



Should we stay or should we go? The US debate on exiting Iraq

Project on Defense Alternatives Briefing Memo #32

8 March 2005

Carl Conetta

Index

1. Introduction
2. The Bush administration's declaratory goals for Iraq
3. The security threshold: a ten-year mission?
4. The value of time lines and an exit strategy
5. The Bush administration's Iraq exit strategies
6. Congressional alternatives: Recent Democratic proposals for withdrawal
7. Signaling what to whom?
8. Militarizing the so-called "Pottery Barn rule"
9. The potential destabilizing effects of precipitous withdrawal
10. Democrats inside and outside the box
11. Uncertain sentiments: public opinion on withdrawal
12. "Our exit strategy is success" – and other *non sequiturs*

1. Introduction

The 31 January 2005 election in Iraq was a milestone in the country's postwar development and it has prompted many in Washington to begin debating the prospect of withdrawing US troops. Adding urgency to this debate have been several other, less auspicious milestones: the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom's third year and the occurrence of the 1500th US military fatality associated with the mission. Another factor is the financial cost of the mission. Counting the President's January 2005 supplemental funding request, almost \$200 billion has been allotted for military operations and reconstruction efforts in Iraq as of February 2005;{1} the total will surely rise significantly above \$200 billion before the end of 2005.

Not included in these sums are the funds that will be needed to bring the armed services back to their prewar readiness levels once the operation ends. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the Army alone will require \$20 billion for equipment overhaul and replacement due to the war.{2} The Army itself sets the figure higher: \$35 billion -- although this estimate includes the cost of replenishing depleted war stocks. The other effects of today's extraordinarily high tempo on the armed services – which involve troop morale, recruitment, retention, and training – are harder to quantify. But they are substantial.{3}

Perhaps of greatest concern is that, despite two years of effort and the recent Iraqi elections, there is no end in sight for the mission as presently defined or for the costs associated with it. The insurgency that bedevils the mission seems to be both intractable and growing.{4} And many critics argue that the occupation is doing more to fuel the insurgency than douse it.

2. The Bush administration's declaratory goals for Iraq

In his 2005 State of the Union address President Bush described the US objective in Iraq as “A country that is democratic, representative of all its people, at peace with its neighbors and able to defend itself.”{5} Regarding the withdrawal of US troops, he asserted: “[W]hen that result is achieved, our men and women serving in Iraq will return home.” But each of the operative goals for Iraq mentioned by the President – democracy, peace, and the capacity for self-defense – are generalities. They each admit a variety of definitions, inclusions, and thresholds. Certainly, the President intends the goals for Iraq to include internal stability and freedom from terrorism, for instance. In November 2003 an official of the former Coalition Provisional Authority more fully described the desired end state as:

A durable peace for a united and stable, democratic Iraq that provides effective and representative government for and by the Iraqi people; is underpinned by new and protected freedoms and a growing market economy; and no longer poses a threat to its neighbors or international security and is able to defend itself.{6}

This statement does not specify the President's goals so much as it unpacks them -- and then only partially. And the problem of thresholds remain. When will any of these goals be said to be satisfactorily and durably attained? Many nations are pursuing development along these lines, but relatively few can be said to have decisively crossed the finish lines. As long as military occupation is tied to goals so vaguely stated, the stay of US troops in Iraq should be regarded as indefinite. (And, indeed, infrastructure preparations are underway that would support the stationing of large numbers of US troops in Iraq indefinitely.){7}

3. The security threshold: a ten year mission?

In other statements administration officials have linked the US troop presence – at least at its current levels – closely to the status of Iraqi security forces. During her confirmation hearings, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said, “Our forces will be relieved when we can get Iraq security forces up and running.”{8} Speaking directly to questions about a timetable for withdrawal, President Bush said on 3 February 2005:

You don't set timetables. You don't want the enemy to say, okay, we'll just wait them out. The timetable is as soon as possible. And it's going to be based upon the willingness and the capacity of the Iraqi troops to fight the enemy.”{9}

Although well-constructed, these statements are less straight-forward than they seem. What constitutes “up and running”? How much Iraqi defense capacity is enough and how is it to be measured?

At the time of her confirmation hearings Secretary Rice asserted that Iraq had 120,000 trained and ready security force personnel at its disposal, which was somewhat more than 40 percent of the stated requirement.{10} Because serious force development efforts have been underway for only a year, and the Administration intends to substantially improve and accelerate these efforts, can we surmise that the target goal might be reached in less than 18 additional months? Or has the administration seriously overstated the current readiness level of the Iraqi security forces, as an analysis by researcher Anthony Cordesman suggests:

By the end of 2004, there may not even have been the equivalent of 12,000 reliable, well-trained, well-equipped Iraqi troops that could engage serious insurgent resistance. There were only one or two battalions with any track record of operating on their own without extensive US support, and Iraq's first mechanized battalion did not become operational until mid-January 2005.{11}

If Cordesman is correct, then the Iraqi army and national guard could be years away from the target force of 90+ capable battalions – depending on the level of effort the coalition intends to invest in Iraqi force development, which is unclear. Of course, a truly capable army would have to have structures and a capacity to fight above the battalion level, as well as an extensive support, command, and communication infrastructure. And, if Iraq is to be able to independently defend itself against conventional nation-state challengers, not just internal foes, there will have to be among its units 40+ mechanized and armored battalions, as well as a small but adept air force. Completing force developments this extensive could take ten years – depending on the quality sought and assuming that these developments are “from scratch”.{12}

Coincidentally, ten years also is a common estimate for how long it takes to beat an insurgency – in those cases where they can be beaten.{13} (Some insurgencies -- such as the Vietnamese, Palestinian, and Irish -- lasted much longer.)

