their efforts to acquire these weapons.

To prosecute the war in Iraq, the Bush administration has squandered resources that should have been used to protect the American people. It has failed to implement most of the suggestions of the bipartisan 9/11 Commission, leaving ports insecure and sending its best National Guard units and their equipment to Iraq, making them unavailable to respond to natural disasters and possible terrorist attacks at home.

The diversion of resources from Afghanistan to Iraq has left Afghanistan exposed to a resurgence of the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

The diversion of resources from Afghanistan to Iraq has left Afghanistan exposed to a resurgence of the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Afghanistan is less stable than it was a year ago, and there are troubling signs of more violence from the Taliban and Al Qaeda. In 2005, the Afghan insurgency was responsible for killing approximately 1,600 people. Last year was the deadliest year for U.S. troops since the Taliban were deposed in 2001, with 91 killed in action, more than doubling the violence from 2004. In the first four months of 2006, increasing levels of violence is an ominous sign about the future of the country. These attacks include bombings and assassinations that target police, foreign contractors, and local government officials.

Two emerging trends are cause for further alarm: the increasing use of suicide bombers and the growing willingness of the Taliban and Al Qaeda to launch brazen attacks on U.S. military bases. Suicide attacks were rarely used after the fall of the Taliban. But in February 2005, Lt. Gen. Michael D. Maples, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee that suicide attacks have quadrupled in the last year. These

attacks, in conjunction with increased beheadings and the prevalence of IED usage in Afghanistan, offer signs that the insurgents are incorporating tactics developed in Iraq. These attacks come as part of a publicized spring offensive by the Taliban insurgency. Taliban leader Mullah Omar in March warned of new attacks this spring and summer.

In the broader battle against global extremists, the Bush administration has not taken the right steps to defeat the radical ideologies and propaganda used to stoke the flames of conflict and terrorism. In 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld posed the question to his team: "Are we capturing, killing, or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical clerics are recruiting, training, and deploying against us?" Nearly three years later, the clear answer to this question is no, with global terrorist attacks increasingly dramatically on President Bush's watch. Though President Bush and top officials in his administration talk about the need to combat this ideology, they have done little to update the U.S. strategy or tactics to meet this challenge. Rumsfeld himself gave the United States a grade of "D" in the battle of ideas to counteract extremists' ideology.

The Bush strategy of working to defeat terrorism by promoting democracy, defined narrowly as holding elections, has in some key places, like the Palestinian territories and Lebanon, empowered Islamist extremists who espouse violence, leaving the world neither safer from terrorists nor substantially more democratic. The images of purple fingers of Iraqi voters have faded rapidly in the months of bloodshed and increased sectarian violence. Nearly five years after the September 11th attacks, an increasingly skeptical American public is asking why the United States has seen such little return from the loss of so much blood and treasure. At the heart of the challenge is our misguided and mismanaged policy in Iraq.

Recognizing New Realities in Iraq and the Gulf Region

Since the fall of 2005, when we issued our first call for redeployment, the situation in Iraq and the Gulf region has deteriorated in five key ways:

1. Growing sectarian violence and the threat of all-out civil war. During the past six months, the nature of violence in Iraq has not only increased but changed, with an increasing number of killings and kidnappings targeting ordinary Iraqi citizens and local companies. A new type of violence is taking place — Iraqi-on-Iraqi violence that threatens to splinter the entire country and undermine regional stability. Sectarian killings have surpassed terrorist bombings, and tens of thousands of Iraqis have been internally displaced. According to U.S. military statistics, nearly eight times as many Iraqis died in execution-style sectarian killings as terrorist bombings in March 2006.

Both General John Abizaid, the regional commander, and Zalmay Khalilzad, our ambassador to Iraq, agree that civil war is now a greater threat than the insurgency.

2. No substantial improvement in quality of life for Iraqis. In addition to the increased violence and instability, the quality of life in Iraq is worse now than it was before the invasion. According to the General Accounting Office, oil and electricity production remain stuck below pre-war levels. Reconstruction goals for oil, electricity, and water have not been met. Unemployment remains in the double digits, and nearly 60 percent of the country remains dependent on food rations. Prices for staple foods like rice, sugar, and flour have soared in the past three years. The billions that the U.S. poured into reconstruction projects have not accomplished very much, except to increase the earnings of several American companies.

3. Emergence of Iraqi ethnocracy. Two elections and a constitutional referendum in 2005 have not brought stability to Iraq. Rather than creating a democracy, the political transition has established an ethnocracy where most Iraqis vote their ethnic or sectarian identity and Iraqi leaders fail to deliver on key policy issues like improving basic services. In effect, the elections were an ethnic census. Though the Bush administration hails the increased voter turnout in the December 2005 elections, it ignores the fact that approximately nine in 10 Iraqis voted for parties representing their ethnic or sectarian identity. As a result, Iraq's politics is almost entirely devoid of policy issues, despite the many pressing concerns facing the country.

The political transition has established an ethnocracy where most Iraqis vote their ethnic or sectarian identity and Iraqi leaders fail to deliver on key policy.

The process of trying to build a multiethnic state in Iraq has not been able to resolve such immediate and pressing issues as security and the division of power and key resources such as oil. The current draft of the Iraqi constitution, barely approved in the October referendum and rejected by most Sunnis, leaves many unanswered questions about the distribution of power and resources.

By focusing on advancing democracy narrowly defined as elections and meeting electoral deadlines, the Bush administration rushed Iraq's constitutional process in 2005. Iraq's constitution drafting committee began its work late and was terminated early without any significant Iraqi public input and deliberation. Portraying a façade of democracy to the world, the Bush administration continued to meddle unproductively in Iraq's political process, twisting arms for the wrong objectives, and taking its focus off of the changing security dynamics in Iraq.

By rushing the constitutional process and leaving no time or space for public deliberation over key issues, the Bush administration made a fundamental mistake that has impeded efforts to advance real democracy in Iraq — all while further exacerbating ethnic and sectarian divisions. Though the state-building process might provide limited hope for resolving these issues, more than four months of political deadlock in Iraq over who should lead the government does not bode well for the new government resolving the more difficult questions of how to amend Iraq's constitution. Even though Iraqi leaders made some progress by the end of April 2006 in naming a prime minister designee and six other top government posts, much work remains undone in bridging the divides that separate Iraq's top political factions.

