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Chairman Snyder, Ranking Member Akin, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, and Committee staff, I am grateful for this opportunity to speak before you today.

Despite the massive U.S. investment in lives and dollars, the situation in Iraq is steadily deteriorating with no end in sight. I believe that the United States will not be able to bring peace and stability to Iraq in the next several years. Even in the long-term, ending the Iraqi civil war would require a far larger military and civilian commitment than we currently have—and even then the prospects for success are uncertain. Moreover, domestic political support for the Iraq mission is diminishing, making it difficult for the United States to bear the heavy burden of the war for years to come. Because I am skeptical of our chances for success and because I recognize the heavy human, financial, and diplomatic costs of remaining in Iraq, I reluctantly advocate substantially reducing our troop presence and abandoning our current policy that prioritizes defeating the insurgents and building the Iraqi state for a policy that actively aims to mitigate the consequences of U.S. drawdown. I do not take this stance lightly because I believe that a U.S. drawdown will have severe costs for the Iraqi people and could worsen several U.S. strategic interests in Iraq and in the region.

Unfortunately, just as administration officials "best-cased" the planning for the initial invasion of Iraq, critics of the war are making a similar mistake with regard to a U.S. withdrawal. Although it may seem like the situation cannot get worse, it easily can: the problems of Iraq could spill over into neighboring states and beyond.

It is imperative that the United States have a plan for containing the Iraqi civil war. As painful as it may be to admit that that the U.S. effort to bring peace and stability to Iraq has failed, our new priority must be to prevent the Iraqi conflict from spilling over and destabilizing neighboring states and fostering international terrorism. Washington must fundamentally shift its strategy: the emphasis should no longer be on solving the problems in Iraq, but rather limiting the impact of these problems on U.S. interests in the region and beyond. The United States should soon begin a significant drawdown of its military forces but must, at the same time, become even more involved in working with U.S. allies and other countries in the region to contain the civil war's spillover. This shift

will not be easy. But planning now and taking the first steps soon may allow the United States to mitigate the worst effects of the regional chaos that the Iraq war is producing.[1]

In this prepared statement I briefly outline the costs and risks of a more massive civil war in Iraq that would follow a U.S. troop withdrawal or significant drawdown. I then propose a set of more limited interests and goals, most of which concern the stability of the Middle East outside of Iraq, and suggest appropriate U.S. policies. I conclude by making recommendations for U.S. military forces in light of these policies. Because the focus of this hearing involves looking beyond current debates to alternative strategies, I do not assess the progress of the surge or other concerns regarding today's Iraq policy that are currently in the newspaper headlines.

The Costs of War to Iraq

By any measure Iraq is deeply embroiled in a civil war, and the scale of the violence is likely to grow should U.S. forces withdraw or significantly draw down. A full-blown civil war in Iraq has many disastrous repercussions. Without question, a wider Iraqi civil war would be a humanitarian nightmare. Based on the experiences of other recent major civil wars such as those in the former Yugoslavia, Lebanon, Somalia, Congo, Afghanistan, the Caucasus, and elsewhere, we should expect many hundreds of thousands or even millions of people to die with three to four times that number wounded. The same experiences suggest that refugees, both internally and externally displaced, will number in the millions—and the number for Iraq is already over two million. The United States has *intervened* in other civil wars to stop tragedies on this scale.

Of course, an Iraqi civil war will be even more painful for Americans to bear because, if it happens, it will be our fault. We will have launched the invasion and then failed to secure the peace, a failure that produced a civil war. For years to come Iraqis, Americans, and indeed most of the world will point their fingers at the U.S. government.

Our efforts to promote democracy in the Middle East are already badly damaged. In particular, the autocrats of the region argue that democratization is a recipe for disaster—ignoring all of the risks that democracy's more repressive alternatives may entail in terms of breeding more political instability in this troubled part of the world. Already in the popular mind in the Arab world the democratic gains in Iraq are being overwritten by the continuing violence and the sense that Iraqi governments are too subservient to the United States.