Will large numbers of American troops have to be on the ground in Iraq for the full duration of force development and counter-insurgency efforts? If so, the total cost to America might easily surpass 7,000 lives lost, 40,000 casualties, and \$600 billion dollars. But it is impossible to tell from official statements and remarks what the Bush administration is thinking and planning on this count.

4. The value of time lines and an exit strategy

In light of the above considerations, the value of projecting a mission time line (even if provisional) is that it requires us to operationalize -- that is, make “testable” or “actionable” -- our view of a situation as well as our assumptions, goals, plans, and allocation of resources. It makes an objective assessment of these easier, while encouraging clarity, discipline, and the early and honest disclosure of problems. By contrast, the lack of such constraints in planning gives license to impractical goals, faulty assumptions, and incompetent execution. Problems and costs are both simply allowed to accumulate. For this reason, no one would reasonably contract to have a house built, for instance, without some type of blueprint, schedule, and budget.{14} And the fact that schedules and budgets both tend to slip does not weaken, but instead strengthens this imperative.

An exit strategy would not only clearly articulate the desired “end state” or threshold conditions that would prompt military disengagement, it would also explain how these conditions are supposed to be achieved.

Step by step, it would relate coalition actions and resource expenditures to positive changes in conditions (milestones); and it would relate these in turn to a reduced demand for US forces and to their redeployment home. Each step or phase would have an expected duration with best- and worst- case variations. An adequate strategy would also map out alternative options or pathways -- “detours” that inadvertent developments might cause, and these would affect the time-line. The resulting plan would have a “time goal” associated with it, but would also incorporate a “time range” reflecting worst-case scenarios and alternative options. Given this

degree of specification, the plan and its constituent parts would be more subject to plausibility assessments than is the case presently.

Although the Bush administration refuses to publicly espouse a time line, as either a goal or expectation, they are most likely conducting the Iraq operation with one in mind. This much would be required for budget planning purposes and in order to integrate Iraq force rotations with other military missions and functions.

5. The Bush administration's Iraq exit strategies

Publicly, the administration does admit to a rudimentary or broad-brush "exit strategy". Critics who suggest it simply lacks one are striking at a straw man. In fact, the Administration has had several, successive exit strategies. These relate principally to the insurgency and probably are meant to cover most but not all of the US troops currently deployed in Iraq.

The strategy that held sway from August 2003 until recently foresaw wearing down the insurgents through raids of increasing precision, while gradually building up indigenous force capabilities. As Defense Secretary Rumsfeld stated it on 14 September 2004:

At some point the Iraqis will get tired of getting killed and we'll have enough of the Iraqi security forces that they can take over responsibility for governing that country and we'll be able to pare down the coalition security forces in the country.{15}

But neither leg of the "wearing down, building up" strategy worked as planned. The Coalition's counter-insurgent activities grew in scope and intensity, but so did the insurgency. And efforts to build-up indigenous security forces were desultory; they received no real emphasis until spring 2004, after the Coalition had decided to accelerate the formation of an Iraqi government. The Iraqi forces that were fielded proved, for the most part, to be incapable of effective action against the insurgents. The problem was not only insufficient preparation, but also poor motivation and uncertain loyalty.

The *London Times* reported one senior coalition officer as recognizing in late February 2005 that:

The coalition has become a catalyst in this mess. We have realized that so long as we remain we will be a catalyst for violence and unease in a society that basically needs to mend itself.{16}

This speaks to an apparent "self-fueling" dynamic between the insurgency and the Coalition's counter-insurgent efforts. In this light, the coalition's strategy was adjusted in early 2005. Henceforth, a greater effort would be made to train and deploy Iraqi forces, so that Coalition forces could serve in roles of diminishing visibility -- as advisors and trainers. The political complement to this was the January 2005 election, which was supposed to win more support for the new Iraqi order both inside Iraq and internationally. The Coalition has hoped that increased international support would take the form of more assistance in the training mission.

The effect of the elections on the insurgency is not yet clear. Given the high turnout among Shiites and the rise of a government led by Shiite parties, grassroots anti-government dissent among Shiites should abate -- at least for a while. And the Shiite militias may become more fully integrated in the security forces. But, ever since Moqtada Sadr and his Mahdi Army stood down in August 2004, the principal problem has not been in Shiite majority areas, but in Sunni ones.

