

## The American withdrawal from Iraq: ways and means for remaining behind\*

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This article examines the 2011 withdrawal of United States' regular military forces from Iraq in the context of Gen. David H. Petraeus strategy of the 'surge' and co-opting Sunni fighters against forces aligned with al-Qā'idah through brokering tribal alliances and adding members of the *majālis al-ṣaḥwah* ('awakening councils') to government pay rosters. It is argued here that Petraeus's strategy of the 'surge' was numerically insignificant and – even if he did order US fighting units back onto the streets – was only partly effective. Various factors and internal Iraqi dynamics played a more decisive role in the outcome of events that ultimately gave the Nuri Maliki government a free hand to work in unofficial cooperation with Shi'ite militias to leave major Sunni neighbourhoods in Baghdad depopulated or abandoned and which transformed the capital into a predominantly Shi'ite city. American withdrawal from Iraq was dictated by the need to redeploy US military personnel and material in Afghanistan, which coincided with a new rhetorical framework under Barack Obama for working with the Islamic world that diverged from George W. Bush's categorizations under his 'War on Terror' as well as the recommendations of the new May 2010 National Security Strategy, which set down the broad outlines for withdrawal. Despite the formal military withdrawal, a palpable American presence remains in Iraq through private security firms as well as a constellation of various agreements and deals concluded with mega-corporations and other, not to mention the largest US embassy in the world with its various support apparatuses. While the troop withdrawal of regular forces has taken place and permitted redeployment in Afghanistan, the ways which the Americans have devised to remain behind are many and their de facto presence, albeit in more 'civil' forms, is still very much a 'fact on the ground'.

**Keywords:** American withdrawal from Iraq 2011; Gen. David H. Petraeus's strategy and 'surge'; US National Security Strategy; al-Qā'idah; Sunni forces; *majālis al-ṣaḥwah*; Shi'ite militias; Baghdad; US military strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan

The United States pursues and vouchsafes what it sees as a way to realize its strategic interests around the globe, through the globalization of human civilization in accordance with the American models of democracy and way of life. Similarly, it seeks to legitimize for itself the undertaking of pre-emptive wars or ones ostensibly to deflect supposed and sometimes imagined or entirely fantastic dangers, against individuals,

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organizations or states, as well as to prevent what it sees as possible threats to its national security. It is of no concern to the United States whether or not it has in place what is necessary to support such actions; nor is it of concern what are the long-term costs and dangers borne by the peoples who live in the theatres of US military conflicts and whether these effectively liquidate their resources and damage their vital interests. This is at the same time as the United States demands from others – the Arabs and Muslims – that they overlook all that ensues from its policies and that they promote its ‘cultures’ as a contemporary alternative to the well-known cultures of the Arabs and Muslims, which are not cultures but rather sanctified creeds in which Muslims have believed since the time of the Prophet Muhammad.

The contemporary alternatives are nothing more than political reforms that the United States demands the countries of the region implement precisely and to the letter. Among the requirements imposed is the deconstruction and dissolution of traditional Islam and its restructuring as a ‘contemporary Islam’ or ‘civil Islam’ or adoption of ‘moderate Islam’ or ‘secular Islam’. This means substituting original Islam as derived from the Qurʾān and the normative practice and teachings – *sunnah* – of the Prophet, which imposes at its core *jihād* against unbelievers and polytheists as well as wars against aggressors as a legal obligation of the *sharīʿah*. It means disengaging and desisting from such obligations by adopting any of the contemporary ‘formulations’ of Islam just indicated. Accordingly, the so-called ‘War on Terror’ (for which read ‘War on Islam’) targeted Islam as a religion first by going after fighting Islamist movements or what are often known as *salafist jihadist* trends, as organizational structures, and then subsequently targeting the Islamic religion conceptually and existentially.

### **First: the downgrading of Iraq in the order of American priorities**

US national security strategy, as ratified by the US Congress before implementation, specifies the principal threats to national security as well as US conceptions of potential dangers to security around the world. On this basis, the US administration sets forth appropriate plans to confront these threats and potential dangers. As the threat posed to Israel by Iraq receded, a new policy emerged that prioritized the resumption of direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority as a step towards a comprehensive solution for the problem of the Middle East that US strategists view as among the most important problems in the world and which feeds a hatred of Americans. At the same time the continuation of the conflict has increased the acceptability of Islamic fundamentalist thought (along *salafist* and *jihadist* lines), that first and foremost is directed in its essence towards *jihād* against injustice and the occupation, or which underlies ‘terrorism’, according to US categorization.

The new US strategies focus on anticipated dangers in Central Asia in the border areas between Afghanistan and a nuclear Pakistan, the stronghold of the Ṭālibān and al-Qāʿidah, where it is feared that extremist Islamists might obtain access to nuclear weapons. This new threat assessment was among the factors that led to a reduction of US forces in Iraq to fewer than 100,000 for the first time since the 2003 invasion, and came in the wake of their withdrawal from the cities on 30 June 2009, a step reduction to 50,000 or fewer by the end of August 2010, and finally a declared intention to withdraw the last American soldier from Iraq by the end of 2011. Likewise, policy on Iraq shifted to one of diplomacy as an alternative to the bellicosity of President George W. Bush in his universal ‘War on Terror’ (that is, on Islam).

On 26 May 2010, the US National Security Strategy for the year was released, during the first term of President Barack Obama. In what pertains to Iraq, the document focuses on three axes (National Security Strategy 2010, p. 25):

- **Transition Security:** First, we are transitioning security to full Iraqi responsibility. We will end the combat mission in Iraq by the end of August 2010. We will continue to train, equip, and advise Iraqi Security Forces; conduct targeted counter-terrorism missions; and protect ongoing civilian and military efforts in Iraq. And, consistent with our commitments to the Iraqi Government, including the U.S.–Iraq Security Agreement, we will remove all of our troops from Iraq by the end of 2011.
- **Civilian Support:** Second, as the security situation continues to improve, U.S. civilian engagement will deepen and broaden. We will sustain a capable political, diplomatic, and civilian effort to help the Iraqi people as they resolve outstanding differences, integrate those refugees and displaced persons who can return, and continue to develop accountable democratic institutions that can better serve their basic needs. We will work with our Iraqi partners to implement the Strategic Framework Agreement, with the Department of State taking the lead. This will include cooperation on a range of issues including defense and security cooperation, political and diplomatic cooperation, rule of law, science, health, education, and economics.
- **Regional Diplomacy and Development:** Third, we will continue to pursue comprehensive engagement across the region to ensure that our drawdown in Iraq provides an opportunity to advance lasting security and sustainable development for both Iraq and the broader Middle East. The United States will continue to retain a robust civilian presence commensurate with our strategic interests in the country and the region. We are transforming our relationship to one consistent with other strategic partners in the region.

