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**The Situation in Iraq:  
The Impact of President Bush's  
Speech**

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- The most important point President Bush made in his speech was to clearly state that the US is at war, and that there now is no way to determine the scope of that conflict.
- **It is, however, only one war out of four in the region where the US is challenged.**
  - The situation in Afghanistan is as uncertain as in Iraq, not so much because of the strength of al Qaida and the Taliban, but because of an equally uncertain nation building process, and questions about the stability of Pakistan.
  - The US faces a broad threat from Islamic extremist that goes far beyond Bin Laden and Al Qaida, and is not clear this threat is being reduced faster than new cadres are generated and new cells and groups emerge.
  - It is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and not terrorism or Iraq that does most to polarize the Arab and Islamic worlds. US are seen as the ally of Israel and a cobelligerent, and US peace efforts as inadequate and insincere.
- Given this context, the issue of whether the US should have invaded Iraq in the first place is now largely irrelevant. Americans have to deal with the realities on the ground in all four wars, and with the fact that the wars Americans are fighting are largely perceptual and political wars – not ones determined by force ratios and traditional military strengths.
- **Here it may be useful to review some of the points President Bush made last night.**
  - First, he is correct in stating the strategic priority for success, and that vital US interests are now engaged in Iraq, the region, and the world.
  - The US does need to make national building in Iraq work if the US possibly can, and US need to recognize that the reversals of the last few weeks must be kept in proportion.
  - The fighting around Fallujah is serious, but the brunt is being borne by 3,000 US troops dealing with a mix of insurgents that probably have a core strength of less than 1,000 in a city that has at most 300,000 people or a little over 1% of Iraq's population. Even if US include the entire population of the actively hostile towns in the Sunni Triangle, US are talking around 6% of Iraq's population and probably less than 10,000-15,000 full and part time insurgents. As long as the threat remains this small, it can be dealt with.
  - Similarly, Sadr seems to remain a force that can call up substantial crowds, but not large popular masses. His militia seems to be about 5,000-10,000, and has far less experienced military cadres than the Sunnis.

- There is still a very real possibility that a combination of the efforts made by the CPA and the efforts of the UN negotiator can create a government with more legitimacy and competence than the existing Governing Council by June 30.
- It will be a political disaster in Iraq if US delay the transfer of sovereignty. Iraqis simply will not accept any serious delay in getting back their sovereignty and there is not practical chance US can negotiate a better result with more than a limited delay.
- Finally, the success or failure of nation building in Iraq will depend on the Iraqis and not on the US, UN, or any other mix of outsiders. Within 100 days, all US plans will become subject to the decisions of the new Iraqi government, including the role of US military forces, US embassy, and US aid efforts.
  - The new government will either reach the compromises necessary to create effective federalism or pluralism or it will not.
  - It will transform Iraq's failed economy from a command kleptocracy to something approaching a viable private sector economy or it will not.
  - It will create a political climate where legitimate political leaders and parties emerge or it will not.
- The US may retain leverage and influence – although this will diminish with each month that passes – but Iraqis will shape Iraq's future.
- **At the same time, the risks involved in Iraq are far greater than President Bush stated, and the US has made many major mistakes that have compounded those risks that the President should have remembered.**
- Neither the US nor the exiles it brought with it -- and made a key part of the Governing Council US appointed – now command significant popular support or have serious political legitimacy. The Interim governing Law is a US creation, and the US truly does not know what kind of government US can create by June 30, or how it will be perceived.
- The majority of Iraqis does not hate the Americans, nor do they reject US nation building efforts to date. Many are grateful for Saddam's departure, although not for the war.
  - It is dangerous, however, to confuse tolerance and hope with gratitude and admiration, and to assume that most Iraqis will somehow be loyal to US goals and plans. "Freedom" does not mean the right to make US choices. It means the right to make Iraqi choices.