Moreover, the election process, which went forward despite Sunni calls for delay, has produced an “ethnicized” government – one dominated by Kurds and Shiites. This is not likely to increase Sunni support for the postwar order.

Just as serious, the planned change in military strategy seems unrealistic -- even contradictory. It assumes that the demands of the counter-insurgency campaign will allow US troops to step back from their current forward role to assume a new one emphasizing the support and training of Iraqi troops. This might have been possible if last year’s “wearing down, building up” strategy had been more successful. Indeed, the new approach seems more like a second phase of the first than an alternative to it. But it is the failure of the earlier approach, not its success, that motivated the change in strategy.

From where will the needed slack in Coalition counter-insurgency efforts come in order to allow a redirection of resources? How fast and how much can Iraqi unit performance be improved by the addition of US advisors? If it takes six months or a year, then the supposed positive effect of bringing Iraqis to the fore will also be delayed. Moreover, to the extent that Iraqi units are brought forward to lead the fight, their calming effect should be doubted. After all, these units will likely be predominantly Kurdish and Shiite in composition -- with a mission of riding herd on restive Sunnis. For these reasons, it is likely that the insurgency will not abate, but continue to pull Coalition troops away from the training mission and into a leading combat role. In sum: the new strategy seems ridden with contradiction.

6. Congressional alternatives: Recent Democratic proposals for withdrawal

Three proposals for troop withdrawals have been offered by Democrats in Congress, although none are supported by the Democratic leadership.

Rep. Lynn Woolsey (CA) suggests convening an international peacekeeping force to assist the Iraqi government in security matters and simultaneously beginning a relatively rapid withdrawal of US troops.{17}

Rep. Marty Meehan has proposed reducing the US military presence to about 30,000 personnel within 18 months; the remaining troops would provide the Iraqi security forces with ongoing training and combat assistance.{18}

Senator Edward Kennedy has proposed the most elaborate plan.{19} Among its provisions are that the United Nations assume responsibility for guiding the further political development of the Iraqi government, that the United States pursue a regional diplomatic initiative to prevent intervention by other powers, and that the United States begin a phased troop withdrawal with the aim of completing the drawdown as early as possible in 2006.

Both the Kennedy and Meehan plans place great emphasis on accelerating the training of Iraqi forces. And all three take as a central premise the proposition that the US military occupation has become the principal motivator of the insurgency and “rejectionism” more broadly. It is the announcement of a time line for US withdrawal that is supposed to significantly deflate the insurgency.

Some Congressional Republicans have shown interest in advancing the discussion of withdrawal, but none seem to have suggested a withdrawal time table or called for an explicit

exit strategy. Rep. Howard Coble (R-NC) has said that it is time to start thinking about withdrawal and handing more responsibility over to the Iraqi government and security forces.^{20} Similarly, Rep. Jim Leach (R-Iowa) has argued for thinking seriously about a plan for disengaging troops gradually, after the election.^{21} Senator Chuck Hagel has suggested that the Administration clarify when it foresees withdrawing troops.

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco), while calling for an exit strategy with clear benchmarks, do not advocate setting a time table.^{22} Indeed, Reid has called that approach “unwise” and Pelosi has argued that the issue of withdrawal “is not about a calendar, it’s about performance.” Also opposing a time table, Sen. John F. Kerry has linked withdrawal to the achievement of security and stability in Iraq – a position surprisingly close to that of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.^{23} Similarly, Senator Hillary Clinton announced her opposition to a public deadline for US troop withdrawal, arguing that it would send the wrong signal to the Iraqi insurgents.^{24} Senator Clinton’s concern about “sending the wrong signal” echoes the view propounded earlier in the year by both William Kristol and the President himself.^{25}

7. Signaling what to whom?

The proponents of withdrawal strategies are not insensitive to the power and importance of “signaling”, they simply put it in the context of a more complex set of relationships than the Administration’s strategy will allow. Corresponding to its military-centric approach, the Bush administration fixates on the “coalition versus insurgents” couplet. (Thus, even the issue of whether or not to delay the recent elections was cast in terms of its impact on the insurgency.) Of course, the signaling effect of any course of action would not be uniform across the spectrum of insurgent groups. And the effects on other audiences would be equally important:

At minimum, the relevant audiences inside Iraq include not just the insurgents, but also non-violent “rejectionists”, who may lend varying levels of support to the insurgency.

More broadly, grassroots sentiment in the Sunni and Shiite communities is strongly “anti-occupation” and quite sensitive to the signal sent by constant foreign military patrols (12,000 per week) and check-points, raids (8,000 total since May 2003), citizen round-ups (80,000 detained since April 2003), and the collateral damage associated with these actions.

The insurgents themselves are a varied lot comprising committed foreign extremists, former regime diehards, criminals, and a larger group of contingent players or “fence sitters”: disgruntled former soldiers, unemployed young men, tribalists, and local fundamentalists. The “fence-sitters”, who are motivated by quasi-nationalist sentiments or a sense of injury, would probably have a response to US withdrawal that differs significantly from that of the committed terrorist and former regime elements.

Another key constituency comprises the many groups who have elected to “work with the coalition” but who remain divided among themselves and susceptible to “free-riding” the US mission.