A full-blown civil war in Iraq could lead to the loss of most or all Iraqi oil production from the world market. Iraqi insurgents, militias, and organized crime rings are already wreaking havoc with Iraq's production and export infrastructure, generally keeping Iraqi production below prewar levels of about 2.2 million barrels per day (b/d), and far below Iraq's potential level of more than double this output. Larger and more widespread conflict would almost certainly drive down Iraq's oil export figures even

[1] This testimony draws on my book *Things Fall Apart: Containing the Spillover from an Iraqi Civil War* (Brookings, 2007) and article "Keeping the Lid On," *The National Interest* (May 2007), both of which are co-authored with Dr. Kenneth Pollack of the Saban Center of the Brookings Institution. My testimony today, however, goes well beyond what Dr. Pollack and I have written and represents only my own opinion.

farther. Thus, all-out civil war, even if it could be contained in Iraq, would put upward pressure on oil prices.

Possible Forms of Spillover

The collapse of Iraq into all-out civil war means more than just a humanitarian tragedy. Such a conflict is unlikely to contain itself. In other, similar cases of all-out civil war that also involve a failed state, the resulting spillover has fostered terrorism, created refugee flows that can destabilize the entire neighborhood, radicalized the populations of surrounding states and even sparked civil wars in other, neighboring states or transformed domestic strife into regional war.

Terrorists frequently find a home in states in civil war, as al-Qaeda did in Afghanistan. However, civil wars just as often breed new terrorist groups—Hizballah, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat of Algeria and the Tamil Tigers were all born of civil wars. Many such groups start by focusing on local targets but then shift to international attacks—starting with those they believe are aiding their enemies in the civil war.

This process is already underway in Iraq**;** the 2005 hotel bombings in Amman, Jordan, were organized from Iraqi territory, which enabled the terrorists to better evade Jordan's skilled security services. Iraq-based groups are also inspiring others to emulate their targets and tactics. As they regularly do in Iraq, jihadist terrorists have tried to strike Saudi Arabia's oil infrastructure, a switch from the jihadists' past avoidance of oil targets. Moreover, their Improved Explosive Device technologies are showing up in Afghanistan.[2] Suicide bombing, heretofore largely unknown in Afghanistan, is also now a regular occurrence, with the Iraq struggle providing a model to jihadists in al-Qaeda's former home. Fatah al-Islam, the jihadist organization behind much of the latest violence in Lebanon, has many members who trained in or were inspired by the conflict in Iraq.[3]

In turn, an ongoing civil war can contribute to the radicalization of populations in neighboring countries. Already, the war has heightened Shi'a-Sunni tension throughout the Middle East. In March 2006, after Sunni jihadists bombed the Shi'i Askariya Shrine in the northern Iraqi city of Samarra, over 100,000 Bahraini Shi'ah took to the streets in anger. Bahraini Shi'ah are simultaneously horrified at the suffering of their co-religionists in Iraq and emboldened by their political successes. As one Bahraini Shi'i politician noted, "Whenever things in Iraq go haywire, it reflects here."[4] Similar problems may occur in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and other countries that have sizable Shi'a minorities.

And as Iraq descends into further violence, the numbers of refugees will grow**.** Iraq has already generated roughly two million refugees with another one million internally displaced. These represent large groupings of embittered people who serve as a ready recruiting pool for armed groups still waging the civil war. And as the wars in

[2] Clay Wilson, "Improved Explosive Devices (IED) Technology in Iraq and Afghanistan: Effects and Countermeasures," Congressional Research Service, September 25, 2006, p. 2. http://research.fit.edu/fip/documents/SecNews1.pdf

[3] "Fatah Islam: Obscure Group Emerges as Lebanon's Newest Security Threat," *Associated Press*, May 20, 2007.

[4] As quoted in Hassan M. Fattah, "An Island Kingdom Feels the Ripples from Iraq and Iran," *New York Times*, April 16, 2006.

Africa's Great Lakes region shows**,** foreign countries where refugees find shelter can themselves become caught up in the civil war. At times the refugees simply bring the war with them: the fighters mingle with noncombatant refugees and launch attacks back in their home countries, while those who drove them out continue the fight against the refugees in their new bases. Neighboring governments may try to defend refugees on their soil from attacks by their enemies or at times exploit the refugees as a proxy for the governments' own ambitions. Moreover, large refugee flows can overstrain the economies and even change the demographic balances of small or weak neighboring states, upsetting what is often a delicate political balance.