4. Empowered extremist voices. The almost singular focus on elections and deadlines gave an opening for extremists to seize power and wield even greater influence than they had before. A prime example is the rapid rise of Shiite extremist Muqtada Al-Sadr to power. In the early days following the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq, Muqtada Al-Sadr was a marginal figure lacking broad public credibility in Iraq. In 2003, Sadr faced a warrant for his arrest on murder charges, and the Coalition Provisional Authority closed down his newspaper. U.S. Army General Ricardo Sanchez even promised to "kill or capture" Sadr. In 2004, Sadr's Mahdi militia clashed with U.S.-led coalition troops in widespread battles across Iraq that resulted in the deaths of several dozen U.S. soldiers. In late August, Shiite cleric Ayatollah Ali Sistani brokered a deal with Sadr's militia to end the clashes between coalition forces and Sadr's militia.

The almost singular focus on elections and deadlines gave an opening for extremists to seize power and wield even greater influence than they had before.

Over the last two years, Sadr has seen his political influence grow larger. In the interim government, Sadr's allies controlled two ministries — health and transportation — and reportedly banned American advisors from their buildings. His militia controls key parts of Iraq, including a major neighborhood of Baghdad. Sadr's political group won 30 seats in the new Iraqi national parliament, and Sadr has become a key powerbroker working behind the scenes in determining who will lead Iraq's new government. In early 2006, Sadr conducted a round of regional meetings in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Syria to discuss the future of Iraq. Sadr is not a strong advocate for the rights of women or religious minorities, but is a strong advocate for a rapid and complete American withdrawal. And it is voices like his that have been in the ascendancy in Iraq's ethnocracy.

In Basra, fundamentalist Shiite militias, closely aligned with Iran, have seized control of the province from the British forces and turned it into a mini-theocracy. An internal report by the United States Embassy and the military command in Iraq rates the overall stability of six of the 18 provinces including Basra as serious — that is, marked by routine violence, assassinations and extremism. One province, Anbar, is rated as critical.

5. Growing threat of sectarian tensions spreading to the region. Iraq's internal sectarian tensions threaten to spill over its borders and spark regional sectarian tensions. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's remarks in April 2006 questioning the loyalties of Shiite Muslims living in Arab nations are an indication that sectarian tensions are spreading throughout the region.

The United States needs to adjust its strategy to meet these new realities — a "stay the course" strategy will only serve to undermine U.S. interests. With these new dynamics, the case is even stronger for a policy of strategic redeployment.

The Need for Strategic Redeployment

The Bush administration's mistakes in Iraq — invading without proper justification or enough troops to secure the country — have left us with no good options.

A Range of Bad Options

The Bush strategy: Stay the course. Despite the fact that the situation on the ground in Iraq is deteriorating, the Bush administration has maintained the same policy of an open-ended commitment of troops to Iraq. During the last six months, the Bush administration has made some slight tactical adjustments — reducing the presence of U.S. ground troops in many urban areas and putting Iraqi security forces in the lead. The United States has sharply increased its air operations by more than 50 percent in the past six months to provide close air support to these forward deployed Iraqi units.

The Bush administration must set clear limits and put the Iraqi leaders on notice that there is a specific end date to the massive U.S. troop presence.

Indications are that the Bush administration will likely announce some reductions in troop strength sometime this year. But this is not enough. There are no signs that it is planning to make sufficient and timely reductions necessary to adequately protect overall U.S. interests. To ensure U.S. security, the Bush administration must set clear limits and put the Iraqi leaders on notice that there is a specific end date to the massive U.S. troop presence.

Immediate withdrawal plans. Some critics of the Bush policy have called for complete and immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops. This would increase the chance of chaos breaking out in Iraq and the surrounding region. It also risks the spread of Iraq's internal conflict across its borders, and it sends the wrong message just as Iran's regime has increased its rhetoric and taken steps to destabilize the region. Furthermore, a smaller, more nimble U.S. presence in Iraq through the end of 2007 can continue the training of Iraqi security forces and counter Islamist extremist groups and terrorist networks now present in Iraq, without breaking our ground forces.

Conditions-based withdrawal plans. Others favor linking U.S. troop withdrawals from Iraq to conditions on the ground. But this is a recipe for an endless quaqmire. Conditions do not have much chance of improving until Iraqis and regional players understand that the U.S. military is not planning

to serve as a crutch indefinitely. When Bush administration officials signaled last fall that the United States was not staying in Iraq indefinitely, they helped spark new diplomatic initiatives by regional actors to address the security challenge in Iraq.

"Ink spots" counterinsurgency strategy. Still others have advocated a traditional counterinsurgency strategy that creates safe enclaves or "ink spots" on the ground in Iraq. The basic idea is to keep Iraqis safe by cutting insurgents off from the communities and support networks that allow them to thrive. The "ink spots" strategy runs the real risk that the ink spots would become blood stains on the map as the inevitable urban combat would take a deadly toll of soldiers and civilians. The time has come and gone for this recommendation, a theoretical proposal three years too late with too few available troops to implement it without breaking the army. It is an inappropriate strategy at this time for four main reasons.

First, there are simply not enough U.S. ground troops available without extending tours or decreasing time between deployments for forces that are already overstretched. Second, a more visible presence of U.S. troops risks further stoking the flames of the insurgency by feeding perceptions of long-term U.S. occupation among many Iraqis. Third, it is operationally impractical — most U.S. forces are trained and have incentive structures that reward troops for fighting conventional wars and capturing and killing the enemy. Far too few troops presently have the necessary skills — including the Arabic language — to operate in the ways that proponents of the "ink spots" strategy suggest. In addition, force protection considerations and existing rules of engagement are unlikely to change rapidly enough to implement this strategy. Fourth, it risks undermining the growing confidence that Iraqis have demonstrated in their own security forces — recent polling demonstrates that Iraqi public confidence in their own security forces has grown.