What matters in assessing the “signal” sent by withdrawal proposals is the net effect on all these audiences. Proponents of withdrawal aim to divide the insurgency, strip away its popular support, and impel the Iraqi governing factions to curtail their infighting and assume more collective responsibility for the Iraqi prospect. Although a US withdrawal plan might also have

the effect of encouraging hardcore fighters to “wait out” the coalition, proponents calculate that its net effect would be to leave the diehards less able to draw new recruits and other forms of local support.

8. Militarizing the so-called “Pottery Barn rule”

Another impediment to a wider embrace of withdrawal proposals is a sense of responsibility for the postwar order in Iraq. This has been codified in the popular press as the “Pottery Barn Rule” – “you break it, you own it” – and it influences the thinking of both supporters and opponents of the original decision to go to war. It was first expressed by former Secretary of State Colin Powell in his pre-war consultations with President Bush.^{26} Rep. Ellen Tauscher (D-CA), in stating her opposition to setting withdrawal time tables, refigures the idea this way: The situation in Iraq “is a mess, but it's our mess.”^{27}

Of course, bearing a responsibility toward Iraq does not necessarily imply occupying it with armed forces. Those who nonetheless understand this responsibility primarily in military terms, clearly assume that the occupation is not driving the insurgency, as withdrawal proponents contend. If it were a key stimulus to violence and rejectionism, then it could be construed to perpetuate, rather than correct the process of “breaking” that began 19 March 2003. At any rate, all three proposals complement withdrawal with provisions to address lingering security problems. And none assume an end to reconstruction assistance.

9. The potential destabilizing effects of precipitous withdrawal

Former US secretaries of state Henry Kissinger and George Shultz offered a Realist assessment of the problems that might attend a quick US troop withdrawal in a 25 January 2005 editorial piece:

A precipitate American withdrawal is almost certain to cause a civil war that would dwarf Yugoslavia's, and it will be compounded as neighbors escalate their current involvement into full-scale intervention.^{28}

Only Rep. Woolsey’s proposal might be considered “precipitate” in objective terms; it aims to end the occupation almost as quickly as logistical matters allow. By contrast, the Kennedy and Meehan plans assume a process lasting between one and two years, during which US efforts would focus on security- and stability-building measures. The Meehan plan actually leaves a significant force in place. However, the question remains: what if these measures fail or are insufficient? What if phased withdrawal does not have as salutary an effect as anticipated?

It seems in the spirit of both the Kennedy and Meehan plans that a short, *ad hoc* extension of the anticipated end dates would be acceptable -- although neither plan says so. As long as such an option is viewed as an emergency measure and not a planning assumption, it should not detract from the intended effect of working to meet time goals, which is to motivate and discipline the process of preparing the Iraqis to take the helm. Notably, both Kennedy’s and Woolsey’s proposal put some emphasis on internationalizing responsibility for Iraq. Progress in this should at least share out the burden of dealing with residual security problems.

Finally, in assessing these or any other withdrawal proposals, we should keep in mind that military occupation is not the only option at America’s disposal for addressing any persisting Iraqi security problems or needs. Short of occupation, the United States possesses incomparable capabilities, both military and non-military. Figuring how these might be applied

to deal with various potential post-occupation problems should be part of withdrawal planning.

10. Democrats inside and outside the box

The various proposals and demands for a new or clearer course of action evince different degrees of disquiet with administration policy: Some disagree with either the goals of the administration in Iraq or the strategy employed to achieve those goals, or both. Others seem to target the administration's incompetence in pursuing its chosen goals and strategy. Some only seek greater clarity regarding Administration policy and the costs it may incur.

Where the democratic proponents of withdrawal plans and other leading democrats part ways is in the extent to which they are willing to operate within the Administration's framework regarding Iraq. Whereas the democratic leadership calls on the administration to develop an "exit strategy" – a demand it has already met – the proponents of withdrawal plans challenge the Administration's strategy and war assessments as delusional. The withdrawal plan proponents also recognize that exit strategies cannot be meaningfully assessed without associated time goals. Most important, they target the "self-fueling" dynamic of the insurgent-counterinsurgent cycle, seeing the US military presence in Iraq as central to the current impasse. Thus, they refuse to accept that continuing the military occupation is a productive way to meet Iraq's security and stability need. Finally, they break with the administration's militarized view of the "signaling" problem, choosing instead to view it in a broader context.

11. Uncertain sentiments: public opinion on withdrawal

It is worth noting that, despite Americans' continuing concern about the war, proposals that aim or seem to aim for a complete withdrawal of troops in the near-term do not offer their proponents any reliable political advantage. This is made clear by recent US opinion polls on the withdrawal question.^{29} From a political perspective, the safest position for war critics is to complain that the administration's plan lacks clarity.

Recent polls suggest that, given the choice between keeping troops in Iraq until stability is achieved – even if that takes a long time – and bringing them all home as soon as possible, more Americans prefer to keep the troops in place. However, more also feel that some troops can be brought home now that the elections are complete. And a majority seem to feel that most can be brought home within a year. Interestingly, a majority incorrectly think that most Iraqis want American troops to remain.