Jordan appears at grave risk for refugee-based destabilization. Perhaps one million Iraqis have settled in Jordan, perhaps 20 percent of the population. Many of the initial refugees were relatively wealthy, but the new flows are poorer. Many are angry, and Jordan already has a Sunni jihadist problem of its own.

Then there is the "demonstration effect" caused when a civil war is about one group seeking separation or independence as the solution to its problems. At times, other groups in similar circumstances (either in the state in civil war or in neighboring countries) follow suit if the first group appears to have achieved some degree of success. Thus Slovenia's secession from Yugoslavia started the first of those civil wars, but it also provoked Croatia to declare its independence, which forced Bosnia to follow suit—and in both of the latter cases Serb enclaves within both countries themselves sought to secede from the seceding state and join with Serbia**.**

In Iraq, the most immediate secessionist concern is the Kurds: a people who have long deserved their own state but whose independence is opposed by many Iraqis and almost all of Iraq's neighbors. Kurdish leaders have so far behaved with admirable restraint, but as Iraq's problems mount and Kurdish popular support for independence (already high) grows, this could easily change.

All the problems created by these and other forms of spillover often provoke neighboring states to intervene—to stop the terrorism as Israel tried repeatedly in Lebanon when it fell into civil war, to halt the flow of refugees as the Europeans tried in Yugoslavia when civil war there, or to end (or respond to) the radicalization of their own population as Syria did in Lebanon. These interventions usually turn out badly for all involved. Iraq is already seeing both actual intervention and threats of intervention. Iran has hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of intelligence and paramilitary personnel in Iraq and is arming an array of Iraqi groups. Leaders of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan have all threatened interventions of their own, both to mollify domestic sentiment and to counter what they see as unchecked Iranian gains from Tehran's intervention.

First Do No Harm

If Iraq spirals into an all-out civil war, the United States will have its work cut out attempting to prevent spillover from destabilizing the region and threatening key governments, particularly Saudi Arabia. Not being prepared to quickly fall back to a containment posture will lead to an *ad hoc* approach that will involve many avoidable mistakes and missed opportunities.

One of the most difficult challenges for the United States is simply not to make a bad situation worse. Many of the policy options being discussed for Iraq, however, have the potential not only to fail, but to further undermine U.S. interests.

The first is not to try to pick "winners." The temptation for the United States to try to aid one Iraqi faction against another in an effort to manage the Iraqi civil war from within is enormous, and protecting some of our interests will at times require working with different sub-state groups in Iraq. Unfortunately, the historical reality suggests the limits of this approach. Proxies frequently fail in their assigned tasks or turn against their masters. As a result, such efforts rarely succeed, and in the specific circumstances of Iraq, such an effort appears particularly dubious.

Once an internal conflict has metastasized into all-out civil war, military leadership proves to be a crucial variable in determining which faction prevails (sooner or later). However, it is extremely difficult to know *a priori* who the great military commanders are. We know about Moqtada Sadr and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim but know very little about the field commanders of either the Mahdi Army or the Badr Organization, to name only the two best known Iraqi militias. And in some cases we don't even know the relevant militias, let alone their leaders.

Moreover, many communities are divided, fighting against one another more than against their supposed enemies. Commentators often speak of "the Shi'a" or "the Sunnis" as if they were discussing the Confederates or the Roundheads. In fact, Iraq's Shi'a population is fragmented among dozens of militias, many of which hate and fight one another as much as they hate and fight the Sunnis. It is an important element in the chaos of the country today and is attested to by recent battles in Amarah, where Jaysh al-Mahdi forces squared off against the Badr Brigade, and Diwaniyah, where Jaysh al-Mahdi forces fought Iraq's Shi'i-dominated security services, as well as the nightly bloodshed in Basra—all of which is Shi'a-on-Shi'a. Thus Iraq's Shi'a may go the way of the Palestinians or the various Lebanese factions, who generally killed more of their own than they killed of their declared enemies. What is true for the Shi'a is just as true for the Sunnis**.**

A second specific problem for the United States in trying to pick (or create) a winner in an Iraqi civil war is the question of how America would support its choice. Say we choose the Shi'a: all of the Shi'a militias are strongly anti-American or closely tied to Iran, and none of Iraq's Sunni neighbors (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan or Turkey) would help us to engineer a Shi'a militia conquest of Iraq. The Sunni neighbors would be glad to help us support a Sunni militia to gain control of the country, but most of these militias are closely aligned with Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia and other *salafi* jihadi groups—the principal target of the U.S. War on Terror**—**certainly an unpalatable choice.