The National Security Strategy did not indicate any threats or causes for concern over US national security in Iraq that would require US forces to remain there. Rather, the document was limited to the establishment of a sovereign and stable Iraq capable of depending on itself in a proxy war, with US support, stating:

Our goal is an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant. To achieve that goal, we are continuing to promote an Iraqi Government that is just, representative, and accountable and that denies support and safe haven to terrorists. The United States will pursue no claim on Iraqi territory or resources, and we will keep our commitments to Iraq's democratically elected government. (National Security Strategy 2010, p. 25)

The US leadership has linked rapid withdrawal from Iraq with its need for additional forces on its primary front in the 'War on Terror' in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Former head of US forces in Iraq, Gen. Raymond Odierno, stated: 'I have flexibility to speed up [the pullout], if I think the situation on the ground allows it, which could facilitate a U.S. build-up in Afghanistan' (Stewart and Entous 2009).<sup>1</sup> In apparent contradiction to this, since the end of 2007 the US administration has talked about withdrawing from Iraq at such time as it might be assured of the success of its initiative in the country and that a military defeat would not take place. From that time forward the United States relied and focused on the co-option of Sunni elements, including tribal

groups, and supporting the *majālis al-ṣaḥwah* (literally, ‘councils of awakening’; see below). At the same time, pressure by the various Arab governments allied to the United States was brought to bear on Sunni Arab leaderships and some resistance groups within Iraq to urge them to enter into the political process as one of the most important methods for defeating the resistance in Iraq, and for defeating al-Qāʿidah there and isolating it from the society that afforded it a safe haven. These actions coincided with a new American announcement that it was impossible to defeat the resistance in Iraq militarily (Zoellick 2005).

The US leadership has spoken frankly about its support for the Iraqi government to develop Iraqi security capabilities so as to fight as its proxy in the front line against terrorism in Iraq in place of US troops needed in Afghanistan – with the Ṭālibān having extended its control over wide tracts of that country and building its forces day by day.<sup>2</sup> For the United States to confront al-Qāʿidah in the first place and Ṭālibān in the second, Milton Bearden, former CIA Station Chief in Pakistan, said ‘it would take 400,000 troops to pacify Afghanistan’,<sup>3</sup> adding that this would be in order to ‘prevent attacks against America from within the country and to deny terrorists access to weapons of mass destruction and prevent al-Qāʿidah from threatening the American people’ (McNeill 2008; also Stewart and Entous 2009). This goal is ostensibly to be accomplished through weakening al-Qāʿidah, breaking up its infrastructure, isolating it from the Ṭālibān and the rest of its allies, as well as through co-opting other armed forces and tribes and turning them against it. This was analogous to the strategy adopted in Iraq in 2007 by US Gen. David H. Petraeus, who was given command over US forces in Afghanistan after his predecessor Gen. Stanley McChrystal was dismissed.

## Second: Iraq and Afghanistan in the new US strategy

Identification of the frontier between Afghanistan and Pakistan as a primary front in the ‘War on Terror’ was not the brainchild of Obama. Rather, this depiction was advanced by the US National Security Strategy announced in October 2007 during the tenure of George W. Bush, even though it would not be fully adopted until the subsequent administration.

In order to protect the United States from terrorism, the National Security Council endeavoured to:

Prevent terrorism attacks to the extent possible, refocus on Al Qaeda Central and the global movement it has inspired, reorder our overseas priorities, keep the perpetrators from employing the most dangerous technologies, and develop stronger counter-terrorism and intelligence capabilities, particularly at the local level. Specifically, we must: Retire the broad concept of a ‘war on terror’ and shift forces and funding from Iraq to Afghanistan. (Crowley 2008, p. 3)

The US leadership has focused on doing whatever it can to avoid the possibility of defeat in Afghanistan and at any cost. Afghanistan stands in marked contradistinction to Iraq, which previously did not constitute either a practical or a direct threat to US national security and which no longer constitutes a threat to Israel, and which moreover was never a country that ever once adopted extremist Islamist terrorist thought or methods, according to America’s own categorizations. On the contrary, al-Qāʿidah under the leadership of Osama bin Laden took his cadres and set up bases in the Afghanistan of the Ṭālibān who sheltered them. As is well known, bin Laden used

the country as a staging area and a command-and-control centre for his worldwide campaign against the United States in particular and the West in general, both before and after the events of 11 September 2001. For this reason, defeat in Afghanistan is not permitted under any circumstances from the American standpoint and regardless of the human or material costs, on the basis of numerous factors that previously steered the United States to take the decision to go to war in Afghanistan and Iraq.

There are dissimilarities in the importance of the dual American initiatives in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as in their respective aims, and, more importantly, the repercussions of failure in either one of them for American national security. Defeat in Afghanistan ‘will transform Afghanistan into a region for Sunni Islamic resistance against the West and America’ (Mūrū 2011), and will increase American apprehensions that Afghanistan will be a haven and staging area for terrorism, where *jihadists* will be able:

after tasting victory, to set up hideouts and bases for terrorism in Afghanistan; on which basis came the decision by British Prime Minister Tony Blair to withdraw half of the British forces from Iraq and send them to reinforce contingents in Afghanistan. (Mūrū 2011)

This strategy represented an important turning point in the election campaign of Obama that led him to the White House. In what he termed a joint plan with his Vice President Joe Biden (the Obama–Biden Plan), Obama focused on the success in Iraq that was achieved by way of turning over control of the country to the Iraqis in order to ‘end the war in Iraq so that we can renew our military strength, dedicate more resources to the fight against the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, and invest in our economy at home’ (Change.gov 2009).

Heralding this shift, in February 2008 the Center for American Progress had put forward a comprehensive conception for American national security in a study entitled *Safe at Home* (Crowley 2008). It criticized the focus of former President George W. Bush on Iraq and considering it a primary front in the ‘War on Terror’ (i.e., on Islam). The study called on the new Obama administration to adopt a national security strategy better suited to the protection of US territories from terrorist threats, on the consideration that Pakistan and Afghanistan represented the real front in the ‘War on Terror’ (i.e., Islam). That ought to be the primary concern of the incoming administration, it was argued given that:

The invasion of Afghanistan is the principal reason the U.S. homeland has not been attacked again, yet the shift of emphasis from Afghanistan to Iraq has enabled al-Qaeda Central to recover and reconstruct at least some of its terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan’s tribal areas. (Crowley 2008, p. 9)

### **Third: Obama’s concept of the ‘War on Terror’**

Obama endeavoured to differentiate between Islam as a religion and Islamic movements as movements or organizations that he describes as *violent*, rather than expressly terming them as ‘terrorist’. Rather, the suggestion to Muslims is that Americans are only providing them with advice and desire reform, not for Muslims as individuals, but for Islam as a religion, generated from within Islam itself, to tackle those movements that purportedly ‘act against the teachings of Islam itself’ (Crowley 2008, p. 9) through forces of limitless injustice that are designated under the rubric of

‘Islamofascism’ – as George W. Bush described it in his first television interview after arriving in the White House. For a number of important considerations, Bush devoted his first interview appearance to the Arab satellite news channel al-‘Arabiya, implicitly stating that the ‘War on Terror’ had ended:

Yes, the with-us-or-against-us global struggle – the so-called Long War – in which a freedom-loving West confronts the undifferentiated forces of darkness comprising everything from al-Qaeda to elements of the Palestinian national struggle under the banner of ‘Islamofascism’ has been terminated. What’s left is what matters: defeating terrorist organizations. That’s not a war. It’s a strategic challenge. (Cohen 2009)

Yet this delimitation, from the perspective of Arabs and Muslims, flies in the face of a religious creed to which more than 1.5 billion Muslims subscribe. The West and the United States are threatened by the spread of Islam over the long term, just as the ranks continue to grow day by day of Muslims who have come to harbour a hatred for the West and the United States as a result of unjust policies against the Arabs and Muslims, despite the concerted efforts of the United States and Arab and Islamic governments to win hearts and minds (Reuters Press 2005) over to the new American imperialism.