While most Americans now think the war to have been a mistake, the President's approval rating regarding the war has not really deteriorated since the 2004 US election period. Nor is there a clear downward trend in how Americans view the progress of US forces; indeed, some polls show increased optimism regarding US military operations.^{30} Both these outcomes may have to do with the conduct of the Iraqi elections, more than anything else.

The polling results most negative for the President have to do with the administration's exit plans: substantial majorities think the President lacks a clear one.^{31}

12. Our exit strategy is success – and other *non sequiturs*

The Bush administration's response to the withdrawal debate has been to offer curt summaries

of its strategy or just plain bluster – like Secretary Rumsfeld’s November 2003 formulation: “Our exit strategy in Iraq is success. It’s that simple.”^{32} This is a nice rhetorical flourish, but it begs the question. “Success” does not constitute a strategy of any kind; Instead, it is what results when a wise strategy is competently applied in pursuit of realistic goals. It is precisely these three qualities that are being questioned in whole or part: the practicability of the administration goals, the wisdom of its strategy, and the competence of its practice. It is no answer to say that the nation will simply stay the course until it succeeds, when the course in question seems a dead end.

Along similar lines, some who support staying the current course say the nation should focus on a “victory strategy” not an “exit strategy”.^{33} But this framing of the issue is as evasive as saying that victory is our exit strategy. Calls for an exit strategy are meant to compel a clear specification of (1) the desired end state that defines “victory” and (2) a credible plan for achieving it. What motivates this is not an ill-founded impatience, but nearly two years of failed plans and expectations -- with no end in sight. And, of course, proponents of withdrawal plans argue that the administration’s current strategy cannot produce victory. Simply calling it a “victory strategy” in response does not improve it. It only muddies the debate.

Attention to exit strategies was associated during the Clinton administration with “humanitarian interventions” – such as Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans – that some judged to involve less than vital US interests. Characteristically, these operations were complex, involving limited objectives and less than decisive force. Also characteristically, the potential for either stagnation or mission creep (due to “broad mission statements with unclear end states”)^{34} was judged to be substantial. Thus, the emphasis on “exit strategies” was meant to limit costs and commitments when and where it seemed appropriate. Certainly, there are types of wars in which talk of “exit strategies” would be inappropriate at this stage – and the Second World War counts as the prime example.

Should a major war be forced upon a nation, imperiling its life or independence, the appropriate course would be to “pay any price” in order to defeat the aggression – however long the effort took. But, even then, this imperative would not apply to every individual battle or campaign of a war. Nor would it apply to the pursuit of ambitious postwar settlements. Finally, it would not apply to “wars of choice” or offensive wars – even when these involved advancing vital interests. In all these latter cases, a more normal cost/benefit calculus should apply.

Nonetheless, some commentators and analysts have taken to using the example of the Second World War to argue against the current attention to exit strategies. They argue that the commanders of the Second World War were not dogged by such complaints. But one of the issues that divides the administration and today’s proponents of withdrawal is whether the Iraq conflict, in fact, constitutes one like the Second World War or whether it is, instead, a contingency, a sideshow, a distraction, or even an impediment to a more important effort – the broader war on terrorism.

Yes, Churchill was not unduly bothered by “exit strategies”. The relevance of this to the present debate hinges on whether the postwar conflict in Iraq is comparable to the whole of World War II. Rather than trying to substantiate this comparison, the allusions to the Second World War usually just assume its validity. In this, they resemble much of the bluster and rhetoric that has met the withdrawal proposals, which seems calculated not to advance debate, but to confuse it.

Notes

1. US Department of State, "Bush Asks Congress for \$82 Billion for Iraq, Afghanistan; Funds also sought for tsunami relief, Palestinians," *Washington File*, 15 February 2005; George Edmonson, "Bush seeks \$82 billion more; Money will fund wars, foreign aid," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 15 February 2005, p. 6; Edward Alden and Demetri Sevastopuloin, "War costs for US push past \$200bn," *Financial Times*, 26 January 2005; and Steven M. Kosiak, *Funding for Defense, Military Operations, Homeland Security, and Related Activities since 9/11* (Washington DC: CSBA, 18 October 2004).

2. Bryan Bender, "War's 'hidden cost' called heavy," *Boston Globe*, 14 January 2005.

3. Effects of Iraq war on US military readiness:

For comprehensive coverage of this issue, see the *Occupation Distress* web page:
<http://www.comw.org/od/index.html>

Ann Scott Tyson, "Suicides in Marine Corps Rise by 29%," *Washington Post*, 25 February 2005;

Ann Scott Tyson, "Army Having Difficulty Meeting Goals in Recruiting," *Washington Post*, 21 February 2005;

Jon R. Anderson, "Reserve, Guard Units Will Have to Wait to Replace Gear Left in Mideast," *Stars and Stripes*, 18 February 2005;

Eric Schmitt, "Marines Come Up Short on Recruits," *New York Times*, 03 February 2005;