And whichever group the United States chose to support would have to slaughter large numbers of people to prevail and establish control over the country—especially true in case of the Sunni Arabs, who make up no more than twenty percent of the population.

This is why some argue that the solution to civil war is partition**.** The basic problem with pursuing any version of partition today in Iraq is that it is probably impossible to do so without either causing the all-out civil war in the first place, or deploying the hundreds of thousands of American and other first-world troops whose absence has been the first-order problem preventing reconstruction from succeeding. Other than the Kurds, few Iraqis—whether political leaders, militia commanders or

ordinary citizens—want their country divided. And many of those who are fleeing their homes are not merely peacefully resettling in a more ethnically homogeneous region, but are joining vicious sectarian militias like the Mahdi Army in hope of regaining their homes or at least extracting revenge on whoever drove them out.

Nor is it clear that a move to partition would result in the neat division of Iraq into three smaller states, as many of its advocates seem to assume. As noted above, the Sunnis and the Shi'a are highly divided and are likely to fight amongst themselves, leading to regular war within the communities and a probable fracturing of power in areas where they predominate. Many militia leaders, particularly the Sadrists, have made clear that they intend to fight for all of the land they believe is "theirs", which seems to include considerable land that the Sunnis consider "theirs." Baghdad is one area of contention between Sunnis and Shi'a, but many major cities are also home to multiple communities. Much of Iraq's oil also lies in areas that are not peopled exclusively by one group.

The partition model most observers seem to have in mind is the former Yugoslavia. There, however, years of fighting preceded the partition, clarifying the relative balance of power of the parties involved. Perhaps more important, the communities had a degree of unity and clear leaders – Slobodan Milosovic and Franjo Tudjman, for example – who could command their followers to stop the fighting. Nuri al-Maliki and other Iraqi leaders cannot issue similar orders even if they wanted to. Iraq's civil war is just not yet "ripe" for a solution like partition, and therefore to impose it upon Iraq would require a far greater military commitment by the United States than the present one—closer to the troop to population ratio required to police the Bosnia partition, where the conflict actually was ripe for solution when Richard Holbrooke sat down at the negotiating table in Dayton.

In the end, after years of bloodshed and ethnic cleansing, a massive civil war in Iraq may eventually create conditions for a stable partition. And the United States should be prepared for this possibility. However, a major U.S. effort to enact partition today would be likely to trigger the massacres and ethnic cleansing the United States seeks to avert.

The Refugee Challenge

One of the most pressing issues is dealing with the refugee question—not only because of its negative impact on stability within Iraq but also the dangers posed to neighboring states. Because of our moral responsibility for the suffering in Iraq, many will want the United States to do something to try to "do something." Strategic necessity should reinforce our moral obligations**.**

One approach would be to create safe havens in Iraq's cities, but this would be a mistake. The various United Nations forays into Bosnia in the 1990s should remind us of how difficult such a strategy would be and how easily it could turn into a disaster. As the tragic experience of Bosnia demonstrates, Iraqi cities would require huge numbers of troops to keep them safe. In fact, this was the principle behind the first Baghdad security plan, which kicked off in the summer of 2006. That plan sought to increase security in the capital as the first step toward a gradual strategy of stabilizing the country and enabling reconstruction. It eventually failed because Washington did not provide adequate numbers of American and properly trained Iraqi troops (as well as the political and

economic support to lock in the security gains) to make the capital safe. Violence in Iraq's population centers cannot be controlled on the cheap—and would require substantial commitments of both men and materiel, as the latest (and much larger) Baghdad security plan is already demonstrating**.**

