

Memorandum – Policy Brief for Decision-Maker:
“Post-election Iraq and possible political and military strategies”
as if prepared for Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi

Memorandum prepared by
Benedikt Wahler

Prepared for the Research Seminar “War in the Modern World”
by Professor Eliot A. Cohen, PhD

February 9, 2005

The Johns Hopkins University
The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)
Washington, DC

Memorandum

To: Interim Prime Minister Allawi

Date: 9 February 2005

From: National Security and Political Advisers to the Prime Minister

Subject: Post-election Iraq and possible political and military strategies

1. Your list appears to obtain some 10% of final votes. As the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) will get some 50+ %, and Kurdish parties some 20% they are likely to form a coalition with the necessary 2/3, without your participation. Meanwhile, you should set for any new government an agenda that enhances Iraqi stability and prepare to leverage your minority role in the constitutional process.
2. Given the limited backing, you will have to rethink the concept for your party. Widening the party's appeal among all groups of Iraqis may be achieved by extending the party organization on the ground, drawing up a moderate, specific agenda, and recruiting candidates with expertise in political and especially economic affairs. Growth and well-being are likely to feature more prominently in the next elections, after key constitutional decisions have been made. You might have to relinquish party leadership to a more neutral figure for the moment, controlling from backstage, as you are still too closely associated with the resented occupation and attack on Fallujah.
3. The UIA has already demanded to nominate president and prime minister. They agree that Islam should be the principal source of legislation without seeking outright clerical rule. Securing minority rights is thus the foremost challenge in the constitutional process, and presents a political opportunity for you. UIA should be treated as what it is: a loose coalition. Disagreements about key articles should be exploited to cut cross-party agreements to ensure the most pluralist and secular ones achievable. Room for maneuver will be limited, though, as vociferous opposition from major Shiite clerics dooms any referendum. The main bone of contention will be replacement of civil law with Islamic canon law. The decisive question is how wide-ranging the substitution will be. We advise to attempt to draw a definite line at personal status law, which could be differentiated by denomination as in other Arab countries, and avoid if possible its application to other spheres (e.g. commercial law).
4. An ally in this struggle could be found in the Kurdish parties likely to be in government, who prefer civil law but at the cost of a weak federal government. Checking centrifugal tendencies mainly from Kurds is vital for a viable Iraq. We should try to avoid at all cost one united exclusively Kurdish province. This is essential to fend off any hostile action from either Turkey, Syria or Iran if they believe Kurdish separation to be imminent. Relations with Turkey can be severely harmed if we fail to visibly protect Turkmen minority rights in the new constitution. Chaldean Christians in Nineveh province may cause a similar problem with regard to the US (Christian lobby groups). A solution may lie in the creation of a separate province containing oil-rich Kirkuk and areas to the south and west so Kurds don't hold a natural majority there but have to cooperate with Arabs and Turkmen.
5. Turnout in Sunni areas was disappointing; their representation in parliament will be minimal. Their potential to disrupt Iraq's future requires to rapidly seek alternatives of engaging them. Also, the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) stipulates that 2/3 of the voters of three Sunni provinces could subvert the ratification of any permanent constitution. Constitution writing expert committees appear an adequate place for more parity. Sunni clerics (esp. Sunni Muslim Scholars Association) and local tribal chiefs are the only evident interlocutors able to wage any considerable influence. Sunni exiles like Pachachi or Chalabi lack local backing or are discredited. A proposal that could limit Shiite influence in Iraq and find interest with UIA moderates is the creation of an limited-power upper house where Sunni and Kurd Senators can hold a potential Shi'a government in partial check.
6. This provision of the TAL provides an opening for a potential obstructionist strategy that might suit you if the proposed constitution is too unfavorable. Organizing rejection in 3 provinces, you may obtain new elections in which -with higher Sunni participation- you might do better. However, we advise against such a strategy under most circumstances, as a Shiite coalition is likely to continue to obtain a majority and political instability may be the only outcome if this strategy is repeated.
7. The Sadr Movement appears to come in third in the South. The remaining effects of Muqtada's militarization of the movement need to be tackled first of all economically, as supporters are mostly poor young city dwellers. They do not have a wider backing in the community as last years riots in Najaf, Kut and Kerbala showed but continue to possess a relevant potential to cause trouble.