Mark Thompson, "Where Are the New Recruits? The National Guard and Army Reserve Are Drawing Fewer Enlistees," *Time Magazine*, 14 January 2005;

Jack Kelly, "Guard, Reserve Showing Strains; Experts Predict Serious Problems," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 18 December 2004;

Amy Klamper, "Lawmakers see funding shortfalls for military equipment, repairs," *Congress Daily*, 18 November 2004;

Megan Scully, "War Weighs Heavily on Humvees, Trucks," *Defense News*, 25 October 2004;

Carl Conetta, Charles Knight, Melissa Murphy, *Is the Iraq war sapping America's military power? Cautionary data and perspectives* (Cambridge MA: Project on Defense Alternatives, 22 October 2004); <http://www.comw.org/pda/041022milops.html>;

John Hendren and Mark Mazzetti, "Insurgency Threw a Wrench Into Military's Supply Planning; Despite improvements, the Army is still stretching to meet goals for equipping soldiers," *Los Angeles Times*, 19 October 2004, p. 9;

Thomas E. Ricks, "General Reported Shortages In Iraq; Situation Is Improved, Top Army Officials Say," *Washington Post*, 18 October 2004, p. 1;

Mark Mazzetti, "U.S. Military Is Stretched Too Thin, Defense Board Warns," *Los Angeles Times*, 30 September 2004;

Jeremy Barnicle and Leif Wellington Haase, *Legions Stretched Thin: The U.S. Army's Manpower Crisis* (Washington DC: The Century Foundation, 27 September 2004);

William Lind, "Destroying The National Guard ," *Washington Dispatch.com*, 27 September 2004;

Eric Schmitt, "General Warns of Looming Shortage of Specialists," *New York Times*, 17 September 2004;

Anne Plummer, "New Army Report: Supplemental Funds Not Enough to Reset Force," *Inside the Pentagon*, 9 September 2004;

Vince Crawley, "Pushed too far? Low morale spurs retention worries in the reserves," *Air Force Times*, 7 September 2004;

"Hefley Concerned About Impact of Current Ops On Depots," *Defense Daily*, 3 August 2004; and,

Adam J. Hebert, "A Plague of Accidents; Top leaders warn that USAF 'cannot tolerate nor sustain' the recent level of loss," *Air Force Magazine* (February 2004).

4. Tom Lasseter and Jonathan S. Landay, "Analysis: Iraqi insurgency growing larger, more effective," *Knight Ridder Newspapers*, 21 January 2005; Dana Priest and Thomas E. Ricks, "Growing Pessimism on Iraq; Doubts Increase Within US Security Agencies," *Washington Post*, 29 September 2004, p. 1; Douglas Jehl, "US Intelligence Shows Pessimism on Iraq's Future," *New York Times*, 16 September 2004; and, Scott Johnson and Babak Dehghanpisheh, "It's Worse Than You Think," *Newsweek*, 12 September 2004.

5. President George W. Bush, *State of the Union 2005* (Washington DC: Office of the Press Secretary, White House, 2 February 2005)

6. George Packer, "War after the War: What Washington doesn't see in Iraq," *The New Yorker*, 17 November 2003.

7. Eli Lake, "Amid Talk of Withdrawal, Pentagon Is Taking Steps For Longer Stay in Iraq," *New York Sun*, 14 January 2005; and, Christine Spolar, "14 'enduring bases' set in Iraq; Long-term military presence planned," *Chicago Tribune*, 23 March 2004.

8. Liz Sidoti, "Top administration officials won't put timetable on exit from Iraq," *Associated Press Worldstream*, 16 February 2005.

9. *President Discusses Strengthening Social Security in Montana*, transcript (Washington DC: White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 3 February 2005).

10. Transcript, "Confirmation Hearing of Condoleezza Rice," *New York Times*, 18 January 2005; <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/18/politics/18TEXT-RICE.html?ex=1110085200&en=a1f26fe8ab8bbfb4&ei=5070&oref=login&pagewanted=print&position=>

11. Anthony H. Cordesman (with Patrick Baetjer and Stephen Lanier), *Strengthening Iraqi Military and Security Forces*, working draft (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 28 January 2005), p. 62.

12. David H. Hackworth, "We've Danced This Dance Before," *DefenseWatch*, 14 February 2005.

13. The head of the USMC Center for Emerging Threats and Opportunities, Randolph Gangle, says with reference to the Iraq: "I could see this going on for 10 years." Jim Michaels and Charles Crain, "Insurgents showing no sign of letting up; US officers say attacks may continue for years," *USA Today*, 22 August 2004. The Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Meyers, cites seven to 12 years as the average duration of 20th century insurgencies. "Top US General Sees Lasting Iraq Insurgency," *Reuters*, 25 February 2005.

14. Of course, fighting wars is a different sort of activity than building houses. War involves contention between conscious opponents, which contributes to it being a chaotic enterprise. There are other non-standard features in war as well, lending to a degree of "fog" and "friction" not normally encountered in other types of activity. These factors led Field Marshall HKB von Moltke, founder of the German General Staff system, to observe that "No operation extends with any certainty beyond the first encounter with the main body of the enemy" – that is: no plan survives first contact. But this was not an argument against planning. It was an argument for flexibility in planning and the development of contingent options.

15. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, "Media Availability," presentation at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, *DOD News Transcript*, 14 September 2004.

16. Anthony Loyd, "Can the Iraqis crush a swarm of wasps?," *The Times* (London), 21 February 2005.

17. The Woolsey plan, endorsed by 24 other democrats including Dennis Kucinich, calls for the President to immediately commence the withdrawal of US troops and to convene an international meeting for the purpose of creating a peacekeeping force to assist Iraqi forces in maintaining the country's security. Although the proposal does not specify a time table for complete withdrawal, its thrust is to withdraw troops as soon as possible – perhaps within six months. Lynn Woolsey, et. al., *House Congressional Resolution 35: Expressing the sense of Congress that the President should develop and implement a plan to begin the immediate withdrawal of United States Armed Forces from Iraq*, 26 January 2005; www.woolsey.house.gov/newsarticle.asp?RecordID=401; and, Lynn Woolsey, et. al., *Letter to the President*, 12 January 2005; <http://www.woolsey.house.gov/supportingfiles/janpresltr.pdf>.

18. Meehan proposes that the United States draw down the majority of its forces by the end of 2005, leaving only 30,000 troops after mid-2006 to assist in security tasks and training. He argues that announcing a timetable for withdrawal over 12-18 months would change the underlying dynamic in several ways: First, by removing the taint of foreign control from the new government; second, by removing the factor -- foreign troops -- that unites the insurgent groups; third, by encouraging the governing factions in Iraq to cooperate and focus on building the government's capabilities. Meehan suggests structuring the withdrawal to create incentives for the insurgents to come to the negotiating table. Rep. Marty Meehan, "Iraq: Finding a Responsible Exit," remarks delivered at the Brookings Institution, 25 January 2005; www.house.gov/meehan/BrookingsSpeech.htm

19. Senator Edward Kennedy's plan has a five points: The first step involves mutual political disengagement between the United States and the new Iraqi government with the United Nations taking over the role of assisting the new government in its political development and composition of a new constitution. The second step would be to clarify that America intends no

long-term military presence. The third would be to negotiate and begin a withdrawal of US troops with the aim of completing the drawdown as soon as possible in 2006. The third would be a diplomatic initiative involving Iraq's neighbors and the Arab league with the aim of preventing intervention in Iraq's affairs and reducing the possibility of civil conflict. Finally, the Kennedy plan calls for an increased emphasis on training the Iraqi security forces. Notably, while calling for modest near term reductions, the plan does not lay out a hard and fast timetable or deadline for complete withdrawal. Kennedy has suggested only that time-linked goals or expectations might be set to help motivate the process; actual implementation would be contingent on the accomplishment of those goals. Senator Ted Kennedy, "America's Future in Iraq," remarks to the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, *Federal News Service*, 27 January 2005.

20. "NC Congressman Calls For Withdrawal From Iraq; Coble Among First To Publicly Push Pull Out," *Associated Press*, 10 January 2005.

21. Liz Sidoti, "Talk simmers in Congress of plans for withdrawing US troops," *Associated Press*, 27 January 2005.

22. Mary Curtius, "Democrats Shy From Iraq Exit Timetable; Leaders disagree with Kennedy's call for an immediate withdrawal of some troops; But they want Bush to detail a strategy for pulling out," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 February 2005, p. 12.

23. Brian Williams, "Guest: Sen. John Kerry", *Meet The Press*, 30 January 2005; Anne Gearan, "Rice links Iraq withdrawal to security," *Associated Press*, 18 January 2005; and Curtius, "Democrats Shy From Iraq Exit Timetable," *LAT*, 1 February 2005, p. 12.

24. "Sen. Clinton opposes deadline for withdrawing US troops," *Associated Press*, 20 February 2005.

25. On 25 January 2005 Kristol said: "[A]nnouncing a date simply tells the terrorists and the insurgents, I think, that they just have to hang on till this date and they have a chance to wreak more havoc. I think it dispirits our friends. I think an exit strategy, even announcing an exit strategy--well, let me put it this way: Focusing on an exit strategy rather than a victory strategy is the wrong thing to do at this point." On 3 February 2005, the President argued against timetables, saying: "You don't want the enemy to say, okay, we'll just wait them out." *President Discusses Strengthening Social Security in Montana*, transcript (Washington DC: White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 3 February 2005; and, William Kristol, discussant, *A Plan for US Troop Withdrawal: Congressman Meehan Offers a Plan*, Brookings Institution Briefing (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 25 January 2005; <http://www.brookings.edu/dybdocroot/comm/events/20050125.pdf>).

26. Douglas Jehl, "Powell Said to Have Warned Bush Before the War, a New Book Says," *New York Times*, 17 April 2004. Of course, an obvious rejoinder is that there is a difference between assisting a country in postwar reconstruction and stabilization, on the one hand, and actually occupying it. A side note with regard to the "Pottery Barn" rule: The company insists that they have no such policy. "'Pottery barn rule' is false," *UPI*, 20 April 2004.

27. Edward Epstein, "16 Dems urge Bush to start pullout from Iraq," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 January 2005, p. 10.

28. Henry A. Kissinger and George P. Shultz, op-ed, "Results, Not Timetables, Matter in Iraq,"

Washington Post, 25 January 2005, p. 15.

29. Recent polling results on troop withdrawal:

16-21 February: Do you think the US should keep military troops in Iraq until the situation has stabilized, or do you think the U.S. should bring its troops home as soon as possible? Stay until stabilized: 55%. Bring home ASAP: 42%. Pew Research Center for the People & the Press.

10-14 February 2005: Do you think that the United States should maintain its current troop level in Iraq to help secure peace and stability or should the United States now reduce its number of troops since the election has been held? Maintain: 41%. Reduce: 50%. NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll.

8-9 February 2005: Do you favor keeping a large number of US troops in Iraq until there is a stable government there or bringing most of our troops home in the next year? Wait until stable government: 39%. Bring home within a year: 59%. Harris Poll.

8-9 February 2005: Do you think most Iraqi citizens want U.S. troops to stay until things are more stabilized or do Iraqis want US troops to leave immediately? Iraqis want troops to stay: 53%. Iraqis want troops to leave: 35%. FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll.

25-26 January 2005: After the January 30 elections in Iraq, do you think the United States should start bringing some troops home or should U.S. troops stay until more stability is established? Start bringing home: 47%. Stay until more stability: 46%. FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll.

4-6 February 2005: Which comes closest to your view about what the U.S. should now do about the number of U.S. troops in Iraq? The US should send more troops to Iraq, or should keep the number of troops as it is now, or withdraw some troops, or withdraw all troops? Send more: 10%. Keep number steady: 38%. Withdraw some: 32%. Withdraw all: 17%. CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll.

14-18 January 2005: Should the United States troops stay in Iraq as long as it takes to make sure Iraq is a stable democracy, even if that takes a long time, or should U.S. troops leave Iraq as soon as possible, even if Iraq is not completely stable? As long as necessary: 51%. As soon as possible: 42%. CBS News/New York Times Poll.

Summary of poll results: "Iraq," *PollingReport.com*, 5 March 2005, pp. 1-2; <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq.htm>; and, <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq2.htm>

30. Polling results regarding progress in Iraq:

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press: How well is the US military effort in Iraq going?

16-21 Feb 2005: Fairly well or very well: 54%; Not too well or not well at all: 42%.

05-09 Jan 2005: Fairly well or very well: 48%; Not too well or not well at all: 49%.

15-19 Oct 2005: Fairly well or very well: 51%; Not too well or not well at all: 43%.

CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll: How would you say things are going for the US in Iraq?

04-06 Feb 2005: Very or moderately well: 53% Very of moderately badly: 46%
07-09 Jan 2005: Very or moderately well: 40% Very of moderately badly: 59%
24-26 Sept 2005: Very or moderately well: 46% Very of moderately badly: 52%

Summary of poll results: "Iraq," *PollingReport.com*, 5 March 2005, pp. 1-2;
<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq.htm>; and, <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq2.htm>

31. Recent polling results regarding Bush administration plan for Iraq:

16-21 February: "Do you think George W. Bush has a clear plan for bringing the situation in Iraq to a successful conclusion, or don't you think so?" Has a clear plan: 32%; Does not: 61 %.
Pew Research Center for the People & the Press.

14-18 January 2005: So far, do you think that George W. Bush has developed a clear plan for getting American troops out of Iraq, or hasn't he developed one yet?" Has a clear plan: 18%; Does not: 75%. CBS News/New York Times Poll.

Summary of poll results: "Iraq," *PollingReport.com*, 5 March 2005, pp. 1-2;
<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq.htm>; and, <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq2.htm>

32. "Let me be clear. The goal is not to reduce the number of U.S. forces in Iraq. It's not to develop an exit strategy. Our exit strategy in Iraq is success. It's that simple." Gerry J. Gilmore, "Success' is Exit Strategy in Iraq, Rumsfeld Says," *American Forces Press Service*, 10 November 2003.

33. William Kristol, discussant, *A Plan for US Troop Withdrawal: Congressman Meehan Offers a Plan*, Brookings Institution Briefing (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 25 January 2005 <http://www.brookings.edu/dybdocroot/comm/events/20050125.pdf>; William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Exit Strategy or Victory Strategy?", *Weekly Standard*, 17 November 2003; and, Senator John McCain, *Our Exit Strategy in Iraq Is Victory* (Washington DC: Office of Senator John McCain, 5 November 2003).

34. Major General SL Amold, "Somalia: An Operation Other Than War," *Military Review* (December 1993).

35. Arnold Beichman, "Exit strategy chorus," *Washington Times*, 4 February 2005; and, Clifford D. May, "No Exit; The Choice is Between a Strategy for Victory -- or Defeat," *Scripps Howard News Service*, 3 February 2005.