At the very least, the United States should provide technical assistance to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Kuwait to help them ensure that refugee camps do not become insurgent operating bases. Whenever possible, camps should be set up far from the borders. Policing is essential. In her study of refugee-linked conflicts around the world, Sarah Lischer contends that host governments must aggressively ensure that warlords do not run the camps and refugees are disarmed.[5] For many regional states, however, their management skills and military capacity is weak. U.S. aid can help bolster this**.**

Another option would to resettle refugees from Iraq outside the region—including in the United States. This could greatly reduce the strain on Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and other regional states. But neither Europeans nor Americans are eager to embrace Iraqi refugees, whose fate so far has stirred little compassion in either area. But if the situation deteriorates further, many Iraqis, like many South Vietnamese, compromised by their close association with the U.S. administration in Iraq, will need to be extracted**.**

The United States, however, should go well beyond current proposals to aid translators and other personnel who worked closely with U.S. forces. Programs like the "Orderly Departure Program" for South Vietnamese refugees should serve as a model: the United States should take in over a hundred thousand Iraqis and encourage its allies around the world to help similar numbers. Beyond the humanitarian benefits of such a program, it would reduce the war-causing effects of the refugee presence on Iraq's neighbors.

No matter what course of action the United States chooses vis-à-vis the refugees, there will be costs**.**

Managing Spillover beyond the Refugee Problem

As the refugee problem suggests, most of the problems related to spillover have no cost-free solution on offer. Nevertheless, the United States must also consider other steps to minimize spillover. All of these options are difficult and carry their own sets of costs as well as benefits.

Some costs are relatively straightforward—but will require the United States to spend much more in aid and technical assistance to shore up allies in the region who are absorbing the brunt of spillover. This could make a considerable difference to Bahrain and Jordan. Although it is often lumped in with the other Arab Gulf states, Bahrain's standard of living cannot compare to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait or the United Arab Emirates (UAE) because its hydrocarbon production is a fraction of theirs. While it does receive subsidies from its fellow Gulf Cooperation Council members, Bahrain is still the poor relation of the Gulf, and the country is already feeling the heat from radicalization of its majority Shi'a population from Iraq. Bahrain is also particularly vulnerable to anti-Americanism because it has been a reliable U.S. ally and hosts the headquarters of the

[5] Sarah Lischer, "Collateral Damage: Humanitarian Assistance as a Cause of Conflict." *International Security*, 28, 1, (Summer 2003), 79-109.

U.S. Fifth Fleet. Jordan is a small, poor country already overburdened by its long-standing Palestinian refugee population, and trying to absorb hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees as well could be the straw that breaks the back of the Hashemite monarchy. These refugees at the very least will strain Jordan's already vulnerable economy. They may also bring the Iraq war with them, increasing violence in Jordan itself and perhaps polarizing the population. Economic assistance to both countries could help dampen internal problems there derived from or exacerbated by all-out civil war in Iraq. In addition, both need help in policing refugee camps or and ensuring a robust counterterrorism capacity.

No matter what happens in Iraq, an overriding U.S. national interest will be to limit the ability of terrorists to use Iraq as a haven for attacks outside the country, especially directed against the United States. The best way to do that will be to retain assets (airpower, special operations forces and a major intelligence and reconnaissance effort) in the vicinity to identify and strike major terrorist facilities like training camps, bomb factories and arms caches before they can pose a danger to other countries. Washington would need to continue to make intelligence collection in Iraq a high priority, and whenever such a facility was identified, Shi'a or Sunni, American forces would move in quickly to destroy it. When possible, the United States would work with various factions in Iraq that share our goals regarding the local terrorist presence. These same factions, however, would want U.S. money and support for their own political agendas, and many of them would be involved in brutal actions of their own.

And we need to prepare for things going wrong. One would be the possibility of a disruption in the oil supply**.** Since 9/11, Sunni jihadists have shown a growing interest in attacking the world's oil infrastructure and have attempted several strikes on it, including in Saudi Arabia. Iraq is already victim to almost daily attacks on its oil infrastructure. If Iraq becomes even more of a haven for Sunni jihadi terrorists, it is likely that they will plot against the regional oil infrastructure and conduct additional attacks on parts of the Iraqi oil infrastructure outside their control.