- The US also needs to understand that Americans are involved in a political and psychological war where large numbers of Iraqis can turn against us – and may be in the process of doing so.
- **The ABC News poll conducted in February sounded several important warnings.**
  - **Some 37% of all Sunnis and 12% of all Shi'ites supported attacks of Coalition forces in February. Anger may now be far greater, and any political problems between now and early 2006 may make worse.**
  - **Unhappiness is highest by far with the availability of jobs (69 percent say it's bad) and the supply of electricity (64 percent negative). Local schools are rated positively (by 72 percent), and smaller majorities give positive ratings to the availability of basic household goods and the adequacy of local crime protection.** About half give positive ratings to the availability of medical care, clean water and household goods beyond the basics, and to local government.
  - Iraqis divide in their rating of the local security situation now, but strikingly, **54 percent say security where they live is better now than it was before the war. However, for some, local security clearly is a great concern; 22 percent call it the single biggest problem in their lives, more than any other mention ("no job" is second, 12 percent). Local security concerns peak in greater Baghdad, where they're cited by 36 percent as the top problem, compared to a low of eight percent in Kurdistan.**
  - **COALITION FORCES** – As noted, 51 percent oppose the presence of coalition forces – but that doesn't mean most want them withdrawn immediately, likely because of security concerns. **Fifteen percent of Iraqis say the forces should leave the country now; by contrast, 36 percent say they should remain until a new government is in place; 18 percent, until security is restored**
  - **There is relatively little support for a religious theocracy – it's low on the list of preferred forms of government.**
  - In one change from the first national poll in Iraq by Oxford Research International last fall, **more now call for a "single strong Iraqi leader" – 47 percent say one will be needed a year from now, up from 27 percent previously. That's more than say "an Iraqi democracy" will be needed, now 28 percent (essentially unchanged).**

- This interest in a strong leader (not necessarily an undemocratic one) seems based in security concerns. In an open-ended follow-up, references to “freedom” dominate support for democracy, while those who express support for a single strong leader are more apt to cite the need for security and order in their country.

	Iraq's needs for governance	
	In 1 year	In 5 years
<b>Single strong Iraqi leader</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>35%</b>
Iraqi democracy		28
Government of religious leaders		10
Group of strong Iraqi leaders		3
Government of experts/managers		2
Iraqi Governing Council		2
UN transition government		1
Government of Iraqi military leaders		1
Coalition Provisional Authority		1

- In another question, without a time frame mentioned, democracy wins more support than two other options – a strong leader, but one who rules “for life”; or an Islamic state. Forty-nine percent choose democracy, 28 percent a “strong leader” and 21 percent an Islamic state.

- Preferred political system

▪ Democracy	49%
▪ Strong leader “for life”	28
▪ Islamic state	21

- As noted, more Iraqis express interest in politics – 54 percent, up from 39 percent in November – and 31 percent say their interest in politics has increased in the past year, three times the number who say it's decreased. Women are more apt than men to express interest in politics, though it's up among both groups.
- **Sixty-one percent express little or no trust in political parties, and nearly seven in 10 don't identify themselves with any party.**
- **Three-quarters say joining a political party is something they “would never, under any circumstances, do”; indeed after decades of repression, more than a third, 36 percent, say that simply talking with other people about politics is something they would never do.**
- Choices also are fragmented when Iraqis are asked which national leader they “trust the most”– more than 40 individual answers, each with few mentions. Only five received mentions from more than three percent:

- -Ibrahim Al-Jaaferi, eight percent (main spokesman for the Islamic Dawa Party);
  - -Massoud Barzani, six percent (leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party);
  - -Jalal Talabani, six percent (leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan);
  - -Sayyid Al-Sistani, five percent (the country's leading Shiite cleric, sometimes described as the most powerful man in Iraq); and
  - -Adnan Pachachi, four percent (foreign minister in the government deposed by Saddam Hussein in 1968, he founded the Independent Democratic Movement last month.)
- **One figure, meanwhile, was cited by 10 percent as a leader they "don't trust at all" – Ahmed Chalabi, former leader of the London-based Iraqi National Congress, now a member of the Iraqi Governing Council.**
- **The US failed dismally to properly prepare for the security and nation building missions in Iraq before, during, and immediately after the war – largely because of neoconservatives in the Bush Administration that paralyzed interagency efforts and created a war plan based on false assumptions and hopes.**
  - The US has been trying to catch up with reality ever since.
  - The CPA has continued to try to impose many of US ideological beliefs on Iraq -- on an economic and information level, as well as a political one, and has largely failed in doing so.
- **The economic and information aspects of US efforts were in serious trouble long before the current upheavals.**
  - Now face new contracting crisis and risk must go from guards to mercenaries.
  - USAID gave little sign of competence. Created mission impossible for contractors, and did not sustain CERF efforts.
  - Unclear what can do in low security zones.
  - Need massive supplemental for both fighting and foreign aid, and cannot fund with oil. Talking in excess of \$50-70 billion a year for probably two fiscal years.
  - Information campaign essentially hopeless. Must now rely on Iraqis.

- The war has long been all too real. There 150-180 incidents a week for months before the present peak in the fighting. Ever since August, the day reports have listed an average of at least 20-40 low level incidents or attempts. There has been a serious low intensity conflict, with well-directed attacks, from late July on.
- The last few weeks have destroyed and disrupted much of the aid effort, and there now is no way to predict the future climate for using dollars effectively instead of bullets.
- **Security mission deeply troubled:**
  - Some 230,000 men. Recruiting base local and inherently uncertain in loyalty.
  - Failed to provide pay, uniforms, weapons, communications, transportation, and facilities needed. No clear image when will get.
  - Training not really complete before November.
  - Explosive problem if popular attitudes turn sour.
- **This is an extremely uncertain struggle.**
  - May not be able to “stay the course.” Cannot do so if asked to leave, if a civil war occurs, or if shift from limited insurgency to massive popular hostility.
  - Rather foolish to talk about UN and NATO at this point.
    - New group of outsiders cannot deal with security issues or win support. Little chance of major intervention unless a new Iraqi government emerges that is popular and successful, at which point the intervention has far less priority.
    - UN effort to reach a compromise that replaces the Interim Governing Council with a more legitimate government is very useful, but cannot perform miracles, and even if successful leaves all the other problems of war fighting and nation building intact.
  - This is now a US fight, and can probably expect new waves of violence, casualties for at least another year.
  - Need to understand impacts on terrorism, but not in way President says.
    - Arab-Israeli issue critical and President Bush has just made far worse. His agreement with Sharon will be immensely valuable to America's enemies

in Iraq and to opponents like Bin Laden all over the world. It provides the ideal rationale for coupling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more closely to the US intervention in Iraq, it will make it more difficult for other nations to support the US, and it fuels every anti-American conspiracy theory in the Arab and Islamic worlds.

- Afghan issue is receiving far less attention, but it is unclear that nation building is really more successful. A problem with a lower profile, but which may well come to haunt Central Asia and Pakistan.
- Greater Middle East Initiative may do far more harm to reform than good:
  - So far, it is all “liberty,” without a meaningful economic and demographic dimension.
  - Any balance or new initiative towards an Arab-Israeli peace has already been discredited.
  - His programs to date appear to many in the region as more of threat to existing regimes than as a plan for evolutionary reform
  - There is no sign the US will provide aid to support its initiative, and it cannot now afford meaningful aid funds.
  - The President gave no sign he intended to work with reformers in region, or respond with nuanced programs to the needs of individual countries. There is no sign of a sound country-by- country approach.

Percent responding to Survey question	<u>Sunni Arabs</u>	<u>Shi'ite Arabs</u>	<u>Kurds</u>
Was Iraq Humiliated Or Liberated?			
<b>Humiliated</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>11</b>
Liberated	21	43	82
Was the invasion right Or wrong?			
Right	24	51	87
<b>Wrong</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>9</b>
Coalition should leave now?			
Yes	29	12	2
Attacks on Coalition forces			
<b>Acceptable?</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>
Unacceptable?	57	85	96
Preferred Political System			
Democracy	35	40	70
<b>Strong leader for life</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Islamic state</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>8</b>
Preferred Political System in One Year			
Single strong leader	65	44	20
Democracy	14	24	60
Religious leaders	5	18	2
Preferred Political System in 5 Years			
Single strong leader	49	32	16
Democracy	31	39	67
Religious leaders	6	7	2

## How Iraqis see their lives overall

How things are going today:	All	North	South	Central	Baghdad
Good	70%	85%	65%	70%	<b>67%</b>
<b>Bad</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>32</b>

## Compared to a year ago, before the war:

Better	56%	70%	63%	54%	<b>46%</b>
Same	23	15	21	22	31
Worse	19	13	13	23	<b>23</b>

## How they'll be a year from now:

Better	<b>71%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>63%</b>
Same	9	4	6	10	16
Worse	7	1	4	9	10