The ‘hearts and minds’ campaigns have been accompanied by new security efforts by the United States, in cooperation with these states, in the name of combating terrorism (Senate Armed Services Committee 2007, p. 16), and in accordance with official agreements intended to stamp out new tendencies among Islamist movements led in a decentralized fashion by al-Qā’idah around the world and in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Mauritania and other countries, against the United States and the West. It is a war unlikely to end in the foreseeable future due to the multiplicity of actors, the renewal of their sources of support and leverage, and the evolution of the forms the conflict takes on both sides alike. Adaptation defines the strategies of the two sides in the struggle and not the American side alone as Obama described it, which represents a contrast with previous ideological distinctions that prevailed during the time of the Cold War that culminated with the victory over the communist credo in Eastern Europe and the breakup of the Soviet Union that had previously constituted a counterbalancing force across the globe, notwithstanding its incongruities in the Arab–Israeli conflict. The dissolution of the USSR altered variables and imposed a drop in the relative importance of the region of the Middle East on the list of US priorities, at least insofar as the political dimension was concerned; and this precipitated orientation towards a more balanced policy between the Arabs and Israel in order to mitigate the growing feelings of hostility and resentment among the Arabs. It was supposed that new policy should theoretically have diminished and dissipated negative sentiments towards Israel and the United States, but it did not; and therefore the United States has been obliged to bear the repercussions of previous policies along with governments allied to it, even after decades.

Returning to the approach espoused in the 2010 National Security Strategy discussed above, it proposed to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qā’idah and its violent offshoots in Afghanistan, Pakistan and around the world wherever it is found, without specifically mentioning Iraq, in order to:

Deny Terrorists Weapons of Mass Destruction: To prevent acts of terrorism with the world’s most dangerous weapons, we are dramatically accelerating and intensifying efforts to secure all vulnerable nuclear materials by the end of 2013. ... Deny Safe

Havens and Strengthen At-Risk States: Wherever al-Qa'ida or its terrorist affiliates attempt to establish a safe haven – as they have in Yemen, Somalia, the Maghreb – we will meet them with growing pressure. We also will strengthen our own network of partners to disable al-Qa'ida's financial, human, and planning networks; disrupt terrorist operations before they mature; and address potential safe-havens before al-Qa'ida and its terrorist affiliates can take root. (National Security Strategy 2010, pp. 20–21)

This is in contradistinction to the vision of George W. Bush in defining what he considered to be the real front of the 'War on Terror', and whereas:

the Bush Administration was eager to win Iraq and, according to its critics, took its eye off the ball in Afghanistan, the Obama team just wants to get out of Iraq as quietly as possible while it devotes more resources to winning the war in Afghanistan. (Smith 2010)

Also, as Andrew Exum, a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), says: 'The Obama Administration brought some clarity to U.S. aims' (Exum 2010, p. 10; also Centre for a New American Security n.d.).<sup>4</sup>

#### **Fourth: the Petraeus plan, imposing facts on the ground as an overture towards secure withdrawal**

The resistance in Iraq passed through various stages of relative strength, beginning with what could be broadly characterized as the 'phase of strength' that started a year after its inception in 2003, through to its eventual decline from mid-2007, and the 'phase of retreat'. The intervening period witnessed a 'peak phase' between 2005 and mid-2007, then the 'phase of inaction' that lasted from the early days of 2008 to the end of August 2010, and thence what might be termed the 'nebulous phase' that persisted until the final period of the American presence in Iraq or its total withdrawal.

A careful examination of these phases indicates that the American occupation forces endured their own severest period of weakness and attrition when they were exposed to more than 3000 operations a month<sup>5</sup> and were on the verge of admitting defeat officially had it not been for the intervention of a number of factors that helped to save the forces and restore a sense of *esprit de corps* in pursuit of their project in Iraq.<sup>6</sup> Many voices were raised both within and outside of the US administration, demanding an immediate withdrawal as opposed to a phased one, so as to avoid imminent defeat, even if that risked plunging Iraq into a vicious civil war. The calls for a precipitate withdrawal came amid a rising tide of popular objection among the American people to the continuing deployment of US forces in the country, to a degree that threatened the continuation of George W. Bush in office. Demands reached the point of a motion in the US Congress to stop funding the war<sup>7</sup> in order to pressure the Bush administration to bring the troops home and extricate them from the quagmire – along the lines of President Ronald Reagan's swift move to withdraw American forces from Lebanon, following the bombing of the US Marine barracks in Beirut on 23 October 1983 which killed 241 people.

However, the Bush administration applied a variety of tactics both in Iraq and within the United States that enabled the adopted strategy in Iraq to survive beyond the point of near defeat on the ground in 2007. To this end Gen. David H. Petraeus adopted a plan to deploy an additional 30,000 troops, the so-called 'surge', to bring the total number of US forces in Iraq to 168,000 in June 2007. The plan relied on the principle of maintaining control on the ground through small fighting units on

constant sorties rather than a strategy of sealing off the cities where resistance was strongest and bombarding them from the outside, then striking at the inhabitants in a haphazard fashion from within with deliberate severity in order to isolate the fighters and alienate them from the local non-combatant inhabitants. The new strategy aimed not only to deprive the fighters of their secure environment and social support network, but also, beyond that, to take a step towards bringing Sunni Arabs into the political process while simultaneously building the security forces. This was the plan that Petraeus advanced to improve the security situation, reduce the ferocity of sectarian violence<sup>8</sup> and minimize American losses; and it ran counter to the reality on the ground.

Petraeus's plan was not the primary reason for the improvement in the security situation or the reduction of American casualties. The chief explanation was a coincidental shift in the priorities of the Iraqi resistance<sup>9</sup> with respect to the identification of 'the enemy' – although there was no consensus among the major groups – to the effect that Iran came to be considered enemy number one, or more dangerous than the United States. This shift was attributable to factors other than US strategy, and deflected the focus from engaging with US forces in order to strike at Iranian arms in Iraq, while at the same time some resistance groups engaged in fighting al-Qā'idah. Also coincidentally, there was strife among the factions, precipitated by the reconsideration of priorities, along with a revolt of tribal elements in the province of al-Anbār and their alignment with some members of the resistance, alongside the occupation forces, to fight al-Qā'idah.<sup>10</sup>

The new alliances spread geographically to other regions and cities, the resistance in the neighbourhoods of Baghdad, as well as the provinces and cities of Salāh al-Din, Diyālā, Nineva and others. Similarly, the Petraeus plan was ineffective in regions under the control of the resistance outside Baghdad, such as in al-Anbār and elsewhere, which witnessed (a locally generated) improvement in the security situation. These facts and realities, along with others of lesser importance, present the real picture of what was behind the drop in the levels of sectarian violence and the reduction of American losses that coincided with the regression of the resistance and its weakening to a significant degree. Taken together these factors negate the claims made about the direct and important role of US forces in these events, especially given that the claims emanate from the very same sources that asserted the impossibility of defeating the resistance in Iraq by militarily means (Zoellick 2005). In his own testimony before the US Congress in September 2007, Petraeus was even obliged, notwithstanding some vague caveats,<sup>11</sup> to concede, in effect, that his message was principally directed towards the American home front, where sharp differences were increasing between the Republican administration and Democratic members of Congress on the eve of the 2008 elections, over when and how to withdraw from Iraq and the question of continued military spending to fund the war there.