Grooming leaders with the political process and followers in the rebuilding efforts appears most promising to avoid a North Ireland scenario of the latter moving into crime.

8. While 2500 - 3000 insurgents are being apprehended or killed monthly, the insurgency has not lost strength significantly at about 13,000 and 17,000 rebels. With only about 500 foreigners, it is mostly homegrown. Still 34 "most wanted" and high Ba'ath officials are at large; information gathering and attacks need to be concentrated on this infrastructure of the insurgency. Any effort hoping to be successful must proceed also at the political and economic level as it should with al-Sadr's forces.

9. Restoration of basic services is an absolute priority or no government can hope to maintain goodwill. Electricity availability has fallen from 13 to 9 hours since November. Lack of lighting obviously diminishes the reality and perception of security. Until now, subcontractors are mainly foreign, using foreign temporary workers – producing attractive targets for insurgents and worsening unemployment which stands at an unchanged 28-40%. Where feasible, companies with Iraqi employees should be awarded contracts. Contracts no longer fulfilled by foreign companies due to the security situation should be reviewed for re-assignment. Otherwise lack of security will continue to freeze development: only 1/8 of released international funds could be disbursed so far.

10. Crude oil production stands at 80% of the pre-war level, export only at 55%. Increasing production and securing transportation is essential for government revenues. For transportation of petrol and other commodities on trucks, security of major transit routes, especially to Jordan, is still a weak-point. A convoy-model as in anti-submarine warfare should be adopted instantly, preferably with air support to detect and hunt insurgents being in the vicinity to detonate their devices.

11. Review the conditions of the existing oil contracts and attempt to renegotiate where they were motivated by Saddam's efforts to end UN sanctions. Attempts at outright defaulting on these contracts would considerably burden relations which Iraq is likely to want to exploit for trade as well as debt rescheduling. Given Iraq's potential wealth, full cancelation of the 117 billion external debt is unlikely. Iraqi efforts should focus on achieving a generous long-term rescheduling instead.

12. Fallujah as a symbol and a fact needs to be rebuilt as soon as possible. While 250,000 inhabitants remain homeless and the city destroyed, it will only continue to fester incitement for Sunnis to resist. With action here the new government can at least try to disavow symbolically the action of last year as not its own to not totally poison any attempts at grooming relations with moderate Sunnis.

13. We need to achieve some leverage over the coordination of US military operations. The massive airstrike-approach of Falluja is grossly inadequate for counterinsurgency. It increases hostility to US troops, fomenting rather than suppressing support for and recruitment of insurgents. It has already tainted and will continue to taint the public image of any Iraqi government who does not stop this. Massive collateral damage is not irrelevant, it creates vendetta. 52% of Sunni Arabs say that attacking US personnel and facilities is justified, suggesting 2.5 million Iraqis positively inclined to the insurgency. It is essential to provide security in a way that antagonizes a minimum number of Sunnis. As the US military is stretched thin and prefers airpower to risking lives in urban fights, rapidly achieving a larger role for Iraqi security forces is essential for breaking this vicious circle.

14. Training of local forces needs to be sped up while but not at the cost of quality. A total of 136,065 are trained and equipped, 79,000 police, and 57,000 in the military. A barracked police on the Carabinieri-model could be the right recipe to get forces fit for the tough Iraqi security situation. We should press EU countries to specify and implement their offer to train senior police officers, prison administrators and judges to strengthen and speed up the build-up of Iraqi law enforcement, even if it has to be done outside of the country. When local forces are sufficiently strong to assert and hold control, foreign troops can and should retreat from public view while providing a mobile quick-reaction force to support local forces if under attack by main-force guerilla units.

15. Immediate end to the occupation is a demand of 82% of Sunnis, and even 69% of Shiites. Continued insecurity and attacks will not stop a growing tendency to demand at least a schedule for Coalition withdrawal. Partial retreat from relatively calm regions in the South may help us with this attitude as well as minimize the potential for incitement by troop presence and behavior. Basra et al. could well be controlled by loyal Shiite Iraqi forces, where they could also gain experience. Coalition forces should meanwhile be focuses at hot spots elsewhere. With a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy as suggested and training of Iraqi forces we may be able to resolve this problem in 2005.