The Case for Strategic Redeployment

Even though the debate in the United States on Iraq is still laced with empty phrases like "stay the course," "retreat and defeat," and "cut and run," the real policy question that the United States faces in Iraq is: How do we lessen the risks of what must be an eventual withdrawal of its troops from Iraq? As a practical matter, the United States cannot sustain its current troop presence. But withdrawing U.S. troops too quickly would also be a grave mistake, leaving important work undone and increasing the chances that extremist groups might take root.

The best course forward is a phased drawdown of U.S. troops combined with increased political and diplomatic efforts to bring stability to Iraq and the Gulf region. A strategic redeployment in Iraq has become necessary for 10 reasons:

1. To restore the strength of U.S. ground troops. It has become clear that if the United States still has more than 100,000 ground troops in Iraq by the end of this year, we will do serious damage to the all-volunteer Army. Keeping such a large contingent of troops there will require the Pentagon to send many more individuals back to Iraq for a third or fourth time and continue to make it difficult for the Army to recruit and retain soldiers with the proper qualifications. To paraphrase Vietnam-era Army General Maxwell Taylor, while we sent the Army to Iraq to save Iraq, we now have to redeploy the Army to save the Army. Without a draft, the U.S. military will not be able to recruit a sufficient number of qualified recruits to maintain a large occupation force indefinitely.

It has become clear that if the United States still has more than 100,000 ground troops in Iraq by the end of this year, we will do serious damage to the all-volunteer Army.

2. To make a necessary strategic shift to enable the United States to defeat the global threats from Islamist extremists and terrorist networks, particularly in Afghanistan. The United States must recalibrate its policies, use military force and expertise more judiciously, and increase its intelligence and information operations to defeat the threat of extremism. Global terrorist leaders have used the U.S. troop presence in Iraq as a rallying cry and recruitment tool. Military commanders like General John Abizaid, head of the United States Central Command, and his spokesman, Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, have argued that the United States must reduce its military presence to reduce the perception of occupation prevalent in Muslim-majority countries. A phased drawdown of U.S. troops in Iraq will still enable the remaining U.S. forces to continue the tasks of rooting out terrorist groups in Iraq and working to build Iraqi security forces. The Iraq drawdown will also free up more troops to go to Afghanistan and finish the work left undone when the Bush administration diverted attention to the war of choice in Iraq. It will also allow the National Guard to return to the United States and resume its mission of protecting the homeland.

3. To prevent large numbers of U.S. troops from being caught in the middle of a civil war in Iraq. The United States has no good military options if a full-blown civil war breaks out in Iraq. Security dynamics in Iraq have shifted substantially in the last six months, with the violence turning inward

and attacks between Iraqis increasing. As General Abizaid noted, civil war is now a greater threat than the insurgency. If, for example, the Shiite cleric Ayatollah Sistani were assassinated, U.S. troops would not be able to keep a lid on the violence that would result from Shiites seeking to avenge his death. One of the worst things that could happen is for U.S. forces to get caught in a violent civil war between Iraqi Shias and Sunnis.

4. To prevent mass sectarian and ethnic cleansing in Iraq. U.S. troops can play an important behind-the-scenes role as a force for stability over the next year. Strategic redeployment's phased drawdown of troops would enable U.S. forces that remain in Iraq through 2007 to prevent mass sectarian and ethnic cleansing in Iraq. During the past six months, U.S. forces had to intervene to prevent the massacre of dozens of individuals at the hands of militias and Iraqi security forces and played a key behind-the-scenes stabilizing role as Iraqi security forces kept tensions from boiling over after the Samarra mosque bombing in February 2006.

5. To provide the political space for Iraq's elected leaders to strike a power-sharing agreement. The Bush strategy has been a distorting influence, showing clumsy favoritism to various groups in Iraq at various times, sending the wrong message that all political deals are underwritten by the United States and subject to U.S. approval. By setting a defined limit to our large military presence, the strategic redeployment plan should provide the political space for Iraqi leaders to take charge and reach a power-sharing agreement. The United States cannot want a unified Iraq more than Iraqis do. Strategic redeployment is the one of the few remaining tools that the United States has to positively impact political dynamics in Iraq. A concrete notice period and timeframe for withdrawal will provide the political space for Iraq's political and sectarian leaders to find a way to halt the slide into civil war and open the window for nationalist elements to engage in the political process.

The strategic redeployment plan should provide the political space for Iraqi leaders to take charge and reach a power-sharing agreement.

6. To empower Iraqi security forces to take control. The United States has trained a quarter of a million Iraqi security forces over the past two and a half years — and those numbers continue to rise. Iraqi forces will never truly stand up on their own as long as the United States is in Iraq in such great numbers. The current debate on Iraqi troop training focuses on building combat skills but ignores an equally important factor — motivation. The large U.S. troop presence creates a disincentive for the Iraqi political leaders to agree on a permanent and sustainable method for establishing peace and order throughout Iraq.

7. To weaken the insurgency. Many of those who have taken up arms with the insurgency or have supported the insurgency actively or passively are doing so because they believe the United States intends to occupy the country permanently. Once the U.S. sets a specific timetable for withdrawal, they will have no reason to support the insurgency, or to make common cause with those foreign terrorists who want to transform Iraq into a fundamentalist Islamic state.

8. To motivate other global and regional powers and the United Nations to get more involved. Putting the world on notice that U.S. troops are leaving soon will motivate other states, especially those in the region, to do their share in Iraq. With the growing global demand for energy resources, global powers like Russia and China have an interest in stability in Iraq. But these two key countries, as well as other countries in the region, will not do much more to help the situation in Iraq unless and until the United States sends a clear signal that its troops are leaving soon, and it will not keep permanent bases in Iraq. A departure of the U.S. forces will also open the door for the United Nations to play a more active role in Iraq's political transition and reconstruction. Key regional actors, especially Iraq's immediate neighbors, have a strong interest in making sure that Iraq does not collapse or become a haven for terrorists. Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and Jordan — as well as leading regional powers like Egypt — must step up their contributions to make sure Iraq does not slip into further instability.

Key regional actors have a strong interest in making sure that Iraq does not collapse or become a haven for terrorists.

