

# 'Clear, Hold, and Build':

## The Way ahead in Iraq

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### ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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### Brief Analysis

On December 1, 2005, Ambassador James Jeffrey and Jeffrey White addressed The Washington Institute's Special Policy Forum to mark the publication of The Washington Institute's Policy Focus, Assessing Iraq's Sunni Arab Insurgency, by Jeffrey White and Michael Eisenstadt. Ambassador Jeffrey, the senior advisor to the secretary of state and coordinator for Iraq policy, previously served as deputy chief of mission and then charge d'affairs in Baghdad, ambassador to Albania, and deputy chief of mission in Turkey and Kuwait. Jeffrey White is the Berrie Defense Fellow at The Washington Institute and former head of the Office for Middle East/Africa Regional Military Assessments at the Defense Intelligence Agency. The following is a rapporteur's summary of their remarks.

**View (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/documents/439e4b1745d3a.pdf>)** Jeffrey White's PowerPoint presentation in PDF format.

**Read (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=228>)** Assessing Iraq's Sunni Arab Insurgency, by Jeffrey White and Michael Eisenstadt.

James Jeffrey

The U.S. strategy in Iraq has three elements: political, security, and economic.

- On the political side, the United States is aiding the Iraqis in building a society with strong democratic institutions. The key is persuading Sunni Arabs to support a democratic Iraq led by a federal government that is strong enough to protect minority rights. Currently, Sunni Arabs are underrepresented in the Iraqi political system relative to their proportion of the population. However, indications point to greater Sunni participation in the upcoming December 15 elections.
- On the security front, coalition forces, in conjunction with Iraqi security forces, are on the offensive, cleaning out areas formerly under the control of terrorists, safeguarding the area with Iraqi forces, and following up with targeted reconstruction.
- On the economic front, the United States is assisting the Iraqis in rebuilding internal infrastructure, reforming their economy, and building prosperity. Coalition partners, the UN, and other international organizations have been involved in this effort.

The U.S. shares the views of many in the region that Iranian and Syrian behavior is not contributing to stability in Iraq. As Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice noted in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Syria and Iran must decide whether they wish to side with the cause of war, or with the cause of peace.

Much of the U.S. effort with the Sunni Arabs has an international aspect. While many Arab countries view events in Iraq with concern and distrust, these states could play a significant role in encouraging Iraqi Sunnis to enter the political process. The United States has launched a series of high-level visits to key Arab states to support this process. The consistent message during these missions has been the vision of Iraq laid out in UN Security Council Resolution 1546 -- a federal, democratic, pluralistic, and unified Iraq able to handle its own security.

The most recent Arab League -- sponsored meeting on Iraqi reconciliation in Cairo is a sign of increased Arab involvement with, and support for, the new Iraq. While the final communiqué had some flaws, especially in terms of the varying levels of sympathy for the insurgency, it condemned terrorism and acts of violence, killing, and kidnapping. The document calls for a timeline for coalition withdrawal, but only after a stable Iraqi security force has emerged -- the same conditions called for by President Bush and UN Security Council Resolutions 1637 and 1546. Further, the document calls for canceling Iraqi debt, training Iraqi officials, reinforcing the Arab diplomatic presences in Baghdad, increasing humanitarian assistance, and supporting the establishment of stable borders.

The U.S.-brokered political process culminates with the December 15 elections -- the first democratic elections under an democratically drafted and ratified Iraqi constitution -- for a permanent government with a four-year term. This does not, however, end the integrated security and political approach to Iraqi reconstruction. The coalition will work harder to coordinate the multinational forces with Iraqi efforts in the field. To that end, coalition efforts are being reorganized in the provinces under the new concept of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). These PRTs, consisting of civil-military teams working in concert with each of the major subordinate commands, will be deployed in key parts of the country. They will train police, set up courts, and help with local services like sewage treatment and irrigation.

Jeffrey White

Iraq is entering what appears to be a true tipping period, with the events of the next six to nine months likely to determine whether the U.S. effort in Iraq succeeds or fails. A key element of understanding this tipping period is assessing the state of the Sunni Arab insurgency. The insurgency is actually a composite of various elements acting out of diverse motives. The only generally shared motivations are resisting occupation and subverting or overthrowing the emerging Iraqi government. The insurgency, to this end, is about power. The Islamist elements are on the outer edge of the insurgency. An increasing merger of Islamist forces and former regime elements is apparent, but it is unclear if this is a marriage of conviction or convenience.

The structure, processes, and functioning of the insurgency is complicated. The insurgency is not organized hierarchically, but consists rather of elements, entities and groups in cells -- it is a network of networks, linked by personal, religious, tribal, and organizational ties. Financing comes from within and without Iraq through a well-developed system for acquiring and distributing money. Strategically, it is clear that the insurgents do not strike at random; they conduct purposeful activity along several lines of operation, such as attacking coalition forces. Since the January 2005 elections, counter-collaboration and counter-stability attacks have become increasingly important.

The insurgency has rhythms and cycles associated with the religious calendar, weather patterns, political events, and anniversaries. However, the trend has been a sustained and progressively increasing level of violence and the use of ever more sophisticated weaponry, which exacts a heavy and growing toll on civilians and the ranks of coalition and Iraqi forces. Despite the thousands of insurgents killed and ten of thousands of Iraqis detained, the insurgency remains resilient -- it is as robust and lethal as ever.

The insurgents have succeeded in establishing themselves as the major, if not the dominant, social and political force in the Sunni triangle. They have a significant presence in the social, economic, religious, political, and criminal spheres and have largely succeeded in undermining efforts to extend government institutions into Sunni Arab areas. Further, they have penetrated the "thought world" of the Sunni Arabs, with notions and beliefs hostile to occupation, coalition forces, and the Iraqi government. This has convinced most Sunnis that the draft constitution does not serve their interests and has contributed to the popular dissatisfaction in the United States with how the war has been handled. The insurgency has the advantages that it is self-sustaining; has access to weapons, financing, and manpower; is adaptable because of the nature of its organization; and knows that coalition forces are constrained in how they use force.

While the insurgents have proven to be formidable opponents, they are not unbeatable. The insurgency has not derailed the political process; prevented recruitment of young Iraqis to the Iraqi security forces; built substantial support among the Iraqi or American public; or provoked the Shiite leadership to abandon its policy of restraint. The war in Iraq is "winnable," provided that the political process is not derailed by civil war or undermined from within and that the United States does not withdraw prematurely. It will become evident in the next six months whether Iraq is evolving as a democracy or a state torn by major violence. This underscores the importance of the United States remaining sufficiently engaged to enable the Iraqi government to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

This rapporteur's summary was prepared by Brooke Neuman.



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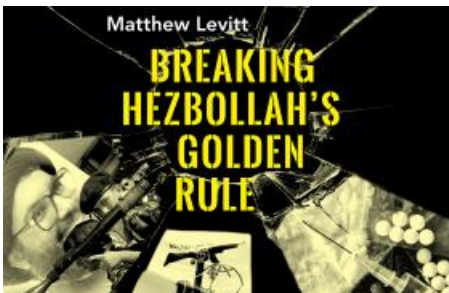
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