The American announcement of an increase in the number of forces in Iraq (i.e., the 'surge') was accompanied by the announcement by the Iraqi government in February of 2007 of a (second) security plan known as 'laying down the law', which stirred up additional doubts about the intentions of the Iraqi government in embarking on a plan with a sectarian caste<sup>12</sup> to divide up the regions and neighbourhoods that had been targeted in the violence, beginning first with Baghdad. This move came in the wake of the joint efforts of US forces and the Iraqi government to disarm Sunni areas,<sup>13</sup> which were followed immediately by attacks on these areas by Shi'ite militias in the summer of 2006, with disregard on the part of US forces for the protection of civilians who were killed and wounded in high numbers and chalked up as 'collateral



damage' in these regions. These developments transpired despite the pleas of influential members of Iraqi society from the affected regions and their threats to resort to the formation of self-defence forces from among the residents of areas that had been penetrated by al-Qā'idah. It had begun by then to abandon its control over the provinces and to marshal its forces in Baghdad, following the killing of Abū Muṣ'ab al-Zarqāwi in June 2006. Additionally, Sunni–Shi'ah infighting escalated rapidly in the wake of the bombing of the shrine of Imam Ḥasan al-'Askari in Sāmārā' on 22 February of 2006.

Despite fears that al-Qā'idah might exploit the self-defence forces, which was a terrifying prospect for US forces, they did not undertake any measures to protect civilians in the target areas out of fear of opening up a new front with the militias. In the Fall of 2006, the residential neighbourhoods began to take shape in isolation and along sectarian lines, as though they were all of a single stripe, and armed forces as well as paramilitary ones were organized by the inhabitants of the various areas for the purposes of self-defence and to which US forces turned a blind eye, especially in the regions controlled by resistance groups. The potential future danger of these developments to US personnel and equipment was likewise ignored, either with or without agreements effectively to neutralize US forces. Meanwhile, there were attempts by the Iraqi government to limit the formation of new militias that might threaten to upset the prevailing security and military balance of Shi'ite parties within the government forces. Nevertheless, US forces paid little heed to these attempts of the government as they in fact benefitted from sectarian tensions, that gave them a pretext to erect concrete separation barriers with single points of entry and exit in most of the Sunni areas of Baghdad, and to a lesser degree in Shi'ite ones. These resembled the 'apartheid' wall erected by former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to isolate certain Arab regions from others and to cut off contact between them on the pretext of protecting Israeli settlements.

US forces erected a number of separation walls in the Sunni region of al-A'ẓamiyah abutting the Shi'ite area of al-Kāẓimiyah as well as in the Sunni area of al-Ghazāliyah contiguous with the Shi'ite area of al-Shu'alah that had come to be a strategic centre and staging area for attacks against Sunni regions by the militias of Muqtadā al-Ṣadr's Mahdi army (*jaysh al-Mahdi*), whose ranks were drawn from al-Ṣadr city and elsewhere. US forces utilized the sectarian tensions to their advantage in order to win the sympathies of Sunni regions by imparting the impression to inhabitants that the occupation forces were there to protect them from attacks by Shi'ite militias. This strategy even went to the extent that, for a number of months, the US forces charged the local defence forces with manning the exit and entry points in the separation walls in a way that prohibited the entry of Iraqi government forces, particularly the police forces and internal security commando units, as well as other security elements. This was because, as US forces confirmed, death squads were exploiting these government elements for the use of official uniforms, weapons and equipment of the Ministry of Interior in operations of sectarian killing, arrests and kidnappings causing the daily murder rates to mount along with the numbers corpses of unknown identity discovered by the Iraqi authorities.

The nominal agreement, that was dictated by the reality on the ground, did not reduce the number of attacks to which US and Iraqi government forces were exposed, even months after the implementation of the plan to 'lay down the law', such that in June 2007 the highest daily averages were recorded<sup>14</sup> since the time when Bush announced the end of combat operations in May 2003. Neither the

government nor the occupation forces were able to extend their control over all areas of Baghdad, even after five months of attempting to impose order in the move to ‘lay down the law’.<sup>15</sup>

Under US Generals John Abizaid and George Casey, the United States had largely pulled back its forces within the perimeters of its bases and had stopped venturing into some areas of Baghdad at all. Instead, efforts were focused on the ‘Iraqization’ of the war and training the Iraqis to ‘take over’ or, as Bush often quipped: ‘As they stand up, we’ll stand down’ (Filkins 2009). Petraeus’s two-pronged strategy was an about-face on previous US military strategy in Iraq as well as within the corridors of power in Washington – a gambit to stop or at least to slow the rapidly deteriorating circumstances on the ground. It entailed getting US personnel off their bases and back into the streets to communicate to the Iraqis – and especially the Sunnis among them – that the Americans were with them. More significantly, it was a policy of co-opting Sunni elements not affiliated to al-Qā’idah from an irregular pool that included ex-Baathists, disaffected elements and – significantly – co-opted Sunni tribes. The Sunnis had suffered under the initial policies that saw US soldiers indiscriminately crashing through doors and bursting into courtyards and inflicting casualties on ordinary Iraqis who were not involved in al-Qā’idah or even in the fighting, thereby alienating significant sectors of the population. They suffered to an even greater degree once Prime Minister Nuri Maliki and ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Ḥakim took power after the December 2005 elections, when they were able to direct the Iraqi armed forces against Sunni neighbourhoods as well as afford Shi’ite militias a free hand.

Al-Qā’idah extremists bent on starting a civil war along sectarian lines and ultimately on setting up an Islamic caliphate in the ‘Area between the Two Rivers’ – (i.e., Mesopotamia/Iraq), engaged in a series of savage suicide bombings against Shi’ite civilians, pilgrims, mosques and market places. Not surprisingly, the backlash from these attacks and accompanying revenge killings were directed at Sunni neighbourhoods and typically at the hands of Shi’ite militias. This meant that civil war in Baghdad was de facto and therefore absorbing the energies and attentions of both Sunni and Shi’ite fighting factions, while simultaneously and automatically decreasing the pressure and the frequency of attacks on US forces. Sunni tribes that were paying the price for al-Qā’idah suicide bombings undertook to defend themselves and form what became known as *majālis al-ṣaḥwah* (literally, ‘awakening councils’); and – perhaps logically, given their lack of options – they opted to ally with the Americans against al-Qā’idah and the Shi’ite militias as well as indirectly against a Shi’ite-dominated Iraqi government that was largely ranged against them. Petraeus co-opted the marginalized Sunni tribes and enlisted their fighters and those known ultimately as ‘Sons of Iraq’, putting approximately 100,000 on the US payroll (Gardner 2010). With the services of their new local allies who had a much better grasp of the local lay of the land than the Americans, the persecution of al-Qā’idah by US forces became much more effective.