The economic impact of such attacks could be considerable. A further reduction in Iraqi oil production would drive prices higher, given how tight world oil markets already are today. Of far greater concern, however, is the risk of attacks on Saudi Arabian production and transit facilities. Disruptions in the Saudi supply could send prices soaring. Even the greater *risk* of attacks would lead to an increased instability premium on oil, further increasing its price.

We cannot say we have not been warned. This is one area where what we do outside of Iraq--building up the Strategic Petroleum Reserve in order to reduce the impact of price spikes on U.S. consumers, developing contingency plans under the aegis of the International Energy Agency so that leading oil-consuming countries can better manage the risk of disruptions, and encouraging conservation in general—can enhance our freedom of action (and perhaps in turn reduce incentives to attack oil production and transit facilities.)

A Kurdish decision to secede from Iraq could provoke another crisis, especially if (as seems likely) Turkey, Iran and Syria move to oppose this. Because of the ease with which secessionism can spread, the number of groups in the Persian Gulf that could easily fall prey to such thinking, and the determination of Iraq's neighbors to prevent this, it will be necessary for the United States to persuade the Iraqi Kurds not to declare their

independence anytime soon. Iraq's Kurds (and all of the Kurds of the region) deserve independence, but this should only come as part of a legal process under conditions of peace and stability. In practice, however, Kurdistan must be managed as if it were independent—as if it were one of Iraq's neighbors. The Kurds are likely to share the same problems as Iraq's neighbors in terms of refugees flowing their way, terrorist groups striking out against them (and using their territory to conduct strikes) and the radicalization of their population.

The Kurds should be asked to police their own borders to minimize other spillover problems. In particular, the United States should press Iraq's Kurds to cooperate with Turkey to stop the militant Kurdistan Workers Party from using Iraqi Kurdistan as a rear base for its operations. Consequently, the United States will have to help the Kurds deal with their own problems of spillover from the civil war in the rest of the country and convince the Kurds not to "intervene" in the rest of Iraq. That will mean helping them deal with their refugee problems, giving them considerable economic assistance to minimize the radicalization of their own population and likely providing them with security guarantees to deter either Iran or Turkey from attacking them. One U.S. red line for Iran ought to be no attacks, covert or overt, on the Kurds.

Indeed, preventing Iran from intervening, especially given how much it has already intruded on Iraqi affairs, could be the biggest headache of all. Given Iran's immense interests in Iraq, some level of intervention is inevitable. For Tehran (and probably for Damascus too), the United States and its allies will likely have to lay down "red lines" regarding what is absolutely impermissible. The most obvious red lines would include sending uniformed Iranian military units into Iraq, laying claim to Iraqi territory, pumping Iraqi oil, or inciting Iraqi groups to secede from the country.

The United States and its allies will also have to lay out what they will do to Iran if it crosses any of those red lines. Economic sanctions would be one possible reaction, but this is only likely to be effective if the United States has the full cooperation of the European Union states—if not Russia, China and India as well. On its own, the United States could employ punitive military operations, either to make Iran pay an unacceptable price for one-time infractions (and so try to deter them from additional breaches) or to convince them to halt an ongoing violation of one or more red lines. Certainly the United States has the military power to inflict tremendous damage on Iran for short or long periods of time; however, the Iranians probably will keep their intervention covert to avoid providing Washington with a clear provocation. In addition, all of this will take place in the context of either a resolution of or ongoing crisis over Iran's nuclear program, either of which could add enormous complications to America's willingness to use force against Iran to deter or punish it for intervening in Iraq.

The Role of U.S. Military Forces under Containment

U.S. military forces would play several vital roles in containing the spillover from the Iraqi civil war. Missions for U.S. forces as part of a containment strategy include the following:

- Deterring Iranian conventional military involvement in Iraq. Iran's overwhelming interests in Iraq will lead Tehran to continue to deploy many intelligence and

paramilitary personnel to Iraq. Washington should try to minimize the scale of this presence and in particular ensure that Iran does not deploy its own conventional military forces to Iraq, either to dramatically augment the power of its proxies or to annex territory outright.