9. To combat the emerging threat from Iran. As long as the United States is bogged down in Iraq and refuses to admit the thousands of mistakes it has made, it will not have the moral, political, and military power to deal effectively with Iran's attempts to develop nuclear weapons. U.S. prestige around the world is at an all-time low and most Americans do not trust the Bush administration to take military action against Iran. Moreover, Iran's increasing belligerence is partly a result of the United States being bogged down in Iraq.

10. To prevent an outbreak of isolationism in the United States. Americans are clearly weary of the unending conflict in Iraq and support for the war has dropped rapidly. But more ominously, so has support for U.S. engagement in the world. President Bush is aware of this and in his State of the Union address in January and his recently released national security strategy, he warned of the attraction of isolationism. A clear exit strategy from Iraq would reduce this trend towards isolationism.

Military Redeployment: Rebalancing the Military Presence to Better Protect Americans

The United States needs to implement immediately a strategic redeployment of its forces in Iraq — a phased drawdown of U.S. troops in Iraq over the next year and a half. Today approximately 130,000 U.S. forces are operating in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Of those troops, approximately 80 percent are active duty forces and the remaining 20 percent come from the National Guard and Reserves.

The United States should immediately announce that by the end of 2006, U.S. troop strength will be reduced by 70,000 and that by the end of 2007, the remaining 60,000 will be redeployed out of Iraq. It should also make clear that the United States does not seek permanent bases in Iraq. The United States should complete a status-of-forces agreement with the Iraqi government that delineates the legal status of U.S. military and civilian personnel including employees with U.S. government contractors in Iraq. It would also clarify the procedures and conditions that would enable U.S. forces placed over the horizon or in Kuwait to re-enter Iraq to respond to major threats by outside powers or provide support for anti-terrorist operations as requested by Iraq's government.

Redefining the Mission of U.S. Forces

While declining in numbers, the U.S. forces that would remain in Iraq through the end of 2007 would perform critical missions:

1. Continue training Iraqi security forces. The Bush administration needs to place a stronger focus on training local security forces. According to a recent report by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, the Pentagon spent only 40 percent of the $7 billion appropriated in 2005 for the training of security forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Though behind schedule, the training of Iraqi security forces is starting to yield some tangible results, with approximately 250,000 Iraqi security forces trained. According to a February 2006 Defense Department report to Congress on Iraq, 98 Iraqi Army and special forces battalions were conducting operations in the field. There was a 47 percent increase in battalions classified as "in the lead" or "fully independent" from October 2005 to February 2006. In addition, 27 National Police Force battalions and one Emergency Response unit were capable of combat operations, and an additional 10 units were classified as in the lead. Iraqi security forces took the lead in maintaining a relative calm during the December elections and October referendum. They were also at

the forefront of enforcing curfews in February that were put in place to stem sectarian violence following the bombing of the Samarra mosque.

U.S. troops need to remain in the country to train and mentor the Iraqi security forces for another 18 months. U.S. military commanders have a plan to place 10-member transition teams in each Iraqi battalion to mentor the units and develop leadership. This work needs to continue. Continued support for the training program should be conditional on progress in the Iraqi peace process and the work in building functioning defense and interior ministries.

2. Conduct counterterrorist operations. The remaining U.S. forces should include more special operations forces that work closely with Iraqi intelligence to track down and eliminate small terrorist cells. The main threat of a rash and too rapid withdrawal of U.S. troops is that it would allow foreign terrorist groups to deepen their roots in certain communities in Iraq and allow these terrorist networks to use parts of Iraq as a base for other attacks. Even though Iraq did not serve as a base of operation or a training ground for global terrorists before the American invasion, the Bush administration's incompetence has created a new haven for groups like Al Qaeda. Intelligence agencies warn that Iraqi insurgents are transferring their newly acquired skills to terrorists operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Moreover, large operations like the March 2006 Operation Swarmer in Samarra are largely ineffective in trampling the threat. But more focused and targeted operations with smaller special forces units working closely with Iraqi security forces and intelligence will be more effective in closing down terrorist networks in Iraq.

Intelligence agencies warn that Iraqi insurgents are transferring their newly acquired skills to terrorists operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

3. Provide logistical and mobility support to Iraqi security forces. The nascent Iraqi forces need logistical and close air support. A key factor that prevents an Iraqi unit from making the transition from level 2 ("in the lead") to level 1 ("fully independent") is lack of logistical support. The United States must intensify its efforts to help the Iraqi government build management and logistical support structures in the ministries of interior and defense. For Iraqi forces to operate effectively in the field, they will require support from the United States for the next 18 months.

4. Maintain border security. While U.S. forces continue their program of transferring responsibility to Iraqi security forces and pulling back from urban areas, there is still an important role for U.S. forces to play in stopping border infiltration, particularly from Syria and Iran.

An Over the Horizon Force in Kuwait and the Gulf

While reducing the American presence in Iraq, the United States should maintain its presence in the region. It would continue to maintain its military presence in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar and increase its ground forces in Kuwait from a brigade to a division to guard against any destabilizing actions by Iran or other countries in the region. It would also maintain an "over the horizon" force of a carrier battle group and a Marine expeditionary force capable of providing additional support to U.S. troops in Iraq. An additional 10,000 additional troops called up to rotate into Iraq in 2006 would instead be sent to join the U.S. military presence in Kuwait.

Afghanistan: Completing the Mission

The strategic redeployment plan calls for 20,000 fresh U.S. troops from the United States to be sent to Afghanistan as reinforcements to complete the work left unfinished by the Bush administration in defeating Al Qaeda and the Taliban when it diverted its attention and forces to Iraq. The U.S. troops in Afghanistan should be integrated with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) into a single, unified NATO command headed by an American three-star general.

Afghanistan needs this additional support and more integration of the forces for three main reasons. First, unlike Iraq, Afghanistan has a permanent government in place and has arrived at a power-sharing agreement among its political leaders about the country's future. Second, Afghan security forces require greater assistance than Iraqi security forces. Iraq has approximately 250,000 personnel in its security forces, compared to 80,000 security forces in Afghanistan. Third, the Afghan public favors the presence of foreign troops, unlike the Iraqi public. According to a poll of Afghan citizens conducted in November and December 2005, eight in 10 support U.S. military operations against Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, and nearly 60 percent support expanding international peacekeeping operations in the country.

The new beefed up NATO command should build on the May 2005 U.S.-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership agreement and negotiate a status of forces agreement with Afghanistan that allows an increase of U.S. troops and the integration of all of the international forces to support counterterrorist operations and support the training of Afghan security forces. An additional 20,000 U.S. troops are required in Afghanistan for three critical tasks.

1. Fighting the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The United States is planning to scale back its troop presence, from 18,000 soldiers to 15,500 sometime this spring. This is a step in the wrong direction. The security situation in

Afghanistan is deteriorating and requires the type of military power only the United States can provide. Approximately 6,000 additional NATO troops will come from England, Canada, and the Netherlands. The increased participation of these NATO troops is a positive sign, but Afghanistan needs more support and cooperation to defeat Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

2. Increasing border security in southeastern Afghanistan. Increasing and integrating the international troop presence in southern Afghanistan will strengthen our ability to demand that Pakistan move more forcefully to prevent the Taliban and Al Qaeda from using Pakistan as a base of operations. The inability and unwillingness of the Pakistani government to control this territory permits the insurgents to cross the border to elude U.S.-led forces, as well as transport equipment and personnel. It is suspected that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate is sympathetic to the Taliban, a relationship that has fueled harsh words between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The security situation in Afghanistan is deteriorating and requires the type of military power only the United States can provide.

3. Supporting Afghan security force training. Additional troops from the United States and our NATO allies are needed not only to quell the increasing insurgency but also to train the Afghani security forces to operate independently.

The Afghan National Army currently has approximately 27,000 troops, with a deployable force of 38 operational battalions organized into five regional commands. The goal of achieving a fully operational force of 70,000 troops by 2010 has been hampered by a number of factors, including attrition, fiscal constraints, and challenges in building a senior officer corps and specialized logistical support units.

The Afghan National Police (ANP) has approximately 54,000 officers including border police. The goal of achieving a fully constituted, professional, functional, and ethnically balanced ANP of 62,000 by 2005 has been delayed to the end of 2010. As in Iraq, capacity remains a serious problem. Most rank and file members have received less than three months of training. Some estimates place illiteracy in the ANP at 70 percent. Once deployed in the regions of Afghanistan, police officers frequently lack sufficient leadership, equipment, and facilities to perform their roles in maintaining law and order. The newly unified NATO command can help the Afghan government stand on its two feet by more quickly increasing its support for the training and mentoring of Afghan security forces.

Bolstering Military-to-Military Cooperation in Africa and Asia

In addition to sending more troops as temporary, short-term reinforcements in Afghanistan, the United States needs to enhance its support of programs to combat terrorist extremists in Africa and Asia by sending an additional 1,000 special forces troops to those areas.

In Africa, the United States has already begun two major counterterrorist operations — in sub-Saharan Africa and East Africa. In 2005, the United States introduced the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI), a program which committed $500 million over five years and approximately 1,000 US troops to expand operations to nine African countries; Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Morocco, Nigeria and Tunisia. The TSCTI consists of a military component to train, equip, patrol, and foster cooperation between the armed and police forces across borders. In addition, it includes programs designed to alleviate dangerous humanitarian conditions. The Bush administration has also developed the East Africa Counterterrorism Initiative, which has $100 million worth of assistance and training in the Horn of Africa: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya.

Throughout Asia, the United States has developed similar efforts engaging the national military and intelligence services in countries such as Pakistan and the Philippines.

The United States undermines its own efforts to spread democracy and defeat extremism when it turns a blind eye to human rights abuses by its own troops and by those foreign security forces allied with U.S. counterterrorist efforts.

The United States should offer more support and training so that the foreign intelligence and security services will be more effective in their abilities to track down, capture, and kill violent extremists and eliminate terrorist networks. In offering this support, the United States should develop better practices to strengthen rule of law and foster healthy civil-military relations.

The United States need not support torture, extrajudicial killings, and undemocratic behavior by authoritarian governments. The United States will have a better chance of defeating its enemies if it helps countries build effective institutions and practices with oversight from democratically elected governments in order to wage a successful battle against violent extremists. The United States undermines its own efforts to spread democracy and defeat extremism when it turns a blind eye to human rights abuses by its own troops and by those foreign security forces allied with U.S. counterterrorist efforts. The rendition of prisoners to countries that use torture has not helped the

U.S. effort to fight extremism. And we send mixed messages to governments like Syria and Egypt when we publicly demand that they expand freedom, democracy, and the rule of law but secretly send them terrorist suspects because of their use of torture and abuse during interrogations.

Strong Diplomacy: A Peace Conference for Iraq

The United States must shift the central paradigm from nation building to conflict resolution in Iraq. The sooner the United States recognizes that Iraq has become a failing state with a major internal conflict, the quicker it can work with allies to take appropriate diplomatic steps to resolve the conflict and bring peace and stability to Iraq.

Putting Iraqi and regional leaders on notice that the United States will eliminate its military presence in Iraq should motivate Iraqis and actors in the region to take greater responsibility for security and stability. The redeployment of U.S. troops does not mean that the United States should completely disengage from Iraq — it means a rebalancing of types of power that the United States uses to address the threats and challenges it faces in Iraq and the region.

President Bush has spent a great deal of his time talking to the American people about Iraq, failing to convince the majority of Americans that he has a clear plan. But he needs to talk more with Iraq's leaders and key regional players to facilitate a power-sharing agreement in Iraq and help create stability in the region. To send the right signal, President Bush should appoint a high-level special envoy for Iraq's transition, to work with the United Nations and key regional leaders to help forge a political solution to Iraq's conflict.

President Bush should appoint a high-level special envoy for Iraq's transition, to work with the United Nations and key regional leaders to help forge a political solution to Iraq's conflict.

The special envoy should work with the United Nations and other global and regional powers to help Iraq's leaders advance stability. The United Nations can play a constructive role in brokering a power-sharing agreement. The top U.N. envoy to Iraq, Ashraf Qazi, was instrumental in persuading Iraq's political and religious leaders to take a step forward in forming a permanent government in April 2006. In 2004, Lakhdar Brahimi, the U.N. special representative to Iraq, played a key facilitating and advisory role in helping Iraqis form an interim government.

Geneva Peace Conference for Iraq. The Bush administration should work with other global powers to organize a peace conference for Iraq in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations in the summer of 2006. The conference can use the Dayton Peace Accord of 1995 that settled the civil war in the

former Yugoslavia or the Bonn Conference of 2002 that laid the groundwork for creating a new government in Afghanistan as models. This peace conference should occur even if Iraq's leaders are successful in organizing a government of national unity. At this conference, Iraq's top political and security leaders must come together on five key issues:

(1) A verifiable cease-fire agreement between the government's security forces and militias;

(2) A transparent timetable for disbanding and integrating Iraq's militias;

(3) An agreement on the division of resources;

(4) An agreement defining the nature of Iraq's federalism, including the role of religion; and

(5) An agreement on the status of the disputed city of Kirkuk.

This diplomatic initiative should start with the Iraqi leaders first and it should deal head on with the major issues that divide Iraqis and drive much of the violence in the country – security and the division of resources and power. Ultimately the conference must involve Iraq's neighbors, who have an interest in making sure Iraq does not degenerate into further chaos or become a haven for Islamist extremists. Key countries with a stake in stability in Iraq — including Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia — should be engaged in this peace conference.

Gulf Stability Initiative

The Bush administration should also launch the Gulf Stability Initiative, a multilateral diplomatic effort to develop a regional security framework with confidence building measures and regional security cooperation between all countries in the region. Other strategically important regions of the world have mechanisms to promote security cooperation — for example, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum, a multilateral dialogue group that addresses security issues in the Asian-Pacific region.

While the United States should be working expeditiously to develop alternative liquid fuel supplies, the Gulf region will remain in the near-term the world's energy lifeline. The global price of oil has more than doubled since President Bush entered office in 2001. The region is the epicenter of the battle against Islamist extremists and the challenge of stopping the spread of nuclear weapons.

The United States should build on the desire for greater security in the region by working to help countries create a common regional security agenda.

Actors in the region have called for a more comprehensive approach to addressing regional security. During the 2004 Gulf Dialogue in Bahrain, Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal delivered a speech in which he called for a "collective effort aimed at developing a new and more solid framework for Gulf security." In early April 2006, reports surfaced that leaders of intelligence agencies from countries such as Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates have held a series of meetings to discuss contingency plans to prevent Iraq's internal conflict from spilling over its borders. The United States should build on the desire for greater security in the region by working to help countries create a common regional security agenda.

The Gulf Stability Initiative would establish a framework that would be more stable than the patchwork of bilateral arrangements that exist among a few countries in the Gulf. It would also complement the initiative by the U.S. military to reduce its overall footprint in the Middle East, a necessary step in convincing people in the Arab world that the United States does not have imperial ambitions in the region. It could also serve as a mechanism for drawing Iran into multilateral discussions with its neighbors to discuss regional security and its nuclear research program.

The ultimate goal of the Gulf Stability Initiative would be to help countries in the region manage their own security more effectively, which would enhance overall global stability.

Iraq's Reconstruction: Setting the Right Course

The Bush Administration fundamentally misjudged the post-invasion mission in Iraq by focusing on the reconstruction of physical infrastructure rather than the transformation of Iraq. The reconstruction phase in Iraq offered the opportunity to transform Iraq by creating a capable and transparent state apparatus; initiating the shift from a highly-centralized command to a market-based economy; developing the local administrative capacity that can sustain democracy; and delivering a tangible "post-Saddam dividend" into the hands of the Iraqi people.

By focusing the vast majority of assets on rebuilding hard infrastructure in Baghdad rather than on development efforts across the country, the administration also ceded vast rural areas to insurgents who today prevent U.S. forces, the new Iraqi military, and aid agencies from accessing the majority of Iraq's people.

Even on its own terms, the administration's reconstruction project in Iraq has failed. After spending more than $20 billion of U.S. taxpayers' money and $40 billion in Iraq's own resources, Iraq is left with thousands of unfinished projects. According to the Congressional Research Service, the total assistance provided to Iraq by the United States since 2003 is roughly equal to total assistance — adjusted for inflation — provided to Germany from 1946 to 1952. The amount of U.S. assistance to Iraq from 2003 to the present day is nearly double what the United States provided Japan in the six years after Japan's defeat in 1946. There is little to show for it.

One of the most powerful tools in America's arsenal — the economic assistance that could have transformed the Iraqi people's lives and altered fundamentally the economic and social dynamics of that country — was squandered. And not only did the administration fail to use these resources for the transformation that was then possible; it tolerated, and in some cases oversaw, an unprecedented pattern of corruption.

Late in the game, the Bush administration has attempted to correct its error by shifting tactics, moving from large wholesale projects to smaller, quick impact projects. In its FY 2007 assistance submission to Congress, the Bush administration requested $771 million to sustain infrastructure, promote capacity-building in core Iraq ministries, and support rule-of-law programs. The administration has also undertaken efforts to create provincial reconstruction teams throughout the country. While these shifts may be directionally correct,

the administration has yet to redefine the reconstruction effort in strategic terms, and has acted too late to gain access to huge swaths of the country.

The Bush Administration's stark failure to define and pursue a mission of transformation in post-invasion Iraq and its inability to deploy effectively the considerable assets that were available have — as in the military realm — left us with few, if any, good options. Insurgencies have captured control of the countryside; the costs of reconstruction and development programs have skyrocketed given the need for security; corruption has taken root in Iraq's state institutions; and, most importantly, the largely dysfunctional Iraqi economy offers the Iraqi people little in the way of hope or tangible benefit.

At this juncture, it is not possible to make a wholesale shift to the transformational goal that should have guided Iraq's reconstruction from the outset. It is, however, possible to begin shifting the terms defining Iraq's reconstruction from a mismanaged, ineffective, and corrupt enterprise to a process that could lead to greater stability and meaningful change.

1. Place greater emphasis on enhancing security and stability. Insecurity is the greatest obstacle to reconstruction efforts. Insurgents and terrorist groups continue to sabotage pipelines, attack electrical towers, and destroy reconstruction projects. As a result, about 40 percent of the U.S. dollars originally allocated to reconstruction have been shifted to security. Security is essential to implementing a reconstruction program for the country, and more of the same – which is what President Bush proposes — will not stabilize Iraq. This is why the security-enhancing steps outlined above — military redeployment coupled with the continued training of Iraqi security forces; a peace conference; and the Gulf Stability Initiative — are vital to helping Iraq realize the stability that can allow reconstruction and development to move forward.

2. Move quickly to internationalize the reconstruction efforts. The exertion of near exclusive control of the reconstruction effort by the Coalition Provisional Authority following the fall of Saddam Hussein eroded our ability to enlist sustained international support. Coupled with the growing insecurity in Iraq, this means that approximately $10 billion that has been pledged by other donors has not yet materialized, and the U.S. remains by far the largest donor to Iraq today. In order to increase and diversify the resources flowing into Iraq – and ensure that the United States alone is not expected to pick up the entire tab — the United States should spearhead a new diplomatic effort to secure existing pledges and increase funding for the International Reconstruction Fund for Iraq (IRFI), launched in 2004 by the United Nations and World Bank.

3. Counter corruption before it is too late. The opportunity to set transparent standards for governance in the new Iraq has been squandered, and corruption is now systemic. Building the capacity of the Iraqi state must now, therefore, be coupled with the much more difficult task of rooting out the corruption that has been allowed to flourish. The administration must make clear to the new Iraqi authorities that corruption in Iraq is no more tolerable in Iraq than in any other country to which we provide substantial assistance while also providing the incentives for improved governance. For example, and in addition to undertaking immediate humanitarian projects that will help Iraq's governing authorities meet the basic needs of its people, the International Fund should also be used to counter the growing trend towards grand corruption by offering conditional assistance to governing authorities in Iraq based on their performance in rooting out corruption and establishing transparent governance structures.

4. Put more focus on creating jobs for Iraqis and improving their standard of living. The "object" of Iraq's reconstruction must be the Iraqi people. The Bush Administration's heavy reliance on American contractors and firms and emphasis on the rehabilitation of physical infrastructure has obscured the central role of the Iraqi people in their economic development and in the establishment of democracy. Unemployment has reached untenable highs – highs that fuel the insurgency, diminish hope, and contribute to new levels of structural poverty. Reconstruction programs should make job creation and the provision of basic services top priorities.

5. Provide long-term support for good governance and democratic development. It is also particularly troubling that the Bush administration has scaled back funding for American nongovernmental organizations working to advance democracy in Iraq. The Bush administration's current plan includes funding cuts for the National Endowment for Democracy as well as budget reductions for groups like the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute, which, according to a December 2005 assessment by the U.S. Agency for International Development, are conducting "essential" programs.

The United States should provide long-term funding and support for Iraqi civil society organizations through an increased budget for the National Endowment for Democracy. The United States should also develop a long-term plan for providing crucial training and support to non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, issue advocacy organizations, unions and labor organizations, and political parties that represent the interests of Iraqi citizens. It also needs to provide assistance to Iraqi educational institutions and civil society groups

to develop civic education programs aimed at Iraqi citizens and youth to help them understand how democratic societies function, learn about the universal declaration of human rights, and understand the role that citizens can play in a functioning democracy.

Iraqi leaders face fundamental decisions on how to share power, divide up authority, and address the violence and instability. This immediate work of resolving Iraq's current conflict should not prevent the United States from supporting independent Iraqi civil society groups and organizations working to advance freedom and democracy. The U.S.-supported projects to advance democracy in Iraq in total currently cost less than just one day of the military mission.

The United States can also do more to help governing authorities at the national level and in Iraq's 18 provinces improve the way that they serve their citizens. The United States should work with the United Nations, World Bank, and other major donors to develop programs to improve local and regional governance, strengthen the Iraqi judiciary, and fight corruption and mismanagement in Iraq's ministries.

Countering Violent Extremists: Fighting the Global Battle of Ideas

The United States must counter more aggressively the anti-American campaigns of its terrorist enemies. The Bush administration has focused too heavily on military solutions to address threats that need new political, diplomatic, and intelligence efforts to win the global battle of ideas.

The role of the military in defeating violent extremists is a vital one — but it should not be the only one. Defeating violent extremists that attacked the United States nearly five years ago requires more than increased troop deployments and military action around the world. As Army Lieutenant General Ray Odierno, who commanded a division in Iraq and is now assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff put it, in the so-called "long war," information will be as important as ammunition.

Defeating the violent extremists and global terrorist networks requires the United States to update its global strategic communications efforts to reflect the realities of the 21st Century. In addition, it also means that the United States must make key shifts in its policies that affect Muslim-majority countries. In its second term, the Bush administration has started to take some important steps in what Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice calls "transformational diplomacy." But more needs to be done. Five key changes the United States must make to counter violent extremists include:

1. Make concrete changes to U.S. policies impacting Muslim-majority countries. The most important thing the United States can do is change the policies that do nothing to make Americans safer yet undermine U.S. credibility and support around the world. Four key policies changes are necessary to fight the battle of ideas more effectively:

- **Make a clear statement that the U.S. has no intention to occupy or maintain permanent bases in Iraq or any other Muslim-majority country.** The open-ended commitment of U.S. troops to Iraq has been a boon for our terrorist enemies who have used the troop presence as a rallying cry and recruitment tool. The United States should make clear it has no interest in subjugating or occupying Iraq or any other Muslim-majority country. President Bush should make a clear statement that the United States seeks no permanent military bases in Iraq.

- **Act as a constructive force for building a better future and greater stability in the Middle East.** The United States should stress that its goal is to build a better future in a more stable

Middle East. Instability, insecurity, and lack of hope in the region trigger turmoil and harm U.S. and global security. One key step forward in the regional stability and security equation requires high-level ongoing U.S. attention in moving Israelis and Palestinians toward resolving their conflict. Such attention has been lacking consistency over the last five years. Neither the conflict nor the region responds well to the resulting vacuum. These efforts should include encouraging the development of a pragmatic Palestinian leadership, while showing no tolerance for militant actions. Intense and sustained U.S. involvement in working to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will accrue to the U.S. benefit in other efforts that serve regional stability and U.S. security interests, such as a U.S.-led multilateral security framework in the Gulf.

- **Support political and economic reform in Muslim-majority countries.** The United States should not let its interest in greater regional stability become a code word for support for authoritarian governments and dictatorships. It should develop long-term plans with non-governmental organizations to support advocates for freedom and democracy in the region and support programs that recognize that political and economic reform requires a consistent, sustained generational effort.

- **Offer humanitarian and development programs in times of crises.** Two of the most successful efforts to fight the battle of ideas and perceptions in the last five years came in Indonesia and Pakistan. In the wake of the devastating tsunami in Asia, Indonesia saw a sharp increase in favorable attitudes towards the United States after the U.S. military provided much-needed assistance to tsunami victims. Pakistan witnessed a similar trend after the U.S. worked to provide assistance to earthquake victims in 2005.

2. Reengage allies and strengthen global alliances. The United States needs to reengage allies and build sustainable alliances that serve as a solid platform for multilateral cooperation, rather than relying on ad hoc "coalitions of the willing." The Bush administration's continued emphasis on preventive war and unilateral approaches in its latest national security strategy is the wrong approach.

3. Develop better intelligence capabilities to understand our enemies. Nearly five years after September 11th, and the United States government still lacks a sufficient number of experts with the language and cultural expertise to help the United States engage more effectively in the battle of ideas against radical extremists. The United States should develop a new generation of intelligence analysts and operatives with the skills to speak Arabic, Pashto, Dari, Urdu, and other critical languages.

The Bush administration's mistakes in misunderstanding the enemy that the United States faces are part of the problem with the failed policies. President Bush has taken the bait of terrorist leaders like Al Qaeda deputy Ayman Al-Zawahiri and Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi and implemented policies that have helped these terrorist extremists increase their status and advance their goals. By maintaining a large U.S. military presence in Iraq for more than three years, the Bush administration has fed perceptions of occupation. By amplifying and overemphasizing the stated goals of radical fringe groups on establishing a radical Sunni Muslim caliphate in Iraq, the Bush administration has misled the U.S. public. Even if all U.S. forces left Iraq tomorrow, the chances for a Sunni caliphate emerging in Iraq are slim, since Sunnis represent less than 20 percent of the population and would face strong opposition from the Shiite majority and a relatively secular Kurdish leadership.

A corps of intelligence professionals with the skills to understand the nature of the challenge will help prevent future policy blunders and ground U.S. strategy in the complex reality of today's world, rather than the simple academic theories or ideologies of a few top advisors to the president.

4. Update U.S. global communications strategies to fight the battle of ideas more effectively. In addition to making important shifts in policies that affect Muslim-majority countries and reforming our intelligence agencies, the United States should update the way it actually communicates its policies and values to the rest of the world. The battle of ideas against violent extremists and their radical ideologies requires a broad shift in how the United States communicates.

Under the Bush administration, the United States still operates with a Cold War mindset in a world that has seen a significant global media transformation led by the spread of the Internet and other forms of new media. Though the United States has begun to implement some reforms to reflect changes in the global media environment, it still supports programs that have little impact on how global audiences view the United States. For example, the Bush administration has supported outdated and irrelevant forms of public diplomacy through Radio Sawa and Al Hurra television — U.S.-funded Arabic language stations that have done little to change broad societal perceptions about the United States in the Arab world.

Instead, the United States should dedicate more resources to engaging in the battle of ideas on the media outlets that already exist. It should develop a corps of diplomats and Foreign Service officers who have the language and media skills to engage in discussions and debates about U.S. policy on private satellite television channels and media outlets already popular around the world such as

Al Jazeera. The United States government should also strengthen its capacity to provide 24-hour, seven-day-a-week rapid communications responses to events around the globe.

5. Develop long-term efforts to support the creation of democratic institutions and enhance press freedom. Finally, the United States must continue supporting freedom and democracy in the world — but it should move beyond President Bush's naïve and shortcut approach of focusing on elections. During the last year, important elections occurred in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories. But in all of these cases, elections did not represent a meaningful step toward democracy. In some cases, the election results left the same old powers in place. In other cases, the elections brought new, radical voices to power, including some groups that proclaim and practice violence and terrorism. The United States should not shirk away from the difficult challenges associated with advancing freedom and democracy. But it would be a grave mistake to continue on the path that President Bush has set, based on a naïve belief that democracy promotion defined largely as elections alone will defeat terrorism.

Instead of looking for short-term advances and photo opportunities associated with elections, the United States should develop long-term programs to support the creation of democratic institutions around the world. The United States should look beyond election cycles and develop programs to support efforts by countries to strengthen the rule of law. It should also support long-term efforts to fight corruption and increase administrative and management skills in government ministries. It should make long-term commitments to strengthening civil society and helping advocates for women's rights develop their abilities to influence debate in their societies.

Finally, the United States must be a strong advocate for press freedom around the world. If it is going to see progress in its goals of defeating violent extremists and radical ideologies, the United States should take steps to promote press freedom in all regards – legal, political, and economic freedom — and it should support efforts to increase professional reporting standards around the world.

That is why using the private public relations contractor, the Lincoln Group, is counterproductive. In December 2005, the U.S. press revealed that the Lincoln Group made payments to Iraqi newspaper editors to publish stories that were favorable to the United States. Bribing newspaper editors to advance a particular story or get facts out defeats the ultimate goal of fighting the conspiracy theories dominant among radical extremists groups. It also feeds perceptions that the United States is seeking to dominate and control countries.

Instead of seeking immediate and short-term gains, the United States should use its power and resources to advance long-term reforms in other countries. Markets work — and free markets of information can help people obtain the information and ideas they need to understand how to advance their interests. The openness and transparency of a democratic system will ultimately help U.S. values defeat the retrograde and hateful radical ideologies of extremists and global terrorist networks.

To be the most effective supporter of freedom in the world, the United States should not cut corners. It should update its approach to public diplomacy to match with the complex reality that exists in today's global media landscape and seek to articulate U.S. values and interests more clearly than the Bush administration has.