Thus, the actual effect of the ‘surge’ per se, in terms of the introduction of 30,000 additional US personnel, was relatively incidental to the turning of the tide. In point of fact, the increased numbers of US forces had a fairly insignificant impact in the context. Instead, a number of causes factored in reducing losses among occupation forces. Even so, the decision to suspend actions by the Mahdi Army, factored to a greater extent than others in putting an end to the fiercely indiscriminate sectarian violence of militias, government apparatuses and special groups.<sup>16</sup> The reduction in losses in US ranks cannot be correlated in such a way as to suggest that it was the result of Petraeus’s plan – or at

least the ‘surge’ – that failed to produce tangible results, except for a spell at the end of 2007 and in the first half of 2008 (Olsen 2009), when over a year had already passed since the formation and inception of the tribal *ṣaḥwāt* and a particular role established for the most important resistance groups within them. This apparent turning point also followed half a year of factional fighting in west Baghdad in the areas of al-Raḍwāniyah and Abū Ghurayb – the most important strategic strongholds for the resistance forces around the capital city – fighting that pitted the 20th Revolution Brigades and those aligned with them against American forces, and those of the tribal *ṣaḥwāt* (such as the *ṣaḥwah* of Abū ‘Azām) and some government forces on one side and the forces of the Islamic state of Iraq on the other.

Less than two months on, between 20 May and 4 June 2007, there was a violent wave of fighting in the region of al-‘Amārah in Baghdad<sup>17</sup> between the Islamic army and those factional elements allied to it, tribal *ṣaḥwāt* and Sunni political parties along with US forces on the one side and the Islamic state of Iraq on the other. This ended in the formation of the *ṣaḥwah* of al-‘Amārah (the revolutionaries of al-‘Amārah) under the leadership of Abū al-‘Abd, one of the leaders of Islamic army. The fighting spread to other regions described previously as ‘liberated zones’ that were effectively off-limits to US and Iraqi government forces, such as the region of al-Ghazāliyah, Ḥayy al-Jāmi‘ah, south Baghdad and other areas. Subsequently, this was followed by the exodus of most of those affiliated to the so-called ‘Islamic State of Iraq’ (ISI) – Dawlat al-‘Irāq al-Islāmiyah (a rubric denoting a number of Sunni insurgent groups dedicated to establishing a Sunni caliphate in Iraq), who left Baghdad for Diyālā and Mosul.

In essence, for most of the Sunni regions this meant the loss of an effective protective force, as surmised by both the Shi‘ite dominated government and militias that immediately undertook attacks into Sunni regions that had already ostensibly been disarmed. The numbers of displaced persons and refugees fleeing Baghdad shot up dramatically due to death threats as well as forced evictions under threat of arms.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, corpses of unknown identity began turning up with alarming frequency; and these were presumed to have been kidnapped from their homes during curfew hours at the hands of death squads, militias and security apparatuses, within view of US forces. Bodies were often discovered thrown into sewers or left in the streets of Baghdad; and in June 2007 alone 453 corpses were discovered – a relative increase of 41% from the previous year, before the plan to ‘lay down the law’ was implemented or operations during the ‘surge’ completed. The ultimate result of this was the eviction and dispersion of the Sunni population of Baghdad – a city that was once fairly evenly divided demographically between Shi‘ites and Sunnis. That many have been killed, displaced or fled to other regions or into exile, where they live in reduced circumstances in countries like Jordan, tends to be confirmed by patterns of ambient light in West Baghdad as detected by satellite (Cole 2010).

Differently stated, the Americans let the internal civil war take its toll, until the point of total collapse; which had the effect of decimating the numbers of the various combatants, buying time to allow for the building up Iraqi government forces, and permitting the transfer of US troops from Iraq to Afghanistan. The United States also increasingly pressured and attempted to entice the leaderships of various Arab Sunni resistance factions to enter into the political process and to gain a foothold in determining the political situation and struggle over power and resources among the various factions competing and participating in Iraqi politics.

Among the priorities for the success of the strategies of the Iraqi national forces, whether armed or political, was to find a framework to bring them together for the purpose of working towards adopting unified policies and positions to confront the occupation and its supporters, both militarily and politically. Especially in what pertained to fateful decisions that would affect, either directly or indirectly, the future of the resistance and Iraq, as well as that of the *ummah* to which the resistance belongs. Similarly, the change in the prioritization of enemies to be targeted (such that Iran became enemy number one), was made on the basis of near-term views on long-term prospects. The consequences of these individualistic decisions and what followed from them of measures led to the entrance of some fighters of the Islamic resistance into *majālis al-ṣaḥwah* or forming altogether new ones and transforming them into political associations and blocs with a connection to the occupation authority or the Iraqi government.

### **Fifth: The Security Agreement, the schedule for American withdrawal and the position of the resistance**

Through bilateral agreement between the United States and the Iraqi government as per the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) of 17 November 2008, a timetable for US withdrawal from Iraq was set according to specific principles. The most important of these were laid out in the US National Security Strategy (2010) as follows:

We are transitioning security to full Iraqi responsibility. We will end the combat mission in Iraq by the end of August 2010. We will continue to train, equip, and advise Iraqi Security Forces; conduct targeted counterterrorism missions; and protect ongoing civilian and military efforts in Iraq. And, consistent with our commitments to the Iraqi Government, including the U.S.–Iraq Security Agreement, we will remove all of our troops from Iraq by the end of 2011. ... The United States will continue to retain a robust civilian presence commensurate with our strategic interests. (p. 25)

The Security Agreement cited in the US National Security Strategy was signed in Iraq between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on 17 November 2008 – endorsed by the Iraqi Parliament on 27 November 2008 and implemented on 1 January 2009 – and it went into force ‘following an exchange of diplomatic notes confirming that the actions by the Parties necessary to bring the Agreement into force in accordance with each Party’s respective constitutional procedures have been completed’ (Agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq ... 2008, Article 30, p. 18). The Agreement scheduled the timing of the US troop withdrawal as follows: ‘All the United States Forces shall withdraw from all Iraqi territory [waters and airspace] no later than December 31, 2011’ (Article 24, p. 15) and required the handover of responsibilities for security in all Iraqi provinces to the Iraqi security forces after the withdrawal of US forces from the cities, according to a fixed deadline of 30 June 2009. It also determined the arrangements for the reduction of the number of US forces according to a timetable as per the Security Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) as ratified by the Iraqi Parliament on 27 November 2008.

Logic and reason in conflicts dictate the necessity of understanding what the enemy is thinking; that is, knowledge of what the enemy wants and, on that basis, at least working to obstruct his attainment of his goals. The enemy in question here was the American occupation forces that remained in Iraq for a number of years doing nothing more than searching for a safe face-saving exit that would preserve a

minimum of prestige. What the United States sought certainly served its ends and realized its interests; and thus, it cannot possibly be the case that these were anything but antithetical to the interests and goals of the Iraqi resistance. More probably, it is entirely logical that the interests of the resistance were entirely opposite to the orientations, policies, and plans of the occupation and its interest. However, a number of Iraqi forces given to assuming leading roles in the media and politics and speaking in the name of ‘the resistance’ and the other forces resisting the occupation did not adopt this strategy and saw that:

the genuine interests of the Iraqi people are in the withdrawal of the occupation forces according to a declared timetable and adhering to it as backed up by international guarantees and in agreement with a comprehensive plan, ensuring complete national rights for Iraqis. (Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq 2005a)

This view was espoused as a national initiative alternative to the initiative of the occupation, predicated on the realization of national demands in complete independence and sovereignty on the ground, and in capabilities, as was announced in the Umm al-Qura communiqué of 15 February 2005. In this communiqué, the Iraqi nationalist forces resisting the occupation elucidated the principles of their national plan for liberation as represented in ‘the clearly delimited and express timetable to be observed according to international guarantees for the withdrawal of the forces of occupation from Iraq in all of their manifestations (*bi-jamīʿ mazāhirihā*)’ (Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq 2005b).

The response of the occupation forces to the schedule for withdrawal is not a victory, as some of these armed and unarmed Iraqi ‘nationalist’ forces are deluded into imagining, if the timetable can be counted as a comfortable escape from defeat. It was to be expected that the supposed enemy would not abandon Iraqi territory before it had secured the primary pillars for the success of its mission, that are embodied in corporations, investments, security establishments and comprador agents established to execute its policies and realize its immediate and strategic interests through Iraqi persons and facades. The withdrawal of the enemy is thus ordered and staged according to carefully delimited phases of the timetable, which grants it the opportunity to arrange its affairs and situation at every stage and in adequate time to prepare for subsequent stages. This completion of the withdrawal is synchronized with the complete insurance of interests. Likewise, with the exit of the occupation soldiers and their equipment, the resistance loses its trump card for exerting pressure, if this was not the only card which it had to play for the human and financial material of the enemy or to compel it to admit military defeat and in order to achieve the interests and goals for which the resistance had fought.

Notwithstanding that the American withdrawal was to take place according to timetables declared in the bilateral agreement between the United States and the Iraqi government without international guarantees; despite the fact that the resistance in Iraq did nothing to disrupt these timetables and either delay or speed them up; even though the withdrawal was conducted safely and the departing columns were not exposed to any armed operations that might have impeded their withdrawal<sup>19</sup> or inflicted major losses with the exit of over 100,000 troops and millions of tons of equipment; notwithstanding that there was no treaty or agreement between the resistance and the United States even though the United States acknowledged the resistance after negotiations with the political council of the resistance under the supervision of Turkey; despite all of this, the

resistance groups in Iraq claim that the withdrawal constitutes a victory brought about by the painful blows inflicted on the United States by the *mujahidin* (Jabbūr 2010), and that it was the Iraqi resistance that compelled the occupation to flee from Iraq (al-Babilyah 2010). They also believe that the declaration of the end of combat operations constituted the first indication of defeat of the forces of occupation (Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq 2010), and that the blows of the resistance exhausted the enemy and that the loss of lives and material that it inflicted proved too much for the occupation to bear and militated against its remaining longer in Iraq (Front of Jihad and Change 2010). It was presumed that all these factors compelled the United States and its allies to retreat after seven years of being battered by the resistance groups (Ra'fat and Baghdād al-Jihād 2010); and furthermore, that the time had come to turn more seriously towards mass mobilization, with the continued repulsing of the forces of occupation, until the departure of the last American soldier.

It was in fact a partial withdrawal that would not have occurred had it not been for the actions and attacks of the resistance in Iraq that inflicted both visible and unseen losses on the ranks of the US army that ultimately compelled the administration of Obama to take the political decision to withdraw (al-Mu'ini 2009), and which was, in the end, an escape from hell and a major victory for the resistance in Iraq.

#### **Sixth: the American withdrawal, its import and the possibilities for a return**

The United States manoeuvred to address the impasse in Afghanistan by linking estimates and assessments of American field commands in both Afghanistan and Iraq to situations on the ground in Iraq and abiding by the deadlines for final withdrawal from that country. This is the strategy adopted by the Americans for years, in order to fulfil the war mission in Iraq and ensure US interests, including prevention of the tarnishing of its image in the Arab–Islamic milieu as well as domestically in the United States itself, while at the same time not neglecting the training of substitute Iraqi forces so that Iraq should not fall into the hands of Islamist *jihadist* movements.<sup>20</sup> Stable security in Iraq is the criterion for judging the situation on the ground and from the perspective of the occupation forces is inversely proportional to the resistance operations in Iraq.

In contrast to this there is the matter of what this signifies for Iraqi citizens; this discrepancy enabled the occupation forces to conduct a trial run for what will meet its basic needs in Afghanistan.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the situation amounts to a vote of no confidence on the part of the government in the capabilities of the Iraqi forces to confront the new challenges after the American withdrawal and accept the need for these forces for many years to come, so as to complete the building up of its capabilities to a level where its forces will be qualified to execute their security missions without the support of US forces.<sup>22</sup> This contradicts the assessments of the American military that views the Iraqi forces as they now stand as being capable of engaging in all their responsibilities by depending on themselves.<sup>23</sup> Differently stated, this American escape is irresponsible in light of how the parlous situation in Iraq has come about as a result of the presence of the occupation and the failed policies of the Iraqi governments that the United States brought in to rule Iraq. Furthermore, the form of the governments that the United States intended to introduce is of an immature type that remains in need of the tutelage and propping up of another.

All in all, it appears that the US strategy was designed in advance to reduce US casualties and set a limit on the continued loss of personnel and materiel, as well as

simultaneously ensure the vital interests of the United States in the region and avoid giving additional impetus to *jihadist* forces along with the means for them to enlist new recruits for the ongoing global struggle between them. In any case, it is this struggle that permitted the United States to complement its defensive positions on its own territory with forward, offensive bases in new theatres of confrontation, into which the *jihadist* forces will find themselves coerced to transfer and coexist, after the loss of the justifications for their existence as fighting forces in Iraq, in the perception of most Iraqis, and at the forefront of them those forces that resisted the initiative of the occupation by other means or those which participated in armed resistance and fought pitched battles as proxies alongside the American forces against al-Qā'idah in most of the provinces and areas where it was found. Despite the declaration of the American withdrawal from Iraq and the American decree and certification that it is like any sovereign, independent nation and free to chart its future course, the trust of average Iraqis is at best very limited in the seriousness of the United States with regard to total withdrawal in a sense that it would effect the realization of the absolute sovereignty of Iraqis over Iraq. This is the fixed presumption among Iraqis with regard to the occupation.<sup>24</sup> It would appear that the most that the United States is willing to concede with regard to Iraqi sovereignty and independence entails both withdrawal *while* remaining, and a perpetual guarantee of the right of free passage.

- 'Withdrawal while remaining behind' might indeed be the closest and most accurate description for the actual reality of the American presence after 31 December 2011, the deadline for all withdrawal of American forces from Iraq as stipulated in the SOFA.<sup>25</sup> The United States participated in building up Iraqi military and security capabilities over the first six years of the occupation with the assistance of Arab and foreign nations,<sup>26</sup> in order to participate in preserving European security through the expurgation of *jihadist* forces and movements from Iraq (Kuwaiti News Agency (KUNA) 2003) and substituting direct and conspicuous military occupation with a concealed multidimensional occupation of various forms drawing on the presence of several thousand employees in the US Embassy in Baghdad in addition to more than 10,000 security contractors (that is, *mercenaries*) who constitute another form of occupation able to execute security tasks, preserve the interests and assets of the United States, and carry out whatever remains of its policies in Iraq in cooperation with compliant Iraqi governments and their military and security forces that were equipped with a military ideology that is sufficient impetus for them to plunge into proxy wars against the enemies of the US in Iraq over the long term.

The United States worked to remain in Iraq by effecting a security coexistence to guarantee the necessary continuity of the political process through the building up of Iraqi security forces according to American military credo capable of serving as a well-trained side in the 'War on Terror' and to fight as a proxy for the United States that will 'provide the necessary support from time to time to assist the Iraqis, but it does not ever want to be on the frontlines'.<sup>27</sup> There is no doubt that the United States must continue over the long term to provide logistical support to the Iraqi forces, a form of support that is primary in the War on Terror – whether inside Iraq or without. This is in conjunction with direct assistance in democracy-building over the long term that might last for decades.

- Guarantee of the right of free passage in perpetuity. Even though the Security Agreement specified that Iraqi 'territory, waters and airspaces' would not be

used as military bases against other countries,<sup>28</sup> the United States worked on ensuring the ‘right to free passage’ through Iraq’s territory and airspace for the purpose of pursuing its War on Terror (on Islam).

- Redeployment. The United States is manoeuvring to redeploy its military forces throughout the world so as to ensure its continuing capability to wage war against ‘terrorism’ (Islam) in new theatres along the Pakistani-Afghani frontier or in potential new hotspots from Yemen to North Africa. In the context of spreading its forces out across the globe, there is the possibility that the United States may rent permanent military bases in Iraq in addition to those already present in the Arabian Gulf, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia and Diego Garcia (in the south Indian Ocean) as well as others throughout the world, such as those in Germany, South Korea and Japan. These are to meet the needs of the United States in its ‘War on Terror’ as well as to guarantee the free flow of sources of energy from the Gulf region to the Caspian Sea and ensure the security of Israel, in addition to responding to any potential Iranian threat against its interests in the region, or at the very least to stand by Israel in the event of any possible confrontation in the future. These actual and potential bases have the potential to factor in facilitating and supporting regional US military activities along with bases in the Gulf and Jordan<sup>29</sup> and Turkey. Similarly, the potential for Iraq to slip into a Sunni–Shi’ite civil war or one between Arabs and Kurds is very real – conflicts that might draw in neighbouring countries and regional powers and lead them to intervene directly into the fray on one side or another, which would in all likelihood push the Iraqi government to demand that the United States send some of its forces back in, yet again.

### **Seventh: American withdrawal and other forms of occupation**

By the end of June 2009, US forces had effected a withdrawal to bases and temporary camps outside the major Iraqi cities, wherein their presence and activities were greatly reduced from what they had been previous to that date. American forces maintained a presence only on the roads and highways outside the cities for technical missions connected to arrangements for final withdrawal from Iraq, in addition occasionally to providing assistance for Iraqi forces in military or security operations against the resistance as was the express policy and as was in fact the case to a certain extent. This presence diminished after the end of August 2010 even though the occupation would persist in hidden forms after the final withdrawal at the end of 2011. Among the facets of this continued US presence are the following:

- A vast civilian presence that pervades all of Iraq geographically and which persists in numerous forms in the areas of charitable work and organizations of civil society, in which the United States exercises dual roles.
- Thousands of workers in the US Embassy in Baghdad, where the United States employs thousands of American and foreign personnel in what is the largest US embassy in the world that obligates it to protect these individuals as well as the buildings by relying on non-Iraqi security contractors in addition to providing protection for the two US Consulates in Basra and Irbil, to say nothing of the possibility of its opening new consulates elsewhere in important provinces<sup>30</sup> which will have an influence on the internal situation and future of Iraq.



- Economic occupation of Iraq, both conspicuous and hidden, in the form of investments of American corporations in the fields of security, industry, oil, technology and other.<sup>31</sup>
- Groups engaged in the reconstruction of Iraq and their affiliates characterized as advisors and according to other descriptions among groups engaged in development and construction in the provinces.<sup>32</sup>
- Investment in the security and protective services sector employing security contractors (mercenaries) for the protection of government institutions as well as persons and foreign establishments, including some prominent Iraqi personages. Before withdrawal there were between 70,000 and 100,000 foreign mercenaries of all sorts of nationalities operating in Iraq. The number of American mercenaries among these was thought to be more than 100,000;<sup>33</sup> and it is expected that the need for these security personnel will increase to compensate and stand in for the regular forces that have been pulled out. Iraqi elements will be depended upon to a greater extent due to considerations pertaining to their lower wages, their dedication to work, their knowledge of the geographic and social situation, as well as the various specific urban layouts and milieus.

## Notes

1. For details on the hearing, see Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives (2009).
2. Gen. David H. Petraeus, Commander of Multinational Forces Iraq, stated that: 'In parts of Afghanistan, the situation is deteriorating ... 2009 levels of violence were significantly higher than those of last year' (Petraeus 2009, p. 21).
3. Bearden was CIA Station Chief in Pakistan from 1986 to 1989 (Bearden 2009); also see the statement of Gen. Dan McNeill, previous commander of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in July 2008 (McNeill 2008).
4. Also see: <http://www.cnas.org/blogs/abumuqawama> [Accessed 30 January 2012].
5. Brigadier Gen. Keith Walker, Commander of the Iraq Assistance Group (IAG), a US military command underneath Multi-National Corps – Iraq (MNC-I), stated: 'In May of 2007, Iraq saw an average of 900 attacks per week. In May of 2008 the average was 200 attacks per week. And for 22 of the last 26 weeks, we've seen less than 100 attacks per week' (Olsen 2009).
6. Petraeus, Commander of Multinational Forces Iraq, stated: 'In December 2006, during the height of the ethno-sectarian violence that escalated in the wake of the bombing of the Golden Dome Mosque in Samarra, the leaders in Iraq at that time – General George Casey and Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad – concluded that the coalition was failing to achieve its objectives. ... Throughout this period, as well, we engaged in dialogue with insurgent groups and tribes, and this led to additional elements standing up to oppose Al Qaeda and other extremists' (Petraeus 2007, pp. 2–3).
7. Russ Feingold, Wisconsin State Democratic senator and Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, stated that he: 'will introduce legislation that will prohibit the use of funds to continue the deployment of U.S. forces in Iraq six months after enactment' (p. 2); adding that: 'Today, we have heard convincing testimony and analysis that Congress has the power to stop a war if it wants to' (Feingold 2007, p. 31).
8. '[T]he [deployment of] 30,000 troops in Iraq improved the security situation and helped reduce violence attacks, as well, bringing down the number of civilian casualties' (Petraeus 2007, p. 3).
9. 'In the last few months of 2006, a new political discourse emerged on the Iraqi scene that was adopted by some resistance groups in Iraq. The discourse reformulated the priorities of the struggle, considering Iran as the supreme enemy, which had the effect of sidelining the American enemy or at least declaring truce with it in order to take action against the more immediate enemy' (al-Hamid 2008).

10. 'Certainly violence has declined as local Sunni sheiks have begun to cooperate with US forces. But the surge tactic cannot be given full credit. The decline started earlier on Sunni initiative' (Odom 2008).
11. 'In recent months, in the face of tough enemies and the brutal summer heat of Iraq, Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces have achieved progress in the security arena' (Petraeus 2007, p. 1).
12. Quotes of the text of US National Security Adviser in Iraq, Steven Hadley, who said that: 'repeated reports from our commanders on the ground contributed to our concerns about Maliki's government. Reports of non-delivery of services to Sunni areas, intervention by the prime minister's office to stop military action against Shiaa targets and to encourage them against Sunni ones ... all suggest a campaign to consolidate Shiaa power in Baghdad' (Hadley 2006).
13. 'Americans were protectors and supporters of the government forces. They were the ones who facilitated the committing of crimes and massacres since they used to block off a region or a town, then search carefully for weapons and confiscate guns. Thereafter, they would seal off all points of entrance with their tanks and material in order to allow militias and government forces to kill at will, and arrest and destroy however they wish' (Muslim Army in Iraq 2009).
14. 'US Ministry of Defense statistics show that attacks in Iraq reached their highest daily average in June 2007 since May 2003. Figures indicate an accelerating tendency for daily attacks during the last four months, where June witnessed the occurrence of 5335 attacks against occupation forces, Iraqi security forces, civilians and the basic infrastructure' (*al-Ba'ith* 2007).
15. Gen. Raymond Odierno, US Military Commander of Ground Forces, said there was a long way to go in retaking the city from Shi'ite Muslim militias, Sunni Arab insurgents and al-Qā'idah terrorists. He said only about: '40 percent is really very safe on a routine basis [which are Shi'ite regions], with about 30 percent lacking control [which are Sunni regions controlled by al-Qā'idah], and a further 30 percent suffering a high level of violence ... [constituting] areas that we consider to be the hot spots, which usually have a Sunni-Shiite fault line' (Gamel 2007).
16. 'Special groups' (*al-majāmi' al-khāṣṣah*) is a term that was repeatedly used by US forces indicating groups of militias and death squads financed and promoted by Iran's Revolutionary Guards.
17. 'The worst month of Lt. Col. Dale Kuehl's deployment in western Baghdad was finally drawing to a close. The insurgent group al-Qaeda in Iraq had unleashed bombings that killed 14 of his soldiers in May, a shocking escalation of violence for a battalion' (Partlow 2007).
18. 'The UN-run International Organisation for Migration says the numbers fleeing fighting in Baghdad grew by a factor of 20 in the same period ... that 63 percent of the Iraqis fled their neighbourhoods because of threats to their lives. More than 25 percent said they fled after being thrown out of their homes at gunpoint' (Doyle 2007).
19. 'In a telephone interview from Kuwait, Army Col. John Norris spoke about the unit's road march from Baghdad to Kuwait'. It is worth mentioning that 'the brigade [Stryker] was spread out all over western Baghdad, and the mission was to get 2,200 soldiers in 350 vehicles out of the area. ... The 350-mile road march would be a tempting target for al-Qaida in Iraq or other terror groups. ... We moved from Baghdad and did a rest overnight at Camp Adder [in Talil near al-Nasiriyyah, Iraq] and then moved south to Kuwait. ... There was no enemy contact and very few maintenance issues' (Garamone 2010).
20. 'The militants [Islamic radical movements] believe that controlling one country [such as Iraq] will rally the Muslim masses, enabling them to overthrow all moderate governments in the region, and establish a radical Islamic empire that spans from Spain to Indonesia' (National Endowment for Democracy 2005, p. 2).
21. 'This Agreement shall be amended only with the official agreement of the Parties in writing and in accordance with the constitutional procedures in effect in both countries' (Agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq ... 2008, Article 30, p. 18).
22. Iraqi Army Chief of Staff, Lt Gen. Babaker Zebari, stated that: 'Iraq will not be fully able to protect/defend its borders and airspace OR will be unable to execute the full spectrum of

- external-defence missions until 2020, at the earliest', implying that even then it would still need US support (*Daily News* 2011).
23. In an exclusive *This Week* interview, Odierno said Iraqi security forces have 'stepped up' to the challenge, stating: 'We do believe they are ready to assume full operations in Iraq', after the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq (Miller 2010).
  24. Steve Niva, Professor of International Politics and Middle East Studies at Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA (Niva 2009).
  25. 'All the United States Forces shall withdraw from all Iraqi territory [waters and airspace] no later than December 31, 2011' (Agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq ... 2008, Article 24, p. 15).
  26. During a farewell ceremony, attended by Ambassador of the United States and the British Charge d'Affaire in Jordan, Austrian Minister of Interior Ernst Strasser said: '[a] training course will start in Jordan as of next week, where 35,000 Iraqi police cadets will enrol in an 8-week training programme that will graduate 1500 officers each training course' (Kuwaiti News Agency (KUNA) 2003). For more on this, see Kyrle (2003).
  27. 'White House spokesman Tony Snow said Bush would like to see a U.S. role in Iraq ultimately similar to that in South Korea' (Holland 2007).
  28. 'Iraqi land, sea, and air shall not be used as a launching or transit point for attacks against other countries' (Agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq ... 2008, under Article 27, 'Deterrence of Security Threats', p. 17).
  29. There is an open military relation between the United States and Jordan that allows a strong American military presence when conditions dictate such a necessity. Meanwhile, there are currently US military facilities in the Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Azraq, where 1200 Air Force personnel/officers are stationed; while the Aqaba Gulf offers the US Navy forces various services ('Abd al-Salām 2004).
  30. The remaining US forces will concentrate their attention on the US Embassy in Baghdad, the largest US diplomatic outpost in the world, while protecting US consulates general in Basrah and Erbil – located in southern and northern Iraq. The US Department of Foreign Affairs is considering establishing temporary diplomatic branches of their embassies in Mosul and Kirkuk, northern Iraq, to deal with the Arab–Kurdish tension in the region (*Al-Jazeera.net* 2010).
  31. Numerous studies indicated that Iraq has among the largest oil reserves in the world, with over 520 billion barrels (Najib 2009).
  32. 'By August, we will have AABs strategically located across Iraq whose primary mission will be to support PRTs, the United Nations, and other nongovernmental organizations, as well as to train and advise Iraqi Security Forces' (*Prism Journal* 2010, p. 144).
  33. In a statement presented at the Armed Service Committee, Odierno said: 'The number of U.S. contractors in Iraq has dropped from 149,000 in January to just over 115,000, saving over \$441 million' (Allen 2009).

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