- Training Iraqi forces. Although under containment the United States would focus on preventing spillover, it would still want to maintain some influence in Iraq and, when it can be done at limited cost, bolster pro-U.S. forces in the country.

- Improving the "Foreign Internal Defense" capabilities of regional allies. Allies will need assistance with border security and policing refugee camps. Much of the aid will involve assisting regional paramilitary, intelligence, and police forces rather than traditional military support.

- Providing support to al-Qa'ida's enemies. Quite apart from efforts to maintain influence in Iraq, the United States will want to assist local government and tribal groups fighting al-Qa'ida and other anti-U.S. jihadist organizations. U.S. forces might provide logistical support, intelligence, and firepower.

- Conducting direct strike missions. In addition to helping Iraqis go after jihadist terrorists, the United States will need to conduct missions of its own that local allies cannot, or will not, conduct. Such strikes will involve special operations forces' raids, Predator strikes, and standoff attacks. This also involves risky missions to gather the necessary tactical intelligence for attacks on training camps and other terrorist facilities in Iraq.

The forces deployed to the region for the above missions can be rather limited—though some of the missions, such as deterring Iran, could be used to justify extremely large numbers of forces. Deterring Iran from large-scale conventional military activities can be done in large part through a limited regional presence, standoff capabilities, and forces ready to fall in on prepositioned materials in the Arabian peninsula and offshore. Iran's own conventional military capabilities are exceptionally weak, and the United States could easily surge to the region in response to an Iranian conventional force buildup. Most of the training activities would be done by relatively small numbers of U.S. forces, while direct strike missions will rarely involve anything larger than a battalion.

Much of the military presence for containing the spillover from Iraq can be based in neighboring states. Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are all extremely important for helping keep the U.S. presence robust. A regional presence, however, is a diplomatic challenge—in the 1990s, in far less trying circumstances, the United States faced constant difficulties in gaining consistent military support from these states. Having a robust series of diplomatic agreements with as many regional states as possible is vital to ensure that the United States is not suddenly caught short by an ally's withdrawal of backing for a particular mission.

Overall, perhaps 20,000 troops based in the region and other forces based worldwide that are available to deploy rapidly to the region in response to Iranian

intervention should be able to fulfill the above tasks. Demands on special operations forces and other units involved in training and intelligence will remain heavy and perhaps even grow. Because such skills are needed for the struggle against terrorism beyond Iraq, increasing the pool of such forces should remain a priority for the foreseeable future.

The Limits of U.S. Forces

In a time of policy crisis, it is tempting to choose a Goldilocks solution, reducing the number of U.S. troops and limiting their mission without making more radical changes to either. Unfortunately, such a middle ground would be a poor place to make a stand. The large U.S. presence in Iraq is failing to dramatically improve the country's security situation, and it would be foolish to expect a smaller number of troops with a more limited mandate to help Iraq emerge from civil war. Large numbers of U.S. forces in Iraq would continue to be a magnet for foreign terrorists and a drain on U.S. resources while having no clear mission unless they became directly responsible for helping displaced Iraqis and running Iraq's refugee camps — a massive and difficult undertaking.

That said, it is imperative to recognize the limits of a significantly decreased presence. A smaller presence in Iraq would still serve as a recruiting tool for the *salafi* jihadists, although the diminished presence of U.S. troops would make this harder. It would also mean that American troops will continue to be targets of terrorist attack, although redeploying them from Iraq's urban areas to the periphery would diminish the threat from current levels. Finally, the United States will have to recognize the military limits of what can be accomplished. Terrorism in Iraq has flourished despite the presence of over 150,000 U.S. troops: It is absurd to expect that fewer troops could accomplish more. The hope is to reduce the frequency of terrorist attacks and the scale of the training and other activities from what it would otherwise be, but our expectations must by necessity be modest.

Many of the most important activities will fall outside the military's traditional emphasis on high-intensity combat operations. Training missions and intelligence are vital. So too are helping police refugee camps and otherwise assisting local security capabilities. Thus even though a containment strategy would mean that the United States would have a reduced presence in Iraq, this would not entail a return to a force posture and strategic doctrine comparable to that of the U.S. military before the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq.