

U.S. Senator Joe Biden

A Year on Iraq



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BACKGROUND
on
The Biden-Gelb Plan for Iraq

Iraq—A Way Forward
Fact Sheet: Biden-Gelb Plan for Iraq

President Bush does not have a strategy for victory in Iraq. His strategy is to prevent defeat and to hand the problem off to his successor. As a result, more and more Americans understandably want a rapid withdrawal, even at the risk of trading a dictator for chaos and a civil war that could become a regional war. Both are bad alternatives.

There is a third way that can achieve the two objectives most Americans share: to bring our troops home without leaving chaos behind. The idea is to maintain a unified Iraq by federalizing it and giving Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis control over their daily lives in their own regions.

The central government would be responsible for common interests, like border security and the distribution of oil revenues. The plan would bind the Sunnis – who have no oil – by guaranteeing them a proportionate share of oil revenues. It would convene an international conference to secure support for the power sharing arrangement and produce a regional nonaggression pact, enforced by an Oversight Group of the U.N. and major powers. It would call on the U.S. military to withdraw most U.S. troops from Iraq by 2008, with a residual force to take on terrorists and train Iraqis. It would increase economic aid but tie it to the protection of minority rights and the creation of a jobs program and seek funding from the oil-rich Gulf Arab states.

The central reality in Iraq is deep and growing sectarian violence between the Shiites and Sunnis. Ethnic militias increasingly are the law in Iraq. They have infiltrated the official security forces. Massive unemployment is feeding the sectarian militia. Sectarian cleansing has forced more than 2 million Iraqis to flee their homes. At the same time, Al Qaeda is now so firmly entrenched in Western Iraq that it has morphed into an indigenous jihadist threat. As a result, Iraq risks becoming what it was not before the war: a haven for radical fundamentalists.

There is no purely military solution to the sectarian civil war. The only way to break the vicious cycle of violence – and to create the conditions for our armed forces to responsibly withdraw – is to give Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds incentives to pursue their interests peacefully. That requires an equitable and viable power sharing arrangement. That's where my plan comes in. This plan is not partition—in fact, it may be the only way to prevent violent partition and preserve a unified Iraq. This plan is consistent with Iraq's constitution, which provides for Iraq's 18 provinces to join together in regions, with their own security forces, and control over most day-to-day issues. This plan is the only idea on the table for dealing with the militia, which are likely to retreat to their respective regions. This plan is consistent with a strong central government, with clearly defined responsibilities. Indeed, it provides an agenda for that government, whose mere existence will not end sectarian violence.

The example of Bosnia is illustrative. Ten years ago, Bosnia was being torn apart by ethnic cleansing. The United States stepped in decisively with the Dayton Accords to keep the country whole by, paradoxically, dividing it into ethnic federations. We even allowed Muslims, Croats and Serbs to retain separate armies. With the help of U.S. troops and others, Bosnians have lived a decade in peace. Now, they are strengthening their central government, and disbanding their separate armies.

The Bush administration continues to hope that Iraqis will rally behind a strong central government that keeps the country together and protects the rights of all citizens equally. But that vision has been engulfed by the flames of sectarian hatred. There is no trust within the central government, no trust of the government by the people, no capacity by the government to deliver security and services—and no evidence that we can build that trust and capacity any time soon. There are two other ways to govern Iraq from the center: a foreign occupation that the United States cannot sustain or the return of a dictator like Saddam Hussein, who is not on the horizon.

That leaves federalism as Iraq's best possible future. But unless we help make it work for all Iraqis, it won't stop the violence. We should start with a major diplomatic offensive to convince the major powers and Iraq's neighbors that a federal Iraq is the best possible outcome for them, too. Then, together, we should convene a Dayton-like conference to move all the Iraqi parties from civil war to the negotiating table. Through a combination of pressure and reassurance, we would persuade the Sunnis to accept federalism and press the Shiites and Kurds to give the Sunnis a bigger piece of the pie.

The course we're on leads to a terrible civil war and possibly a regional war. This plan is designed to head that off. It offers the possibility – not the guarantee – of producing a soft landing for Iraq. I believe it is the best way to bring our troops home, protect our fundamental security interests, and preserve Iraq as a unified country.

The question I have for those who reject this plan is simple: What is your alternative?

A Five-Point Plan for Iraq

1. Keep Iraq Together Through Federalism and Local Control

- Federalize Iraq in accordance with its constitution by establishing three or more regions – Shiite, Sunni and Kurd – with a strong but limited central government in Baghdad.
- Put the central government in charge of truly common interests: border defense, foreign policy, oil production and revenues.
- Form regional and local governments that give Kurds, Sunni and Shiites control over the fabric of their daily lives: security, education, marriage, social services.

2. Secure Support from the Sunnis

- Gain agreement for the federal solution from the Sunni Arabs by guaranteeing them 20 percent of all present and future oil revenues – an amount roughly proportional to their size – which would make their region economically viable.
- Empower the central government to set national oil policy and distribute the revenues, to attract needed foreign investment and reinforce each community's interest in keeping Iraq intact and protecting the oil infrastructure. Provide for an international oversight group to guarantee a fair distribution of oil revenues.
- Allow former Baath Party members to go back to work and reintegrate Sunnis with no blood on their hands.

3. Enlist Help from the Major Powers and Iraq's Neighbors

- Initiate a major diplomatic offensive to secure the support of the major powers and Iraq's neighbors for federalism in Iraq.
- Convene with the U.N. a regional security conference where Iraq's neighbors, including Iran, pledge to support Iraq's power sharing agreement and respect Iraq's borders
- Engage Iraq's neighbors directly to overcome their suspicions and focus their efforts on stabilizing Iraq, not undermining it.
- Create a standing Oversight Group, to include the major powers, that would engage Iraq's neighbors and enforce their commitments.

4. Responsibly Drawdown US Troops

- Direct U.S. military commanders to develop a plan to withdraw and re-deploy almost all U.S. forces from Iraq by 2008.
- Maintain in or near Iraq a small residual force – perhaps 20,000 troops – to strike any concentration of terrorists, help keep Iraq's neighbors honest and train its security forces

5. Increase Reconstruction Assistance and Create a Jobs Program

- Provide more reconstruction assistance, conditioned on the protection of minority and women's rights and the establishment of a jobs program to give Iraqi youth an alternative to the militia and criminal gangs.
- Insist that other countries take the lead in funding reconstruction by making good on old commitments and providing new ones – especially the oil-rich Arab Gulf countries.

BIDEN-GELB Plan for Iraq: What It Is – and What It Is Not

The Biden-Gelb plan has sparked much intellectual debate and as that debate continues, it is important to note what the Biden-Gelb plan is, and what it is not:

The Plan IS NOT partition. In fact, it may be the only way to prevent a violent partition—which has already started—and preserve a unified Iraq. We call for a limited central government, with clearly defined responsibilities for truly common interests like foreign policy and the distribution of oil revenues. Indeed, the Plan provides an agenda for that government, whose mere existence will not end sectarian violence.

The Plan IS NOT a foreign imposition. To the contrary, it flows from Iraq's constitution, which already provides for Iraq's 18 provinces to join together in regions, with their own security forces, and control over most day-to-day issues. The constitution allocates significant powers to the regions, limited responsibility to the central government and it provides that in the case of a conflict of laws between a region and the central government, the region prevails. On October 11, 2006, Iraq's parliament approved legislation to implement the constitution's articles on federalism. Prior to the British colonial period and Saddam's military dictatorship, what is now Iraq functioned as three largely autonomous regions.

But declaring Iraq a federal system is not enough – the Iraqis must take concrete steps to make federalism workable for and acceptable to its major groups. For example, to ensure Sunni support, it is imperative that Iraqis also agree to an oil revenue sharing formula that guarantees the Sunni region economic viability. The United States should enlist the international community, including Iraq's neighbors, to strongly promote such an agreement. The final decisions will be up to Iraqis, but if we do not help them arrange the necessary compromises, nothing will get done. At key junctures in the past, we have used our influence to shape political outcomes in Iraq, notably by convincing the Shiites and Kurds to accept a provision allowing for the constitution to be amended following its adoption, which was necessary to secure Sunni participation in the referendum. Using our influence is not the same as imposing our will. With 160,000 Americans at risk, we have a right and an obligation to make known our views. But the more we make Iraq the world's problem, not just our own – with the major powers and Iraq's neighbors all using their influence to advance a federal outcome – the more effective we will be.

The Plan IS NOT an invitation to sectarian cleansing. Tragically, that invitation has been sent, received and acted upon. Two million Iraqis are already refugees outside their country, and nearly as many are displaced within it, largely as a result of sectarian violence. Iraqis are fleeing their homes at a rate now approaching 15,000 people a week. Only a political settlement, as proposed in the Plan, has a chance to stop this downward spiral.

The Plan IS the only idea on the table for dealing with the sectarian militia. It offers a realistic albeit interim solution. Realistic, because none of the major groups will give up their militia voluntarily in the absence of trust and confidence and neither we or the Iraqi government has the means to force them to do so. Once federalism is

implemented, the militias are likely to retreat to their respective regions to protect their own and vie for power, instead of killing the members of other groups. But it is only an interim solution, because no nation can sustain itself peacefully with private armies. Over time, if a political settlement endures, the militia would be incorporated into regional and national forces, as is happening in Bosnia.

The Plan IS an answer to the problem of mixed cities. Large cities with mixed populations present a challenge under any plan now being considered. The essence of the Plan is that mixed populations can only live together peacefully if their leadership is truly satisfied with the overall arrangement. If so, Iraqis will have fewer reasons to do violence to each other and their leadership will help keep the peace in the cities. We would make Baghdad a federal city, and buttress the protection of minorities there and in the other mixed cities with an international peacekeeping force. Right now, the prospect for raising such a force is small. But following a political settlement, an international conference and the establishment of a Contact Group, others are more likely to participate, including countries like Saudi Arabia which have offered peacekeepers in the past.

The Plan IS in the self-interest of Iran. Iran likes it exactly as it is in Iraq – with the United States bogged down and bleeding. But the prospect of a civil war in Iraq is not in Tehran's interest: it could easily spill over Iraq's borders and turn into a regional war with neighbors intervening on opposing sides and exacerbating the Sunni-Shiite divide at a time Shiite Iran is trying to exert leadership in the Islamic world. Iran also would receive large refugee flows as Iraqis flee the fighting. Iran, like all of Iraq's neighbors, has an interest in Iraq remaining unified and not splitting into independent states. Iran does not want to see an independent Kurdistan emerge and serve as an example for its own restive 5 million Kurds. That's why Iran – and all of Iraq's neighbors -- can and should be engaged to support a political settlement in Iraq.

The Plan IS in the self-interest of Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds. The Sunnis increasingly understand they will not regain power in Iraq. Faced with the choice of being a permanent minority player in a central government dominated by Shiites or having the freedom to control their day-to-day lives in a Sunni region, they are likely to choose the latter provided they are guaranteed a fair share of oil revenues to make their region viable. The Shiites know they can dominate Iraq politically, but not defeat a Sunni insurgency, which can bleed Iraq for years. The Kurds may dream of independence, but fear the reaction of Turkey and Iran – their interest is to achieve as much autonomy as possible while keeping Iraq together. Why would Shiites and Kurds give up some oil revenues to the Sunnis? Because that is the price of peace and the only way to attract the massive foreign investment needed to maximize Iraqi oil production. The result will be to give Shiites and Kurds a smaller piece of a much larger oil pie and give all three groups an incentive to protect the oil infrastructure.

Joseph R. Biden Jr., Democrat of Delaware, is the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Leslie H. Gelb is the president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations.

BIDEN-GELB PLAN EMERGES AS LEADING OPTION FOR MOVING FORWARD IN IRAQ

U.S. Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D-DE) and Council on Foreign Relations President Emeritus Leslie H. Gelb first laid out a detailed five-point plan for Iraq on May 1, 2006 in a joint op-ed in the New York Times. Since that time, the Biden-Gelb plan has sparked growing interest and support from political leaders, foreign policy experts and opinion leaders.

THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE (NIE) ON THE CENTRAL ELEMENT OF THE BIDEN-GELB PLAN

The National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraq – a consensus report of all U.S. intelligence agencies – makes clear the need for a political settlement based on federalism, as called for in the Biden-Gelb plan.

The NIE identifies developments that could “reverse the negative trends driving Iraq’s current trajectory,” including: “broader Sunni acceptance of the current political structure and federalism” and “significant concessions by Shia and Kurds to create space for Sunni acceptance of federalism.” These elements are central to the Biden-Gelb plan for Iraq.

The NIE also warns of the danger of Iraq’s civil war becoming a regional war, which underscores the urgent need for a regional diplomatic strategy that involves Iraq’s neighbors in supporting a political settlement or containing the violence should reconciliation fail, as called for in the Biden-Gelb plan. [U.S. National Intelligence Estimate, 2/2/07]

FORMER SECRETARIES OF STATE ON THE BIDEN-GELB PLAN

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger: “I’m sympathetic to an outcome that permits large regional autonomy. In fact, I think it is very likely that this will emerge out of the conflict that we are now witnessing.”

“If the Iraqis cannot solve the problems that have been described, I’ve told the Chairman privately, that I thought that this [a federal system in Iraq] was a possible outcome, and at the right moment we should work in the direction that will (inaudible) for maximum stability and for maximum chances of peace.” [Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, 1/31/07]

Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright: “[T]he idea of the... constitution of Iraq [as] written, which allows for and mandates, in fact, a great deal of regional autonomy, is appropriate. I think there are certain central powers that a government needs. Some of it has to do with the oil revenue and various other parts. So without endorsing any plan, I do think reality here sets in that there will be regional autonomy.”

“[W]hen asked about Senator Biden's plan, I have said that, in fact, it is an attempt to keep the country together, which I do believe is what it is about. I'm just talking about in the long run what might happen that we do have to watch out for. But I think it is very clear from my reading of the plan that it is done in order to keep the country together. And I do think that is an essential point.” [Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, 1/31/07]

Former Secretary of State James Baker: “...I was and still am interested in the proposal that Senator Biden and Les Gelb put forward with respect to the idea that ultimately you may end up with three autonomous regions in Iraq, because I was worried that there are indications that that might be happening, in fact, on the ground anyway and, if it is, we ought to be prepared to try and manage the situation. So we have a sentence in our report that says, ‘If events were to move irreversibly in this direction, the United States should manage the situation to ameliorate the humanitarian consequences, contain the violence and minimize regional stability.’” [Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, 1/30/07]

FOREIGN POLICY EXPERTS ON THE BIDEN-GELB PLAN

Former Iraq Defense Minister Ali Allawi: “I think the solution has to be to really face the fact that the invasion, occupation of the country has led to really enormous consequences, not only inside the Iraq but in the region. Unless you administer and control the effects of the invasion, you're unlikely to have much peace. And to do that I think you have to take into account that certain irreversible changes have taken place, especially, for example, the empowerment of the Shiite community, the empowerment of the Kurds, and the effects of that on the various countries of the Middle East.

JON STEWART: So you see sort of a central government, kind of existing to mediate between Kurds, Shi'a, and Sunni, but then they also have autonomy of their own?

Allawi: I think so. In the long term, if you want to have a nation state, these components have to be brought together again. You have to reweave the structures of the country and society. And a central government that is based on a kind of federal arrangement is possibly the best outcome.” [The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, 4/18/07]

Ambassador Dennis Ross, Counselor and Ziegler Distinguished Fellow, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy: “The only thing I would say, though, as I've noted before, with 100,000 Iraqis being displaced a month, you're beginning to create the outlines of that on the ground [a federal system in Iraq]. So I was actually in

favor of the idea before, and I think it may have more of a potential now because of that reality.” [Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, 1/17/07]

Ambassador Richard Haass, President Council on Foreign Relations: “I’ve long admired the chairman’s idea [Of a federal system in Iraq]...The problem is—it’s also put forward by my predecessor—the problem is not the idea. The idea’s a reasonable idea; it’s a good idea. The problem facing the idea is that it’s a reasonable idea that’s been introduced into an unreasonable political environment. If Iraqis were willing to sign on to this idea of distribution of political and economic power and so forth, federalism, all Iraqis would be better off and a large part of the problem would fade. The problem is that we can’t get Iraqis to sign on to a set of arrangements that, quite honestly, would leave the bulk of them better off. We can’t force them to be reasonable. And at the moment, they’ve essentially embarked on a path which is in some ways self-destructive of a society. So again—but the flaw is not inherent in the ideas; it’s just, again, we can’t—the very reasonableness that’s at the heart of the chairman’s idea is rejected again by -- virtually across the board, particularly by Shi’a and Sunnis, because they can’t agree on the precise balance, if you will, of political and economic power within their society. So at the moment, there’s not yet a federal scheme they would sign on to.” [Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, 1/17/07]

Michael O’Hanlon, Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution: “It would be preferable...to retain some level of multi-ethnic society... However, let’s be clear about what the data show—it’s happening already. And right now, it’s the militias and the death squads that are driving the ethnic cleansing, and the movement towards a breakup of Iraq. And the question pretty soon is going to be whether we try to manage that process, or let the militias alone drive it, because it’s happening. 100,000 people a month are being driven from their homes. Iraq looks like Bosnia more and more.” [Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, 1/10/07]

Yahia Said, Director, Iraq Revenue Watch: “I think the constitution, the Iraqi constitution, with all its shortcomings, serves as a good starting point for dialogue. But the constitution needs to be transformed through genuine dialogue from a dysfunctional to a rational federal structure. Oil and negotiations on an oil deal, which have apparently concluded recently, also provide a model for the -- for that rational federalism. The main principles that the negotiators have agreed on is to maximize the benefit of Iraq’s oil wells to all Iraqis, to use oil as a way to unite the nation, and to build a framework based on transparency, which is very important in a situation of lack -- of poor trust, and on efficiency and equity.” [Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, 1/10/07]

Former UN Ambassador Richard Holbrooke: “I urge [President Bush] to lay out realistic goals, redeploy our troops and focus on the search for a political solution. We owe that to the Iraqis who welcomed the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and put their trust in us, only to find their lives in danger as a result. By a political solution, I mean something far more ambitious than current U.S. efforts aimed at improving the position of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki by changing ministers or setting timelines for progress. Sen. Joe Biden and Les Gelb have advocated what they call, in a reference to the negotiations that ended the war in Bosnia in 1995, a “Dayton-like” solution to the

political situation -- by which they mean a looser federal structure with plenty of autonomy for each of the three main groups, and an agreement on sharing oil revenue." [Washington Post, 10/24/06]

Ambassador Peter W. Galbraith: "And, Mr. Chairman, if I may say, I am often asked what is the difference between the plan that you and Les Gelb put forward and the plan that I have outlined. And I would say that the central point is what they share is that we believe that the future of Iraq is up to the Iraqis. You and Les Gelb are more optimistic about what that future might bring. And if you're right, I think that would be terrific." [Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, 1/11/07]

Dr. Ted Galen Carpenter, Vice President for Defense and Foreign Policy Studies, CATO Institute: "And I believe there is a regional -- there is a reasonable prospect of convincing even Iran and Syria that a proxy war can easily spiral out of control and it would not be in their best interests to tolerate that kind of development, that it is better to quarantine this conflict and allow the dynamics in Iraq to play themselves out. Perhaps at some point the various factions in Iraq will agree on compromise, either a reasonably peaceful, formal partition, or a very loose federation with adequate political compromise. But they have to determine that. We cannot determine that for them." [Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, 1/11/07].

Walter Russell Mead, Council on Foreign Relations: "I thought that the Joe Biden op-ed ... in the *Wall Street Journal* yesterday was also a very sober and thoughtful approach.

JIM LEHRER: For those who didn't read that, capsulize it for us.

Mead: Well, they were basically talking about a way forward in Iraq that would have some bipartisan support, and something that the administration could work with. And I think what we're seeing now is a sense that the country does need to try to move as united as possible." [PBS Newshour, 10/25/06]

Anne Marie Slaughter, Dean of Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University: "I think that the Biden-Gelb plan is the best option out there." [TPMcafe.com, 5/18/06]

Eric Leaver, Institute for Policy Studies Research Fellow: "The two alternatives that have been fleshed out most deeply are 'strategic redeployment' and plans for partition... The five-point plan of Sen. Joe Biden, D-Del., calling for a virtual partition of Iraq has its roots in proposals made by Peter Galbraith, a former U.S. ambassador with a long involvement in policy on Iraq, and Leslie Gelb, president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations... Both of these plans have merits... These measures would draw in Iraq's neighbors who are desperately needed for a long-term solution. [TomPaine.com, 9/5/06]

Juan Cole, Middle East scholar and prominent blogger: "You have to admire Biden for recognizing the mess and for thinking seriously about what structural

programs could be implemented to provide a way out of this mess." [JuanCole.com, 5/2/06]

David Phillips, Council on Foreign Relations, author of *Losing Iraq*: "What they are proposing makes absolute sense. By decentralizing power and giving regions control over governance, economy and cultural affairs, you have some chance of holding the country together." [The Guardian, 5/2/06]

PUBLIC OFFICIALS ON THE BIDEN-GELB PLAN

Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA): "Our chairman has come forward with a vision of how this thing can end up in a place where people will stop killing each other, and yet keep together the country of Iraq, to do the things a country has to do, including making sure the oil is shared in a fair way. It's not three separate countries -- he's gotten a rap on that; never was -- always semi-autonomous; policing by your own people; trust built up in that kind of situation. It's just what's happening in Kurdistan." [Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, 1/31/07]

Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN): "My own view is that... we have to continually advise our friends in Iraq to get on with this question of the division of the oil money or the dedication of the various groups, as well as how a federation can work.

"It may not be an absolute division of the country into three parts, but at least some ways in which the Kurds, who already have a great deal of autonomy, are joined by a lot of Shiites that want the same thing and Sunnis that are worried that they're going to be left out of the picture. And that takes heavy lifting. Politically, a lot of objections even to bringing it up before their congress, but we have to keep insisting that they do. That has to be on the agenda." [PBS Newshour with Jim Lehrer, 9/19/2006]

Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS): "I think this idea of maybe the three autonomous regions within one country may be the one that we start to move more and more towards." [The Hill, 10/24/06]

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX): "Allowing the Kurds, Sunni and Shia to govern their own territories while sharing in Iraq's oil revenues through a national revenue stream could help quell the bloodletting." [Houston Chronicle, 10/17/06]

Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY): "Mr. Schumer said, he hopes that a controversial plan strongly advocated by Senator Joe Biden of Delaware—which essentially calls for the dissolution of Iraq into three autonomous ethnic enclaves (and which Mr. Schumer quietly supported last year) —will emerge as a concrete Democratic alternative to current administration policy. "It may actually move into play," said Mr. Schumer. "I've always believed that the Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds hate each other more than they will ever love any central government." [New York Observer, 11/20/2006]

Bill Richardson, Governor of New Mexico: "I would also study Senator Biden's federation [proposal]. I think that may be ultimately the right solution." [Christian Science Monitor, 9/27/06]

Muwaffaq al-Rubaie, National Security Advisor of Iraq: "I don't think Senator Biden has said that Iraq should be divided into three sections. What I think -- and I can't agree more with Senator Biden and his article, and I think he is a very well-informed person. What we are talking here -- and he's talking about Iraqi constitution. The constitution of Iraq has said very clearly that you can form provinces, regions, federal -- this is a democratic federal system, and any two or three or nine or 10 provinces can get together and form a region, and form a federal unit. And this is exactly what Joseph Biden is saying, or I believe when I read his article... I think Biden's idea is a good idea, with some modification because it's very compatible with our permanent constitution, which was ratified on the 15th of October last year." [CNN Late Edition, 5/7/06]

Congressman Chris Van Hollen: "Democrats have been making some of the most creative proposals. Senator Biden has a proposal for reconciliation in Iraq, but the stay the course rhetoric you hear from this administration clearly isn't getting us anywhere, things are getting worse not better. [T]he American people want a congress that's going to deal with this issue in reality not in the fantasy world." [MSNBC Live, 10/20/06]

EDITORIAL PAGES AND COLUMNISTS ON BIDEN-GELB

Michael Hirsh, Newsweek Columnist: "Joe Biden is dead right on Iraq.... [Biden] has been on the record for a year with a fully thought-out vision for Iraq that offers a real alternative to the bleak choice we're getting from everyone else." [Newsweek.com, 4/26/07]

Thomas L. Friedman, New York Times columnist: "[T]he person I think who has been where I've been from the very beginning, seeing the potential, you know, that this could have for a positive outcome but really, really cautious and worried all the time, that if we weren't doing it right is, Joe Biden. I think Joe Biden has been on top of this from the very beginning. He was on top of the opportunity. He was on top of what stakes we needed or what we needed to do to get some chance of realizing that opportunity and he's been top of saying this isn't working. [CNN The Situation Room, 4/20/2007]

David Brooks, New York Times columnist: "Senator Biden is the one exception. What happened Friday was significant with this intelligence report. It drove a missile right into the Bush policy. Because what it said was these two people, Sunni and Shia, will never get back together. That destroys the Bush policy. It drove a missile to the Democratic policy because it says we can't get out. So what's the other option? To me it's the soft partition idea that Joe Biden, lone among the leading Democrats, has been in favor of." [ABC This Week, 2/4/07]

“As Joe Biden points out, the Constitution already goes a long way toward decentralizing power. It gives the provinces the power to have their own security services, to send ambassadors to foreign countries, to join together to form regions. Decentralization is not an American imposition, it's an Iraqi idea.In short, logic, circumstances and politics are leading inexorably toward soft partition. The Bush administration has been slow to recognize its virtues because it is too dependent on the Green Zone Iraqis. The Iraqis talk about national unity but their behavior suggests they want decentralization. Sooner or later, everybody will settle on this sensible policy, having exhausted all the alternatives.” [New York Times, *Parting Ways In Iraq*, 1/28/07]

“There is one option that does approach Iraqi reality from the bottom up. That option recognizes that Iraq is broken and that its people are fleeing their homes to survive. It calls for a "soft partition" of Iraq in order to bring political institutions into accord with the social facts -- a central government to handle oil revenues and manage the currency, etc., but a country divided into separate sectarian areas to reduce contact and conflict. When the various groups in Bosnia finally separated, it became possible to negotiate a cold (if miserable) peace. Soft partition has been advocated in different ways by Joe Biden and Les Gelb, by Michael O'Hanlon and Edward Joseph, by Pauline Baker at the Fund for Peace, and in a more extreme version, by Peter Galbraith.” [New York Times, *Breaking the Clinch*, 1/25/07]

“The liberals who favor quick exit never grappled with the consequences of that policy, which the Baker-Hamilton commission terrifyingly described. The centrists who believe in gradual withdrawal never explained why that wouldn't be like pulling a tooth slowly. Joe Biden, who has the most intellectually serious framework for dealing with Iraq, was busy yesterday, at the crucial decision-making moment, conducting preliminary fact-finding hearings, complete with forays into Iraqi history.” [New York Times, *The Fog Over Iraq*, 1/11/07]

Philadelphia Inquirer, Editorial Board: "One shining exception to 'slogans over substance' is U.S. Sen. Joe Biden (D., Del.). Gutsily, he's put forth a plan for dividing Iraq into semi-autonomous Kurdish, Shiite and Sunni zones, with Baghdad as a federal city; a fair division of oil revenues; and U.S. troops nearby as a watchdog against neighbors' mischief. You can name a dozen ways Biden's approach could collapse. But at least he has put a reality-based proposal on the table. That's more than most of the people seeking your vote right now seem willing to do." [Philadelphia Inquirer, 10/1/06]

David Broder, Washington Post columnist: "At a time when most people see nothing but hopeless discord in Iraq, it is healthy to have someone offering alternatives that could produce progress." [Washington Post, 5/4/06]

Jackson Diehl, Washington Post columnist: "Instead, the time may finally be ripe for some of the ideas that have been doggedly pushed for most of this year by Democratic Sen. Joseph Biden, who has been one of his party's most serious and responsible voices on Iraq... It's easy to find holes in this strategy, as with any other plan for Iraq... But Biden's basic idea -- of an external political intervention backed by an

international alliance -- is the one big option the Bush administration hasn't tried."
[Washington Post, 10/2/06]

David Ignatius, Washington Post columnist: "The Democrat who has tried hardest to think through these problems is Sen. Joseph Biden. He argues that the current government of national unity isn't succeeding in holding Iraq together, and that America should instead embrace a policy of 'federalism plus' that will devolve power to the Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish regions. Iraqis are already voting for sectarian solutions, Biden argues, and America won't stabilize Iraq unless it aligns its policy with this reality. I disagree with some of the senator's conclusions, but he's asking the right question: How do we fix Iraq?" [Washington Post, 9/30/06]

Bill O'Reilly, Fox News: "See, I favor Biden's—Senator Biden's solution of the three regional areas. Because you've already got one, the Kurds in the north that's autonomous. If you could carve the two out, divide up the oil revenue, have a central government protected by the Americans to make sure that the Iranians don't come in, I think that might work." [The O'Reilly Factor, 9/29/06]

Portland Press Herald (ME) Editorial Board: "Biden's scenario opens the door for Congress to conduct a needed discussion about options that fall between the status quo and immediate withdrawal." [The Portland Press Herald (ME), 5/9/06]

Delaware News Journal Editorial Board: "Sen. Joseph Biden has done the country a service by forwarding a thoughtful, realistic plan for the future of Iraq." [Delaware News Journal, 5/3/06]

The Barre Montpelier Times Argus (VT) editorial board: "Let's hope someone in the White House reads the Biden-Gelb essay and draws Bush's attention to a solution he can embrace." [The Barre Montpelier Times Argus (VT), 5/2/06]

St. Louis Post-Dispatch Editorial Board: "Together with incentives (i.e., a share of oil revenue) to attract the Sunnis, a phased American troop withdrawal and a regional non-aggression pact (Iran and Syria, stay out), the Biden-Gelb plan offers at least a semblance of hope. You could even call it a turning point." [St. Louis Post-Dispatch (MO), 05/02/06]

The Journal Standard (IL) Editorial Board: "Sen. Joe Biden [is] among the few Democrats offering something resembling a plan. On Sunday, he floated the idea of separating Iraq along sectarian lines into three largely autonomous states under the umbrella of a weak central government. That may or may not be the ideal policy. The point is we need to do something radically different. The alternative is a mission perpetually unfulfilled and ever more costly in American blood and treasure." [The Journal Standard (IL), 5/2/06]

IN HIS OWN WORDS
Opinion Editorials by
U.S. Senator Joe Biden

The New York Times

Unity Through Autonomy in Iraq
By Joseph R. Biden, Jr. and Leslie H. Gelb
May 1, 2006

A decade ago, Bosnia was torn apart by ethnic cleansing and facing its demise as a single country. After much hesitation, the United States stepped in decisively with the Dayton Accords, which kept the country whole by, paradoxically, dividing it into ethnic federations, even allowing Muslims, Croats and Serbs to retain separate armies. With the help of American and other forces, Bosnians have lived a decade in relative peace and are now slowly strengthening their common central government, including disbanding those separate armies last year.

Now the Bush administration, despite its profound strategic misjudgments in Iraq, has a similar opportunity. To seize it, however, America must get beyond the present false choice between "staying the course" and "bringing the troops home now" and choose a third way that would wind down our military presence responsibly while preventing chaos and preserving our key security goals.

The idea, as in Bosnia, is to maintain a united Iraq by decentralizing it, giving each ethno-religious group — Kurd, Sunni Arab and Shiite Arab — room to run its own affairs, while leaving the central government in charge of common interests. We could drive this in place with irresistible sweeteners for the Sunnis to join in, a plan designed by the military for withdrawing and redeploying American forces, and a regional nonaggression pact.

It is increasingly clear that President Bush does not have a strategy for victory in Iraq. Rather, he hopes to prevent defeat and pass the problem along to his successor. Meanwhile, the frustration of Americans is mounting so fast that Congress might end up mandating a rapid pullout, even at the risk of precipitating chaos and a civil war that becomes a regional war.

As long as American troops are in Iraq in significant numbers, the insurgents can't win and we can't lose. But intercommunal violence has surpassed the insurgency as the main security threat. Militias rule swathes of Iraq and death squads kill dozens daily. Sectarian cleansing has recently forced tens of thousands from their homes. On top of this, President Bush did not request additional reconstruction assistance and is slashing funds for groups promoting democracy.

Iraq's new government of national unity will not stop the deterioration. Iraqis have had three such governments in the last three years, each with Sunnis in key posts, without noticeable effect. The alternative path out of this terrible trap has five elements.

The first is to establish three largely autonomous regions with a viable central government in Baghdad. The Kurdish, Sunni and Shiite regions would each be responsible for their own domestic laws, administration and internal security. The central government would control border defense, foreign affairs and oil revenues. Baghdad would become a federal zone, while densely populated areas of mixed populations would receive both multisectarian and international police protection.

Decentralization is hardly as radical as it may seem: the Iraqi Constitution, in fact, already provides for a federal structure and a procedure for provinces to combine into regional governments.

Besides, things are already heading toward partition: increasingly, each community supports federalism, if only as a last resort. The Sunnis, who until recently believed they would retake power in Iraq, are beginning to recognize that they won't and don't want to live in a Shiite-controlled, highly centralized state with laws enforced by sectarian militias. The Shiites know they can dominate the government, but they can't defeat a Sunni insurrection. The Kurds will not give up their 15-year-old autonomy.

Some will say moving toward strong regionalism would ignite sectarian cleansing. But that's exactly what is going on already, in ever-bigger waves. Others will argue that it would lead to partition. But a breakup is already under way. As it was in Bosnia, a strong federal system is a viable means to prevent both perils in Iraq.

The second element would be to entice the Sunnis into joining the federal system with an offer they couldn't refuse. To begin with, running their own region should be far preferable to the alternatives: being dominated by Kurds and Shiites in a central government or being the main victims of a civil war. But they also have to be given money to make their oil-poor region viable. The Constitution must be amended to guarantee Sunni areas 20 percent (approximately their proportion of the population) of all revenues.

The third component would be to ensure the protection of the rights of women and ethno-religious minorities by increasing American aid to Iraq but tying it to respect for those rights. Such protections will be difficult, especially in the Shiite-controlled south, but Washington has to be clear that widespread violations will stop the cash flow.

Fourth, the president must direct the military to design a plan for withdrawing and redeploying our troops from Iraq by 2008 (while providing for a small but effective residual force to combat terrorists and keep the neighbors honest). We must avoid a precipitous withdrawal that would lead to a national meltdown, but we also can't have a substantial long-term American military presence. That would do terrible damage to our armed forces, break American and Iraqi public support for the mission and leave Iraqis without any incentive to shape up.

Fifth, under an international or United Nations umbrella, we should convene a regional conference to pledge respect for Iraq's borders and its federal system. For all that Iraq's neighbors might gain by picking at its pieces, each faces the greater danger of a regional war. A "contact group" of major powers would be set up to lean on neighbors to comply with the deal.

Mr. Bush has spent three years in a futile effort to establish a strong central government in Baghdad, leaving us without a real political settlement, with a deteriorating security situation — and with nothing but the most difficult policy choices. The five-point alternative plan offers a plausible path to that core political settlement among Iraqis, along with the economic, military and diplomatic levers to make the political solution work. It is also a plausible way for Democrats and Republicans alike to protect our basic security interests and honor our country's sacrifices.

Joseph R. Biden Jr., Democrat of Delaware, is the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Leslie H. Gelb is the president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations.

The Washington Post

A Plan to Hold Iraq Together
By Joseph R. Biden Jr.
August 24, 2006

Four months ago, in an opinion piece with Les Gelb, president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations, I laid out a detailed plan to keep Iraq together, protect America's interests and bring our troops home. Many experts here and in Iraq embraced our ideas. Since then, circumstances in Iraq have made the plan even more on target—and—than when we first proposed it.

The new, central reality in Iraq is that violence between Shiites and Sunnis has surpassed the insurgency and foreign terrorists as the main security threat. Our leading civilian and military experts on Iraq—Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and Gens. George Casey, Peter Pace and John Abizaid—have all acknowledged that fact.

In December's elections, 90 percent of the votes went to sectarian lists. Ethnic militias increasingly are the law in Iraq. They have infiltrated the official security forces. Sectarian cleansing has begun in mixed areas, with 200,000 Iraqis fleeing their homes in recent months for fear of sectarian reprisals. Massive unemployment feeds the ranks of sectarian militias and criminal gangs.

No number of troops can solve this problem. The only way to hold Iraq together and create the conditions for our armed forces to responsibly withdraw is to give Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds incentives to pursue their interests peacefully and to forge a sustainable political settlement. Unfortunately, this administration does not have a coherent plan or any discernible strategy for success in Iraq. Its strategy is to prevent defeat and hand the problem off when it leaves office.

Meanwhile, more and more Americans, understandably frustrated, support an immediate withdrawal, even at the risk of trading a dictator for chaos and a civil war that could become a regional war.

Both are bad alternatives. The five-point plan Les Gelb and I laid out offers a better way.

First, the plan calls for maintaining a unified Iraq by decentralizing it and giving Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis their own regions. The central government would be left in charge of common interests, such as border security and the distribution of oil revenue.

Second, it would bind the Sunnis to the deal by guaranteeing them a proportionate share of oil revenue. Each group would have an incentive to maximize oil production, making oil the glue that binds the country together.

Third, the plan would create a massive jobs program while increasing reconstruction aid—especially from the oil-rich Gulf states—but tying it to the protection of minority rights.

Fourth, it would convene an international conference that would produce a regional nonaggression pact and create a Contact Group to enforce regional commitments.

Fifth, it would begin the phased redeployment of U.S. forces this year and withdraw most of them by the end of 2007, while maintaining a small follow-on force to keep the neighbors honest and to strike any concentration of terrorists.

This plan is consistent with Iraq's constitution, which already provides for the country's 18 provinces to join together in regions, with their own security forces and control over most day-to-day issues. This plan is the only idea on the table for dealing with the militias, which are likely to retreat to their respective regions instead of engaging in acts of violence. This plan is consistent with a strong central government that has clearly defined responsibilities. Indeed, it provides an agenda for that government, whose mere existence will not end sectarian violence. This plan is not partition—in fact, it may be the only way to prevent violent partition and preserve a unified Iraq.

To be sure, this plan presents real challenges, especially with regard to large cities with mixed populations. We would maintain Baghdad as a federal city, belonging to no one region. And we would require international peacekeepers for other mixed cities to support local security forces and further protect minorities. The example of Bosnia is illustrative, if not totally analogous. Ten years ago, Bosnia was being torn apart by ethnic cleansing. The United States stepped in decisively with the Dayton Accords to keep the country whole by, paradoxically, dividing it into ethnic federations. We even allowed Muslims, Croats and Serbs to retain separate armies. With the help of U.S. troops and others, Bosnians have lived a decade in peace. Now they are strengthening their central government and disbanding their separate armies.

At best, the course we're on has no end in sight. At worst, it leads to a terrible civil war and possibly a regional war. This plan offers a way to bring our troops home, protect our security interests and preserve Iraq as a unified country. Those who reject this plan out of hand must answer one simple question: What is your alternative?

The writer is a senator from Delaware and the ranking Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Bipartisan Redeployment

By Joseph R. Biden, Jr. and Leslie H. Gelb

October 24, 2006

Because the current course in Iraq is a losing course, we have to prepare ourselves to make the toughest decisions since the end of the Cold War. Neither Democrats nor Republicans alone will make them: No one wants to be blamed for what might happen next in Iraq. Thus, President Bush continues on autopilot with no end in sight, while some Democrats call for fixed withdrawal deadlines that no president would ever adopt.

The only way to carve out a new path is through bipartisanship. With a united voice we can speak with strength to Iraqis on the need to put their house in order, and find political protection here at home. Political leaders in our country must choose to hang together rather than hang separately. They have every incentive to do so. It is flatly against the security interests of the U.S. to stay the current course. It is also against the political interests of both parties. Republicans don't want to run for the presidency in 2008 with Iraq around their necks. Democrats do not want to assume the presidency in 2009 saddled with a losing war.

Serious members of both parties are prepared to seek a solution. It was in that spirit that Congress urged the creation of the "Iraq Study Group" to explore policy options, led by James A. Baker III, former secretary of state, and Lee Hamilton, former chairman of the House International Relations Committee—a Republican and a Democrat both known for bipartisanship. The other eight members of their commission have stature in their parties to kickstart a bipartisan policy. They understand their responsibility to help our nation find a reasonable path out of Iraq's plunge toward civil war and the untenable situation for our troops.

The commission is expected to present its views publicly after the November elections. We believe that the group could cohere around three basic principles which we have advanced for some time and which are explained in detail at www.planforiraq.com:

- First, there can be no military success in Iraq without a political settlement—a power-sharing arrangement that gives its major groups incentives to pursue their interests peacefully instead of falling into a cycle of sectarian revenge. Mr. Bush's drive to establish a central government of national unity hasn't worked and won't work. The major parties in Iraq don't have the common interests, the trust in each other, or the capacity at this point to make it viable.

What could work is a federalized Iraq, with three or more largely autonomous regional governments to suit the separate interests of Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds. A central government would administer common concerns, such as defending Iraq's borders and

managing its energy infrastructure. The constitution already provides for this approach and Iraq's parliament last week passed a law to implement its articles on federalism. But for federalism to work, the constitution must be amended to guarantee Sunnis 20% of oil revenues to be administered by the central government. Only with such revenues could a Sunni region become economically and politically sustainable.

The final decisions will be up to the Iraqis. But without us helping them arrange the necessary compromises, as we have at every critical juncture, nothing will get done. With 140,000 Americans at risk, we have a right and a responsibility to make our views known.

- Second, we must have a plan prepared by our military for the redeployment and withdrawal of most U.S. troops over the next 18 months. Both Americans and Iraqis have to see that we are not blindly committing ourselves to civil war. And we have to recognize that keeping this level of forces in Iraq indefinitely is counterproductive for our mission and a growing challenge to the well-being of our volunteer military.

The redeployment plan has to prevent insurgent control of strategic areas; vet and train Iraqi forces; create strong incentives for Iraqis to assume battlefield and police responsibilities; and allow for a residual American force to keep Iraqis and their neighbors honest. There's no fixed or artificial timetable here to bind a president unreasonably. But we must unambiguously say to Iraqis, "Here is your last, best chance to escape a disastrous civil war with our help, and it is up to you, now."

- Third, we have to ignite the most vigorous regional diplomacy to back up the power-sharing deal among Iraqis and avoid neighbors warring over an Iraqi vacuum. Some of Iraq's neighbors have no desire to do us any favors—but like us, they can see the abyss opening up before them, and like us, they all have powerful interests in preventing a full-blown civil war that becomes a regional war. We have to bring them together now to begin shaping and supporting a political settlement in Iraq—or, if necessary, to contain the fallout from chaos inside Iraq.

Given the deterioration of the situation, no approach is an odds-on winner. But these three principles can unite our political parties. Nothing in them runs counter to the basic beliefs of either party. And unlike the present policy, they have a chance of working.

The Baker-Hamilton commission has a unique opportunity to generate a bipartisan way forward in Iraq. If it comes up with a better plan than the one we propose, we will embrace it. But whatever it does, it cannot kick the can down the road. It must come up with a strategy that allows us to leave Iraq without leaving chaos behind—which is not being done in Washington now.

Mr. Biden is a Democratic senator from Delaware and ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Mr. Gelb is president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations.

The Washington Post

The Minimum Necessary
By Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
November 19, 2006

As the Baker-Hamilton commission deliberates recommendations for Iraq, it faces a tremendous opportunity and responsibility. The opportunity is to help generate for the president and Congress a bipartisan way forward. The responsibility is to make the hard choices that are required to turn our Iraq policy around. If it fails to make those choices, its efforts will be in vain.

Our current policy in Iraq is a failure. We are past the point of an open-ended commitment. We are past the point of adding more troops. We are past the point of vague policy prescriptions. It is not an answer just to stay. Nor is it an answer—though it may become a necessity—just to go with no concern for what follows. The fundamental question we must answer is whether, as we begin to leave Iraq, there are still concrete steps we can take to avoid leaving chaos behind.

Six months ago Les Gelb, president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations, and I proposed a detailed answer to that question, which can be found at <http://www.planforiraq.com>. We had two fundamental premises: first, that the main challenge in Iraq is sectarian strife, for which there is no military solution; second, that putting all of our chips on building a strong central government cannot pay off because there is no trust within or of the government and no capacity on the part of the government to deliver basic services to the Iraqi people.

We argued instead for a strong federal system, as provided for in the Iraqi constitution, that gives its main groups breathing room in regions while preserving a central government to deal with truly common concerns; a fair sharing of oil revenue to make those regions economically viable; a jobs program to deny the militia new recruits; and a major diplomatic effort to secure support for a political settlement from Iraq's neighbors.

Doing all those things would enable most of our troops to leave Iraq by the end of 2007, with a small residual force to contend with concentrations of terrorists.

Baker-Hamilton need not embrace the details of our plan. But to win broad support, it must contend with three points central to our plan and to the prescriptions of most senior Democratic leaders.

First, Baker-Hamilton must tackle the issue of U.S. troop deployments. Most Democrats believe we should begin the phased redeployment of our troops in the coming months but not set a hard deadline for their withdrawal. We would refocus the mission of those who remain on counterterrorism, training, logistics and force protection.

The best way to get the Iraqis to concentrate on making the hard political decisions and compromises is to make clear to them that the presence of our troops in their present large numbers is not open-ended. Even if it made strategic sense to keep 145,000 troops in Iraq beyond next year, we could not do so without doing real damage to the volunteer military: sending soldiers back on third and fourth tours, extending deployment times from 12 to 18 months, ending the practice of a year at home between deployments, fully mobilizing the Guard and Reserves, and returning demobilized soldiers to Iraq through a back-door draft.

Second, Baker-Hamilton must propose a clear political road map for Iraq. Democrats agree that as we redeploy we must exert maximum pressure on the Iraqis for a sustainable political settlement that deals with federalism, sharing oil revenue and the militias. Redeployment alone is not a plan—it is a means to help bring about the political settlement needed if we are to avoid a full-blown civil war and regional conflict.

Third, Baker-Hamilton must speak to the engagement of Iraq's neighbors. Democrats would convene an international conference and stand up an oversight group of major countries to support a political settlement in Iraq—or, if chaos ensues anyway, to help contain its fallout within Iraq. There can be no sustainable peace in Iraq without the support of its neighbors, including Iran, Syria and Turkey. All major Iraqi factions should be included in the conference—and, as at the Dayton Conference for Bosnia, we should keep them there until all agree to a way forward.

At the same time, simply convening a conference is not enough. We need a clear plan for our troops, a political strategy for Iraq and a mechanism like the oversight group to hold the neighbors to their commitments.

If the Baker-Hamilton commission addresses these three issues in detail, it can meet Americans' growing expectations. It also can help inform the critical debate on Iraq that I intend to hold in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in close collaboration with my Republican counterpart, Sen. Richard Lugar. These intensive and extensive hearings will put a light on what options remain for America to start bringing our troops home without trading a dictator for chaos.

The writer, a senator from Delaware, is the senior Democratic member of the Foreign Relations Committee.



Iraq Study Group Report: Necessary, but Not Sufficient
By Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
December 7, 2006

The Baker-Hamilton report is a first step toward a bipartisan way forward in Iraq. The fundamental changes it proposes are necessary, but not sufficient to achieve the objective most Americans share: to leave Iraq without leaving chaos behind.

The report's most valuable contribution is to make clear that staying the course in Iraq is not an option. Thanks to its efforts, the central question is no longer whether to stay in Iraq, but when and how to responsibly leave.

The military redeployment it proposes is not, by itself, a plan. But the knowledge that our troops will not stay in Iraq in these large numbers can help concentrate the Iraqis on the hard political decisions ahead.

We should start to bring our combat troops out in the first half of next year, but with no artificial end date. A residual force should remain, whose mission would be counterterrorism, training, logistics and force protection.

Even if it made strategic sense to keep 145,000 troops in Iraq beyond next year, we could not do so without damaging the military, including: sending soldiers back on third and fourth tours, extending deployment times from 12 to 18 months, ending the practice of a year at home between deployments, fully mobilizing the Guard and Reserves, and returning demobilized soldiers to Iraq through a backdoor draft.

The impact on retention and recruitment would be devastating.

Involve neighboring countries

The report is also right that as we start to bring our troops out, we have to bring Iraq's neighbors in to support a peaceful outcome. That includes not just Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt and Turkey, but Iran and Syria, too. Some of Iraq's neighbors have no desire to do us any favors. But like us, they have powerful interests in preventing a full-blown civil war that could become a regional war.

We should also convene an international conference to help hammer out an agreement among Iraqis and secure the support of Iraq's neighbors — or, if chaos ensues anyway, to help contain its fallout.

While the report gets the big military and diplomatic pieces right, it falls short on the most important piece of all: a strategy for a sustainable political settlement.

It is not enough to stand up Iraqi forces. We have to help Iraqis stand together. That is the only way to break the cycle of violence and prevent Iraq from falling apart.

Instead, the report perpetuates one of the Bush's administration's most fundamental mistakes: the belief that a political settlement can be based solely on building up a strong central government.

That policy has been tried and has failed. There is no trust within the government, no trust of the government by the people, and no capacity on the part of the government to deliver basic services to Iraqis.

Six months ago, with Les Gelb of the Council on Foreign Relations, I offered a detailed plan that would give each of Iraq's main groups incentives to pursue their interests peacefully. The details can be found at www.planforiraq.com.

We proposed a federalized Iraq, with three or more largely autonomous regional governments to suit the separate interests of Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds. Baghdad would remain a federal city, and a central government would administer truly common concerns, such as defending Iraq's borders and managing its foreign policy.

Our idea imposes nothing on the Iraqis, whose constitution already provides for this approach.

For federalism to work, the constitution must be amended to guarantee Sunnis—who are sand-rich but oil-poor — a proportionate share of oil revenue, to be administered by the central government with international oversight.

Absent a political settlement, refocusing the mission of our remaining troops on training and engaging Iraq's neighbors will not stabilize Iraq.

A welcome shift

Despite its shortcomings, the Baker-Hamilton report has helped spark a fundamental reassessment of our Iraq policy. Right after the New Year, I will focus the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on that same challenge, in collaboration with my Republican counterpart, Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana.

We will hold intensive and extensive hearings, over many weeks. We won't be wedded to any one plan or proposal. Our mission will be to shine a light on what options remain for America in Iraq and to help complete the work that this report has so valiantly begun.

Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del., is the senior Democrat and incoming chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Adding Troops Will Fail Again

By Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

January 07, 2007

As President Bush prepares to announce a new strategy for Iraq, one idea has emerged as his leading option: to surge more troops into Baghdad in a last-ditch effort to stabilize the city.

There is one big problem with that option: In the absence of a political settlement among Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds, it will not work. We've tried the military surge option before and it failed. If we try it again, it will fail again.

And surging our forces in Baghdad risks terrible consequences: more American lives lost and more unbearable strain on our military for no strategic gain. If the president proposes escalation, I will oppose him and so will many of my colleagues in Congress.

Here is what happens: Our troops retake a neighborhood. But because we do not have enough overall manpower to keep them there and because the Iraqis do not have enough competent troops to hold the ground we take, as soon as we leave, the vacuum fills right up again with insurgents, militia or criminal gangs. Our enemies simply wait us out.

That is exactly what happened this summer. We sent a Stryker brigade and several Army battalions to Baghdad, bringing our total force there to about 15,000. As long as our troops occupied the ground they had taken, violence abated. But as soon as they moved to another neighborhood, it swelled with a fury.

Our generals know this, including Gen. John Abizaid, senior commander in the Middle East, and Gen. Pete Chiarelli, who has been in day-to-day command of our troops in Iraq. Both reportedly oppose escalation. So does Colin Powell, who said, "I am not persuaded that another surge of troops into Baghdad for the purposes of suppressing this communitarian violence, this civil war, will work."

If the president decides to surge troops anyway, it would make a mockery of his repeated claims that when it comes to troop levels and military strategy, he listens to our commanders.

Many Americans wonder how it can be that with an active-duty army of 500,000 and more than 2.6 million men and women in uniform, we cannot send an additional

30,000 to 40,000 troops to Baghdad and keep them there long enough to maintain a lid on violence and to give Iraqis a chance to reconcile.

The answer is that our military is not designed for long-term occupations. And we should increase its active-duty end strength.

Three and a half years into this war, we cannot maintain our current force level in Iraq—about 140,000—much less send additional troops without doing real damage to the military. That includes sending soldiers back on third and fourth tours; extending deployment times from 12 to 18 months; ending the practice of a year at home between deployments; fully mobilizing the Guard and Reserves; and returning demobilized soldiers to Iraq through a back-door draft.

Over time, the impact on retention and recruitment would be devastating.

In the meantime, more Americans would die in a futile effort to retake a city that cannot be pacified by military force alone.

Those who advocate escalation fail to see that the main challenge in Iraq is a sectarian cycle of revenge. Even if every al-Qaida-inspired terrorist left Iraq tomorrow, we'd still face a major civil conflict pitting Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds against one another. Putting more troops into the middle of this mess cannot work.

Indeed, those who support a surge have it exactly backwards: in Iraq, security is not a prerequisite to a political settlement. Rather, a political settlement is a prerequisite to security. And they have no workable plan to produce that political settlement.

So what should we do? I have my own very specific ideas for how America can help Iraqis overcome their sectarian divisions.

Those interested in the details can consult the website www.planforiraq.com.

But there are other ideas for the best way forward and we need to give them a hard and unbiased look.

That is the inquiry that my Republican counterpart Sen. Richard Lugar and I will hold in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee starting this coming week.

Over three weeks of intensive and extensive hearings, we will hear from the administration, but also from the leading proponents of alternative plans, and from the foremost experts on the political, economic and security situation in Iraq and the region.

We hope to shed light on the question most Americans are asking: What options remain to start bringing our troops home from Iraq without trading a dictator for chaos.

Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del., is the senior Democrat and incoming chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.



A First Step in Iraq
By Joseph R. Biden, Jr. and Chuck Hagel
January 24, 2007

Today, Congress takes an important step in what we believe is our constitutional responsibility to actively engage and debate the war in Iraq. We agree with the president that our previous strategy in Iraq was failing. Equally, we are convinced that to succeed in Iraq, America's objective and strategy must enjoy the support of the American people and a bipartisan support in Congress.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will vote on a resolution we introduced with our colleagues Carl Levin, D-Mich., and Olympia Snowe, R-Maine. The resolution says what we and many of our colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, believe: America should not deepen its military involvement in Iraq by sending more U.S. troops into the middle of a civil war. More troops in Baghdad will increase the likelihood of more American casualties and will not end the sectarian Iraqi massacres that are occurring every day.

Just as important, our resolution proposes an alternative. The primary objective of America's strategy should be to help Iraqis achieve a political settlement in Iraq, secure support for that settlement from Iraq's neighbors and refocus the mission of our remaining troops on achievable objectives. That is the only way to stop Shiites and Sunnis from killing each other and allow our troops to leave Iraq without leaving chaos behind.

Here are the main elements of our plan:

- * Redeploy U.S. forces out of Iraq's cities with a more limited mission focused on defending Iraq's territorial integrity, counterterrorism, border control, and accelerated training of Iraqi forces;
- * Transfer responsibility for internal security and halting sectarian violence to Iraqi forces under an appropriately expedited timeline;
- * Continue to support Iraq's political process while making it clear that Iraqi leaders must make the political compromises necessary to help Iraq move forward;

* Engage Iraq's neighbors and the international community to build a regional framework to help support and sustain a political solution and national reconciliation.

Two weeks ago, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice presented the president's plan to the Foreign Relations Committee. The reaction from Democrats and Republicans alike ranged from profound skepticism to outright opposition.

A strong majority of the American people opposes sending more American troops into Iraq. So does a broad cross section of this country's leaders, military and civilian, as we have heard this month in hearings in Congress. In December, the Baker-Hamilton Commission issued a valuable report, suggesting a comprehensive strategy "to enable the United States to begin to move its combat forces out of Iraq responsibly" based on "new and enhanced diplomatic and political efforts in Iraq and the region."

Our fundamental objective is to build a bipartisan majority in Congress to support a U.S. policy on Iraq that stands the best chance of succeeding and bringing our men and women in uniform home.

We welcome debate of our resolution and proposed alternatives. The resolution by Sen. John Warner, R-Va., contributes to this debate. As we have made clear publicly and privately, we are prepared to adjust our resolution to help broaden bipartisan support. Ultimately, this debate will give every senator a chance to say where he or she stands.

We believe that the single most effective way for Congress to engage the president in developing a way forward in Iraq is to demonstrate the depth and breadth of bipartisan concern regarding his policy. The power of our resolution rests in its bipartisan foundation.

Iraq is not a partisan issue. It is a challenge that we must meet as Americans. No one in Congress and no one in America wants to see America defeated. We believe our nation is stronger when Congress fulfills its constitutional duty as a co-equal branch of government.

*Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del., is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.
Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., is a member of the committee.*

The Boston Globe

Congress should repeal its authorization to use force in Iraq

By Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Tuesday, February 27, 2007

Two weeks ago, Congress made clear its opposition to President Bush's plan to send more US troops into the civil war in Iraq.

Opposing the surge is only a first step. There needs to be a radical change in course in Iraq. The pressure is building on Congress — especially Republicans — to act if the president will not. Though some in Congress refuse even to debate Iraq, the growing desire for change may soon overwhelm even the strongest supporters of the president.

The best next step is to revisit the authorization Congress granted Bush in 2002 to use force in Iraq.

We gave the president that power to destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and, if necessary, to depose Saddam Hussein. The weapons of mass destruction were not there. Saddam Hussein is no longer there. The 2002 authorization is no longer relevant to the situation in Iraq.

Together with Sen. Carl Levin, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I will offer legislation to repeal that authorization and replace it with a much narrower and achievable mission for our troops in Iraq.

Congress should make clear what the mission of our troops is: to deny terrorists a safe haven, train Iraqis, and help Iraq defend its borders. We should set as a goal removing from Iraq all US combat forces not necessary for this limited mission by early 2008, as the bipartisan Iraq Study Group recommends.

Congress also should make clear what the mission of our troops is not: to stay in Iraq indefinitely and get mired in a savage civil war.

Repealing and replacing the 2002 authorization is not micromanagement from Washington, it is matching our soldiers' mission to the changing realities in Iraq. Indeed, the new, limited mission we proscribe is identical to the mission British Prime Minister Blair assigned the remaining British troops in Iraq when he announced the start of their withdrawal.

Revisiting the 2002 authorization is the right next step but it cannot be the last step. The United States must also answer a two-word test: "What next?"

Everyone wants to get the troops out of Iraq as soon and as safely as possible. There is great political reward in saying, "I can get us out the fastest."

But while leaving Iraq is necessary, it is not a plan. There needs to be a plan for what we leave behind so that we do not trade a dictator for chaos that engulfs Iraq and spreads throughout the Middle East.

Nine months ago, Leslie Gelb of the Council on Foreign Relations and I proposed a plan, which offers a roadmap to a political settlement in Iraq that gives its warring factions a way to share power peacefully and us a chance to leave with our interests intact.

The plan would decentralize Iraq and give Kurds, Shi'ites and Sunnis control over their daily lives; bring the Sunnis in by guaranteeing them a fair share of the oil; enlist the support of Iraq's neighbors and the world's major powers to promote the plan with the Iraqis; and withdraw US combat forces by 2008. You can read the details at www.planforiraq.com.

The Bush administration has bet everything on a future that will not happen: Iraqis rallying behind a strong central government that protects the rights of all citizens equally.

Since the onset of sectarian war, there is no trust within the central government, no trust of the government by the people and no capacity by the government to deliver services and security. There is no evidence that we can build that trust and capacity any time soon.

There are two other ways to govern Iraq from the center: A foreign occupation that the United States cannot sustain or the return of a strongman, who is not on the horizon.

That leaves federalism — an idea a large majority of Iraqis have already endorsed in their constitution.

Our plan offers a way to make federalism work for all Iraqis. And it offers the possibility — not the guarantee — of producing a soft landing in Iraq.

That would be the best possible outcome for Iraq and for America.

Joseph R. Biden Jr. is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.



Mideast Needs More, Not Less, Diplomacy
By Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
March 25, 2007

The Bush administration is struggling to overcome its own policies in the Middle East. Mistakes in Iraq, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories have damaged our credibility, undermined reformers, emboldened Iran and boosted terrorist organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah.

In Iraq, the administration has bet everything on a future that will not happen: Iraqis rallying behind a strong central government. It has ignored the need for a political solution based on federalism that gives local control to Iraq's warring factions. By stubbornly sticking with a failed policy, it is frittering away the diplomatic capital and resources it needs to deal with other challenges.

In Lebanon, two years after the Cedar Revolution, the administration has delivered little military assistance to the embattled government, while Iran and Syria lavish Hezbollah with arms and cash.

In the Palestinian Territories, the administration overruled Prime Minister Sharon and many Palestinians and insisted that the January 2006 legislative elections go forward, despite having failed to empower Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. The result was a Hamas victory.

Now, the administration is taking regional diplomacy more seriously. But its efforts to undo the damage of the past six years are leading it to new strategic miscalculations.

The administration subcontracted to Saudi Arabia the power to broker a deal for a national unity government between Abbas' Fatah party and Hamas, without insisting on red lines any deal could not cross.

Hamas now has what it most craves -- legitimacy in the eyes of the Arab world, which could serve as a bridge to wider international legitimacy. It gives up nothing in return. The Mecca agreement does not require Hamas to meet the demands of the Quartet (the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations): recognize Israel, renounce violence and accept past agreements. Mecca has undercut the administration's most ambitious involvement in the peace process and its belated effort to bolster Abbas.

Even without Mecca, the administration's renewed interest in Israeli-Palestinian peace is driven by flawed logic: the desire to gain greater cooperation from moderate Arab

countries—Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States—in containing Iran's expanding influence.

Those countries have a powerful self-interest in diminishing Iran's influence that requires no inducements. They should be taking risks to support Israeli-Palestinian peace so as to ease regional tensions and isolate Iran. If the Saudis and others mean what they say about wanting a two-state solution, now is the time to begin the process of normalizing relations with Israel.

Meanwhile, authoritative reports say that the administration is telling Israel not to talk to Syria. Syria's overtures may not be sincere, but Israel should be permitted to call its bluff.

A Syrian-Israeli peace process could have significant strategic benefits. It could place pressure on the Hamas leadership in Damascus and strain the Iranian-Syrian marriage of convenience. Combined with U.S.-Syrian engagement, it could reduce Syria's destructive influence in Lebanon and limit Hezbollah's room for maneuver. Syria's behavior in each of these areas has worsened during the period the administration has shunned direct engagement.

The Middle East has entered a tumultuous period that demands more—not less—diplomacy. The priorities should be:

- Restore American credibility and flexibility through an all-out effort to achieve a political settlement in Iraq and redeploy our combat troops by 2008. To learn the details of my proposal, visit www.planforiraq.com.
- Urgently deliver military aid to Lebanon and shift the balance of power away from Hezbollah; gain U.N. Security Council approval to establish an International Tribunal for the murders of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and others, making moot Syria's efforts to undermine a mixed Lebanese-international tribunal.
- Facilitate, don't prevent, Israeli-Syrian talks. Directly engage with Syria to support such talks and confront Syria's destabilizing actions in Lebanon and Iraq.
- Intensify pressure on Iran over its nuclear program with coordinated international sanctions that isolate Tehran, not the United States; engage Iran directly to exploit fissures within the government and between the government and the people; present a positive vision for U.S.-Iran relations if Iran does the right thing.
- Back Israel's interest in engaging Abbas; demand that the Palestinian National Unity government meet the Quartet criteria; press Arab states to start normalizing ties with Israel; support moderate alternatives to Hamas in the Palestinian territories.

The administration's record does little to inspire confidence that it can tackle this agenda. But the cost of not even trying will be tremendous. Hamas will consolidate its position; Iran's influence will continue to grow; Iraq will descend into chaos and its neighbors will intervene; Syria and Hezbollah will continue to destabilize Lebanon; and

the prospects for peace between Israelis and Palestinians will recede even further. That legacy will take a long time to undo.

Sen. Joe Biden, D-Del., is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The Washington Post

The Real Surge Story
By Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
April 12, 2007

Sen. John McCain[" The War You're Not Reading About," op-ed, April 8] is right to warn about the consequences of failure in Iraq. But he is fundamentally wrong when he argues that those potential consequences require us to stick with a failing strategy.

It is precisely because the stakes are so great that we must change course in Iraq, now.

McCain wrote that the president's strategy is beginning to show results but that most Americans don't know it because the media cover the bad news, not the good news. Of course, reporting any news in Iraq is an extraordinary act of bravery, given the dangers journalists must navigate every day. But the fact is, virtually every "welcome development" McCain cited has been reported, including the purported anti-al-Qaeda alliance with Sunni sheikhs in Anbar, the establishment of joint U.S.-Iraqi security stations in Baghdad and the decision by Moqtada al-Sadr to go to ground for now.

The problem is that for every welcome development, there is an equally or even more unwelcome development that gives lie to the claim that we are making progress. For example:

- While violence against Iraqis is down in some Baghdad neighborhoods where we have "surged" forces, it is up dramatically in the belt ringing Baghdad. The civilian death toll increased 15 percent from February to March. Essentially, when we squeeze the water balloon in one place, it bulges somewhere else.
- It is true that Sadr has not been seen, but he has been heard, rallying his followers with anti-American messages and encouraging his thugs to take on American troops in the south. Intelligence experts believe his militia is simply waiting out the surge.
- Closing markets to vehicles has precluded some car bombs, but it also has prompted terrorists to change tactics and walk in with suicide vests. The road from the airport to Baghdad may be safer, but the skies above it are more lethal—witness the ironic imposition of "no-fly zones" for our own helicopters.

The most damning evidence that the "results" McCain cites are illusory is the city of Tall Afar. Architects of the president's plan called it a model because in 2005, a surge of

about 10,000 Americans and Iraqis pacified the city. Then we left Tall Afar, just as our troops soon will leave the Baghdad neighborhoods that they have calmed.

This month, Tall Afar was the scene of some of the most horrific sectarian violence to date: a massive truck bomb aimed at the Shiite community led to a retaliatory rampage by Shiite death squads, aided by the Iraqi police. Hundreds were killed. The population of Tal Affar, 200,000 a few years ago, is down to 80,000.

There is an even more basic problem with McCain's progress report, and it goes to the heart of the choice we face in Iraq. Whatever tactical progress we may be making will amount to nothing if it is not serving a larger strategy for success. Alas, the administration's strategy has virtually no prospects for success.

The administration hopes that the surge will buy time for Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government to broker the sustainable political settlement our military views as essential to lasting stability in Iraq.

But there is no trust within the government, no trust of the government by the people it purports to serve and no capacity on the part of the government to deliver security or services. There is little prospect that the government will build that trust and capacity anytime soon.

In short, the most basic premise of the president's approach—that Iraqis will rally behind a strong central government that looks out for their interests equitably—is fundamentally and fatally flawed.

If the president's plan won't work, what will? History suggests only four other ways to keep together a country riven by sectarian strife:

We allow or help one side to win, which would require years of horrific bloodletting.

We perpetuate the occupation, which is impossible politically and practically.

We promote the return of a dictator, who is not on the horizon but whose emergence would be the cruelest of ironies.

Or we help Iraq make the transition to a decentralized, federal system, as called for in its constitution, where each major group has local control over the fabric of its daily life, including security, education, religion and marriage.

Making federalism work for all Iraqis is a strategy that can still succeed and allow our troops to leave responsibly. It's a strategy I have been promoting for a year.

I cannot guarantee that my plan for Iraq (detailed at <http://www.planforiraq.com>) will work. But I can guarantee that the course we're on—the course that a man I admire, John McCain, urges us to continue—is a road to nowhere.

Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del., is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

FROM THE PODIUM
Speeches by
U.S. Senator Joe Biden

Speech by
U.S. Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The Way Forward in Iraq: Avoiding Partition, Preserving Unity,
Protecting America's Interests
World Affairs Council of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, PA
May 1, 2006

It's an honor to be back at the Philadelphia World Affairs Council.

First, let me apologize to those of you confused by the schedule. It shows me speaking this afternoon. Instead, you get me to start your day. Look at it this way: things can only get better. And they will, because I understand that Vice President Cheney and Secretary Kissinger will be here for lunch.

I'd like to focus on an issue that weighs heavily on our national consciousness – Iraq.

I start from this hard truth: President Bush does not have a strategy for victory in Iraq. His strategy is to prevent defeat and to hand the problem off to his successor. Meanwhile, the frustration of Americans is mounting so fast that Congress might end up mandating a rapid withdrawal, even at the risk of trading a dictator for chaos, and a civil war that could become a regional war.

Both are bad alternatives.

Today, I will argue for a third way that can bring our troops home, protect our fundamental security interests, and preserve Iraq as a unified country.

I developed this plan with Les Gelb, the president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations. It recognizes this new, central reality in Iraq: a rising tide of sectarian violence is the biggest threat to Iraq's future and to America's interests. It is premised on the proposition that the only way to hold Iraq together, and to create the conditions for our troops to responsibly withdraw, is to give Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds room to breathe in their own regions.

Let me tell you what our plan is not: it is not partition. Let me tell you what our plan is: It is consistent with Iraq's constitution. It is consistent with the new unity government. And it is consistent with – in fact, it is necessary to – the goal of keeping Iraq unified within its existing borders and not a threat to its own people, its neighbors, or to us.

I'd like to share the details of our plan with you.

The Current Situation

I was last in Baghdad on December 15th to observe the elections. It was my sixth trip to Iraq. It was incredibly moving to see Iraqis go to the polls.

I came back with a finger stained purple from the polling ink. But I also returned with this warning: we must not, yet again, prematurely declare, "Mission Accomplished." Yes, Iraqis voted by the millions, but who did they vote for? Ninety percent cast their ballots for sectarian and ethnic parties. Far from a democratic turning point, the elections reflected Iraq's deepening fault-lines.

Here's where we are in Iraq: we can't lose on the battlefield and the insurgents can't win as long as enough U.S. troops remain. But, as both our Ambassador and our top general in Iraq acknowledge, violence between the Shi'a and Sunnis has surpassed the insurgency as the main security threat. It is driving the country toward chaos and civil war.

Simply put, the sectarian genie is out of the bottle. Ethnic militias increasingly are the law in large parts of Iraq. They have infiltrated the official security forces. Sectarian cleansing has begun in mixed areas, with tens of thousands of Iraqis fleeing their homes in recent weeks. Dozens of dead bodies turn up daily in Baghdad.

Meanwhile, Iraqis have less electricity, clean water, sewage treatment and oil than before the war. Iraq's government ministries are barely functional. Iraq looks more like a failing state, not an emerging democracy.

There is no purely military answer to this slow but certain downward spiral. With more troops and the right strategy, we might have stopped the insurgency. But no number of U.S. troops will stop a civil war. To prevent it, we need a political solution. The national unity government in which the President has put so much stock is necessary, but it is not enough. We have had "unity" governments for three years in Iraq. Yet sectarian violence has escalated.

What the Iraqis need now—and what this plan proposes—is a genuine political way forward that, like our own Articles of Confederation, gives Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds the confidence to pursue their interests peacefully in a unified country. In fact, the central government this plan proposes for Iraq would be even stronger than America's first government. With time, we can hope they will come to their own Philadelphia freedom.

At the same time, I believe we can't pull our forces out precipitously, just as we can't keep them in Iraq indefinitely. Withdrawing them too soon would open the door to all out civil war that could turn into a regional war. It also would leave parts of Iraq a haven for terrorists. That would be disastrous for U.S. interests.

What our troops deserve—and what this plan proposes—is a clear target date for redeployment that, coupled with a political settlement, will allow us to leave Iraq with our basic interests intact.

A Five Point Plan for Iraq

Ten years ago, Bosnia was drowning in ethnic cleansing and facing its demise as a unified state. After much hesitation, the United States stepped in decisively with the Dayton Accords to keep the country whole by dividing it into ethnic federations. We even allowed Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs to retain separate armies. With the help of U.S. troops and others, Bosnians have lived a decade in peace. Now, they are strengthening their common central government, and disbanding their separate armies.

The Bush Administration, despite its profound strategic misjudgments, has a similar opportunity in Iraq.

The idea is to maintain a unified Iraq by decentralizing it and giving Kurds, Shiites, and Sunnis the room to run their own affairs. The central government would be left in charge of common interests. We would encourage Iraqis to accept this formula with major sweeteners for the Sunnis, a military plan for withdrawing and redeploying U.S. forces, and a regional non-aggression pact. The plan has five elements:

1. One Iraq With Three Regions

The first element is to establish three largely autonomous regions with a viable but limited central government in Baghdad.

The central government would be responsible for border defense, foreign policy, oil production and revenues. The regional governments—Kurd, Sunni and Shiite—would be responsible for administering their own regions.

The United States shouldn't impose this solution and we don't have to because federalism is already written into Iraq's constitution. In fact, the constitution creates a limited central government and establishes a procedure for provinces combining into regions.

Increasingly, each community will support federalism, if only as a last resort. Until recently, the Sunnis sought a strong central government because they believed they would retake power. Now, they are beginning to recognize that they won't. Their growing fear is Shi'a power in a highly centralized state, enforced by sectarian militia and death squads. The Shi'a know that they can dominate the government, but they can't defeat a Sunni insurrection. The Kurds want to consolidate their autonomy.

Some will ask whether this plan will lead to sectarian cleansing. The answer is that it's already happening. According to the Iraqi government, 90,000 people have fled their homes since the February bombing of the Samarra mosque for fear of sectarian reprisals. That's a rate of more than a 1,000 people a day. This does not include the tens of thousands of educated Iraqis from the middle class who have left the country.

We must build in protections to prevent more cleansing and to improve security in the big cities, which the Administration has failed to achieve. Baghdad would become

a federal zone, while densely-populated areas with mixed populations would receive both multi-sectarian and international police protection.

A global political settlement won't end the Sunni insurgency, but it should help to undermine it. The Zarqawi network would no longer have the sectarian card to play. Sunni Nationalists and neo-Baathists would still be unhappy but they would be easier to contain.

Similarly, while decentralization won't end the militia problem overnight, it is the best way to begin rolling it back. Right now, there is no plan to disband the militia. Militias have so heavily infiltrated the security forces that our training program is effectively making them better killers. The regions can become magnets for the militia, integrating them into local forces, and eventually into the national force. Again, the constitution already provides for security forces within the regions. There is nothing radical in this proposal.

The Administration is focusing only on putting together a unity government. But the "unity" government of the past year wasn't able to govern or stop the violence. This one offers little more promise. A much broader political settlement that gives each community breathing space is the best bet to prevent civil war and to keep Iraq intact.

2. A Viable Sunni Region With Shared Oil Revenues

The second element of the plan is to gain agreement for the federal solution from the Sunni Arabs by giving them an offer they can't reasonably refuse.

Basically, they get to run their own region. That's a far better deal than the present alternatives: either being a permanent minority in a centrally run government or being the principal victims of a civil war.

As a major sweetener, we should press the Iraqis to write into the constitution that the Sunnis would receive about 20 percent of all present and future oil revenues. That's roughly proportional to their size. And it's far more than they'd get otherwise, since the oil is in the north and south, not the Sunni center. These revenues represent the only way to make the Sunni region viable economically. If Sunnis reject the deal, there is no guarantee they will get any oil revenues.

The central government would set national oil policy and distribute the revenues, which would reinforce each community's interest in keeping Iraq intact. There would be international supervision to ensure transparency.

Why would the Shiites and Kurds sign on? Petroleum experts agree that the Iraqi oil industry will attract much more desperately needed foreign capital if it is run as a unified whole. Shiites and Kurds will get a slightly smaller piece of a much larger pie. That's a better deal than they would get by going it alone. Guaranteeing Sunnis a piece of this pie will reduce the incentive of insurgents to attack the oil infrastructure. That, too, would be good for everyone.

3. More Aid, But Tied To The Protection Of Minority And Women's Rights

Third, instead of ending U.S. reconstruction assistance, as the Bush Administration is doing, we should provide more. But we should clearly condition aid on the protection of minority and women's rights. The incompetence of the Bush Administration's reconstruction program makes more reconstruction money a hard sell. A new aid effort would have to be radically different than the old one. For example, instead of international mega-firms pocketing valuable contracts, spending a huge chunk of each one on security, and then falling short, Iraqis should be in the lead of small-scale projects that deliver quick results.

The President also should insist that other countries make good on old commitments, and provide new ones. He should focus on the Gulf States. They're enjoying windfall oil profits. They have a lot at stake in Iraq. They should step up and give back.

But all future U.S. aid would be tied to the protection of minority and women's rights, clearly and unambiguously. We should insist other donors set the same standard. Aid would be cut off in the face of a pattern of violations.

President Bush is now silent on protecting minority and women's rights. If they are not upheld, there can be no hope for eventual democracy in Iraq.

4. Maintain Iraq's Territorial Integrity And Engage Its Neighbors

Fourth, this plan proposes that the United Nations convene a regional security conference where Iraq's neighbors, including Iran, pledge to respect Iraq's borders and work cooperatively to implement this plan.

The neighbors may see decentralization as a plot to carve up Iraq. But they have an equally strong interest in not seeing Iraq descend into a civil war that could draw them into a wider war. Engaging them directly can overcome their suspicions and focus their efforts on stabilizing Iraq, not undermining it.

The U.N. Security Council should precede the conference with a call for the necessary declarations. The permanent members of the Security Council should then sponsor and participate in the conference to show a united international front.

After the conference, Iraq's neighbors will still be tempted to interfere in its weakened affairs. We need an on-going mechanism to keep them in line. For two years, I've called for a standing Contact Group, to include the major powers, that would engage the neighbors and lean on them to comply with the deal. I'm not alone. Former Secretaries of State Kissinger, Shultz, and Powell have all called for the same thing.

President Bush's failure to move on this front is inexplicable. There will be no lasting peace in Iraq without the support of its neighbors.

5. A Responsible U.S. Drawdown And A Residual Force

Fifth, the President should direct U.S. military commanders to develop a plan to withdraw and re-deploy almost all U.S. forces from Iraq by 2008. If the military can do it sooner without precipitating a meltdown, so much the better. Regardless, the President should make it clear that the direction we're heading in is out, and no later than 2008.

We would maintain in or near Iraq a small residual force—perhaps 20,000 troops—to strike any concentration of terrorists, help keep Iraq's neighbors honest, and train its security forces. Some U.S. troops and police would also need to participate in a multinational peacekeeping force deployed to the major multi-sectarian cities, as in the Balkans. Such a force is now a non-starter with other countries, despite their own interest in avoiding chaos in Iraq and the region. But a political settlement, and their role in helping to bring it about through a regional conference and Contact Group, could change their calculus and willingness to participate.

Right now, our troops are still necessary to prevent total chaos. But unless the Iraqis see and believe we are leaving, they will have little incentive to shape up. Redeployment is also necessary because we can't sustain this large a force in Iraq without sending troops back on fourth and fifth tours, extending deployments, and fully mobilizing the Guard. That would do serious long-term damage to our military.

A clear plan also would end the fiction the President keeps repeating of a "conditions based draw down." What conditions justify the draw down of 30,000 troops since the December elections? The situation has gotten worse.

President Bush's refusal to give clear direction leaves our military unable to plan an orderly draw down. It also leaves our troops, the Iraqis and the American people in the dark. It's time to end the guessing. It's time for clarity, but clarity with responsibility. Redeploying our troops over 18 months will allow the political settlement I've proposed to take hold and prevent all-out civil war.

Redeeming Our Sacrifice

This plan for Iraq has its own risks. But this Administration has left us with nothing but hard choices.

The choice I'm proposing may be the only way left to keep Iraq intact and allow our troops to come home with our fundamental security interests intact.

The choice I'm proposing can give all of us—Republicans, Independents, Democrats, Americans—realistic hope that our sacrifices in Iraq were not in vain.

Thanks for listening.

Speech by
U.S. Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Five Years After 9/11: Rethinking America's Future Security
The National Press Club
Washington, DC
September 7, 2006

Five years ago, on September 10th, 2001, standing at this podium, I argued against this administration's fixation on national missile defense. I said: "We will have diverted all that money to address the least likely threat while the real threats come into this country in the hold of a ship, or the belly of a plane, or are smuggled into a city in the middle of the night in a vial in a backpack."

I wasn't clairvoyant. I was making a point that was valid then and remains valid today: when it comes to America's national security, this administration has the wrong premises and the wrong priorities.

The President is right, as he put it this week: we're "a nation at war." That makes it all the more incomprehensible that, five years after 9/11, he has failed to mobilize Americans for the struggle. There is no national energy policy, no national service, no real sacrifice except from our soldiers and their families. Instead, he gave us a massive tax cut for the most fortunate among us. Given the opportunity to unite Americans and the world, he has divided both.

These failures flow from a dangerous combination of ideology and incompetence and a profound confusion about whom we're fighting. The President continues to talk about "the war on terror." That is simply wrong. Terrorism is a means, not an end, and very different groups and countries are using it toward very different goals. If we can't even identify the enemy or describe the war we're fighting, it's difficult to see how we will win.

In fact, it's a war with many fronts. The most urgent is the intersection of the world's most radical groups—like Al Qaeda and the freelancers it has inspired—with the world's most lethal weapons.

But we also must confront groups that use terror not to target us directly, but to advance their own nationalistic causes. We must deal with outlaw states that support them and otherwise flout the rules. We must face a growing civil war in Iraq and a renewed war for Afghanistan. We must help resolve a generational war between Arabs and Israelis. And we must engage in a long-term war of ideas for the hearts and minds of tens of millions of Muslims.

These fronts are connected. But this administration has made the profound mistake of conflating them under one label, and arguing that success on one front ensures victory on all the others. It has answered each of these distinct challenges with the same limited responses: military force and regime change.

And it has picked the wrong fights at the wrong times: failing to finish the job in Afghanistan, which the world agreed was the central front in the war on radical fundamentalism, and instead rushing to war in Iraq, which was not a central front. As a result, this administration, which is full of patriotic people, has dug America into a very deep hole -- with very few friends to help us out.

* * *

To those who doubt this harsh verdict, I say, ask yourself a simple question: are we safer today than we were five years ago? To those who share my assessment, join me in answering another question: what do we have to do so five years from now, we are safer than today?

Let me start with the first question: Are we safer?

Maybe the best answer is that this week the administration felt compelled to issue a new strategy to fight terror, which strongly suggests the old one was not working.

The facts speak for themselves. After 9/11, the administration urged we act against a dangerous axis of evil in Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. Today, each member poses an even greater threat.

In Iraq, a dictator is gone, and that's good. But we may be on the verge of trading him for chaos and a haven for radicalism in the heart of the Middle East. Meanwhile, Iran is closer to the bomb and its reform movement is on the ropes. And North Korea has 400 percent more fissile material.

After 9/11, the President made the case that democracy is an antidote to extremism. He was right. But today, because this administration equated democracy with elections and failed to build democratic institutions and bolster moderates, Islamist groups that were already militarized have now been legitimized: Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in the Palestinian territories, and religious parties in Iraq.

Five years ago, President Bush pledged to capture Osama bin Laden. But then he redirected our military away from Afghanistan and toward Iraq. Today, bin Laden remains at large, and his videotaped messages inspire others to act.

Remember when Secretary Rumsfeld asked in a famous memo if we were capturing more terrorists than our enemies were recruiting, and if we had a plan to stop the next generation of terrorists? The answers are: no, we aren't, and no we don't. The fact is, since 9/11, terrorist attacks around the world have nearly quadrupled.

Thankfully, there have been no attacks on our soil since 9/11. But we should not take false comfort from that fact. This is a patient enemy. Just last month, the British and Pakistani police prevented a new attack on our planes and people. That plot burst this administration's rhetorical bubble that 'we're fighting them over there, so we don't have to fight them here.'

After 9/11, this Administration grudgingly embraced the need to protect America here at home. Today, we know from Katrina and the repeated warnings of the bipartisan 9/11 Commission that we are still not prepared, we are still not protected.

So, are we safer than we were five years ago? The American people will decide. They will look at whether the streets are more or less dangerous, at whether our enemies are more or less lethal, and at whether we have the world's respect we had when the towers came down.

* * *

That brings me to the second question: what should we do—what would I do—to make America safer in five years?

I would start with Iraq, for no strategy to make America safer can succeed unless we first solve Iraq. Iraq has already cost us dearly in lives lost and money spent. Because our forces are tied down, our ability to act against our enemies is limited—and they know it. Because we hyped the intelligence before going in, our ability to convince allies—and the American people—of new dangers has been diminished. Because we diverted our energy and resources from Afghanistan, it is on the verge of failure.

This administration has no strategy for success in Iraq. It has a strategy to prevent defeat and pass the problem along to the next President. The overwhelming reality in Iraq is a sectarian cycle of revenge. Throwing more troops at Baghdad won't fix this mess. We need a political settlement that allows each group to pursue its interests peacefully.

I've offered just such a plan, not unlike what we did in Bosnia. It would keep Iraq together by providing each group breathing room in their own regions, getting Sunni buy-in by giving them a piece of the oil revenues, creating a major jobs and reconstruction program to deny the militia new recruits, and bringing in Iraq's neighbors to support the political process. If we do all that, we have a chance to bring most of our troops home by the end of 2007, without leaving chaos behind.

Getting Iraq right won't guarantee success on those other fronts we're fighting. But it will give us much more freedom, flexibility, and credibility to make the profound changes to our national security strategy these complex threats demand.

And it will make it easier to put our focus back on other profoundly important developments that will shape this century, like the developing roles of China, India, and Russia as major powers; the shortage of reliable sources of energy; and the growing impact of climate change.

* * *

Today, I am announcing a four-part plan to move America toward greater security. It flows from my conviction that protecting our homeland requires a dramatic reordering of our priorities; that real security comes from prevention, not preemption;

that working with strong partners is better than alienating them; and that advancing democracy is about more than elections.

And my plan starts from the premise it is time for America to recapture the totality of our strength—our military, economic, and diplomatic might—and the power of our ideas and ideals. That is what won the Cold War. That is what has gotten lost these past five years.

First, to protect us at home, we should dramatically reorder our priorities. We should start by immediately implementing the recommendations made by the 9/11 Commission.

Last December, the Commission assessed the Administration's progress in implementing their recommendations, and they got a report card riddled with Ds and Fs. Just 5 percent of cargo containers are adequately screened at our ports, and we don't screen air cargo. Our first responders still cannot talk to one another. Since 9/11 this administration has cut more than \$2 billion in guaranteed federal assistance for local law enforcement.

Why? Because the Administration's view is that if we cannot protect everything, we should only do the minimum necessary to give the appearance of security. Their only line of defense is a questionable eavesdropping program that we should do under the law, not around it. And they have taken the view that private industry can adequately determine and implement security measures.

I totally disagree. With strong federal leadership and investment we can screen 100 percent of cargo containers at ports, protect our chemical facilities and eliminate some of the most dangerous chemicals with safer alternatives, better secure our mass transit systems, ensure the security of our nuclear plants, develop screening technologies that better detect liquid explosives, and secure our borders.

I would hire 1,000 more FBI agents and 50,000 more cops across the country. We must bring local law enforcement in as equal partners. We should require the networks to turn over critical communications spectrum allocations immediately, and help local agencies purchase communications equipment, so first responders can talk to one another.

In our big cities we should develop locally based counter-terrorism units to stop home-grown plots. Today, only New York City has a sufficient unit.

For those who say we cannot pay for it, that's malarkey. For \$50 billion—\$10 billion per year over the next five years—we can make these changes. It's all about priorities.

The Bush tax cuts for millionaires exceed \$60 billion this year alone. I am proposing we take back some of the tax cuts for people who make over a million dollars a year. If we put just \$10 billion a year of this money into a Homeland Security Trust Fund we could implement all of these measures. I did this with the Violent Crime

Reduction Trust Fund, and it put more than 100,000 cops on the street to make our streets safer.

Wealthy Americans are just as patriotic as poor Americans—we just haven't asked anything of them.

Second, we must defuse threats to America's security before they are on the verge of exploding by switching from military preemption to a comprehensive prevention strategy.

Military preemption has long been—and must remain—an option. It may be our only choice against a terrorist who has no territory or people to defend, and who is amassing hidden weapons instead of massing visible armies. But turning preemption into a one-size fits all doctrine was a profound mistake based on a faulty premise.

By using America's military might, the administration thought we would demonstrate our resolve and convince our enemies to give in to our will—with or without war. In fact, this preemption doctrine is making the world even less secure for America.

It says to Iran and North Korea their best insurance policy against regime-change is to acquire weapons of mass destruction as quickly as possible. It says to fault line states like India and Pakistan, China and Taiwan, Russia and Chechnya, Israel and the Arab states that it is alright to use force first and ask questions later. It requires a standard of proof for intelligence that may be impossible to meet unless we cherry pick the facts, as we did before we went into Iraq. And it has had the dire consequence of undermining our credibility around the world.

There is a better path—a comprehensive prevention strategy that would: secure loose weapons around the world, build the capacity of our partners to detect dangerous materials and disrupt terror networks, set new standards to seize suspect cargoes, and reform the entire non-proliferation system.

Third, instead of acting alone, we must build effective alliances and international organizations. This administration starts from the premise that because America's military might is so much greater than anyone else's, anything that could get in the way of using that might must be ignored.

I start from a different premise. Most of the threats we face—radical fundamentalism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, the spread of infectious disease — have no respect for borders. Not one can be met solely with force.

Our main enemy is a network of fundamentalist groups that could tap into a spreading supply of dangerous weapons. The best response to a network of terror is to build a network of our own, a network of like-minded countries that pools resources, information, ideas, and power. That's what stopped the Heathrow plot. Taking on the radical fundamentalists alone isn't necessary, it isn't smart, and it won't succeed.

As we live by the rules, we must also insist the rules are enforced. That could have been the basis for a common approach to Iraq. It can still be the foundation for stopping Iran and North Korea from pursuing dangerous nuclear weapons programs. The United States should be leading others to a new understanding of state responsibility, including when using force may be necessary.

Civilized societies have a responsibility to protect innocents and a duty to prevent catastrophes. That's why force was necessary in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan, and why it is now necessary in Darfur. But by hyping the intelligence about Iraq and failing to level with the American people this administration has soured the American people on the use of power and hamstrung the next President's ability to use it wisely.

We risk replacing a "Vietnam syndrome" with an "Iraq complex." That's a legacy that could haunt America for decades.

Fourth and finally, we must advance freedom and progress by developing democratic institutions in the Middle East and beyond. We must prove to millions of people who are disenfranchised politically and economically that we offer hope, while the radical fundamentalists offer only hatred.

Again, this Administration starts from fundamentally flawed premises. They believe democracy can be imposed by force from the outside. It cannot. They think democracy and elections are synonymous. They're not. Elections are necessary, but not sufficient.

We must put much more emphasis on building the institutions of democracy: political parties, an independent media and judicial system, effective government, non-governmental organizations, and labor unions.

We must help bolster failing states—which can become havens for terror—by building schools and training teachers, opening closed economies, empowering women, relieving more debt, and redirecting the focus of international institutions.

That's what we should have done in the Palestinian Authority, to support Abu Mazen against Hamas. That's what we should have done in Lebanon after Syria left, to support its government against Hezbollah. But we did not. The net effect: extremist groups gain stature and legitimacy, while we remain silent, failing to make our case to a larger Muslim world.

We must re-invigorate our public diplomacy to explain our policies to the world. One example is Iran. Our greatest allies against the theocracy in Tehran are the Iranian people. They admire America. But we never get our side of the argument into Iran to the people who could insist that the government change course. They never hear our voice. America, whose greatest strengths are her ideas and ideals, has become afraid to talk.

* * *

If we do all this, if we recapture the totality of our strength, my students here with me today from Delaware will read about this period as one chapter in our nation's history, not the final chapter.

Our enemies are not 10 feet tall. We will defeat the radical fundamentalists the same way my parents' generation defeated communism and fascism. We'll match military force with a commitment to project our values to the world.

Bin Laden and his ilk are beyond reason. We must defeat them. But millions of Muslims are open to our ideas and ideals. We must reach them. If we do, teenagers from Baghdad to Beirut, and from Jedda to Jakarta, will pick the promise of a better life under freedom, tolerance, and respect over the hopelessness of radical fundamentalism.

Ladies and gentlemen, we can do much better. The American people are full of grit and optimism. They know we need a new approach. They know there are no easy answers, they know it. And they know with the right leadership, America will prevail—as we always have.

Speech by
U.S. Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Salvaging American Interests in a United Iraq
Council on Foreign Relations
Washington, DC
September 20, 2006

Five months ago, Les Gelb and I laid out a detailed plan to keep Iraq together, protect America's interests and bring our troops home. Our plan generated a much-needed debate about alternatives beyond the Bush Administration's "stay the course" rhetoric and those calling for an immediate exit. Many experts here and in Iraq embraced our ideas. Others raised legitimate concerns. Still others mischaracterized or misunderstood our plan, calling it a "partition," when in fact it is the opposite.

Today, I'd like to explain in more detail what the plan does – and what it does not do.

Iraq's Central Realities

In July, I was in Iraq with Senator Jack Reed. It was my seventh trip. Our soldiers and diplomats are making real progress, under the most difficult conditions. But that progress is prisoner to the terrible violence raging around them. Its main driver is sectarianism. In fact, the central reality in Iraq today is that violence between Shiites and Sunnis has surpassed the insurgency and foreign terrorists as the main security threat.

Sectarian militias are the main instruments of violence. Instead of disarming, they are growing, for one simple reason – young men have no jobs and the militias give them a steady paycheck. Although half the Iraqi army divisions are capable of leading operations with American support, the nuts and bolts that any military needs to be self-sustaining are not there.

There are enormous problems with logistics, pay systems, transportation, procurement, and food delivery. The police are in the most urgent need of reform. Sectarian forces riddle their ranks. The facilities protection service – 140,000 individuals assigned to specific ministries – is heavily involved in sectarian violence.

On the surface, Iraq has a unity government. But privately Sunnis and Kurds complain that they are not part of the decision-making.

Political competition among the parties that make up the Shi'a coalition prevents any genuine outreach to the Sunnis—or any serious attempt to disarm the militias.

On the other side, too many Sunnis continue to aid and abet violence. As a result, the political process is stalled and polarized. While sectarianism is the major new reality

in Iraq, the old reality – insurgents and foreign terrorists – is still very real.

Al-Qaeda is so firmly entrenched in al-Anbar that it has morphed into an indigenous jihadist threat. As a result, Iraq risks becoming what it was not before the war: a haven for radical fundamentalists. It's what I call a Bush-fulfilling prophecy.

No number of troops can solve the sectarian problem, and we don't have enough troops to deal definitively with the jihadist threat. Nothing makes the point more clearly than the fact we've just pulled troops from Anbar – where they were fighting insurgents and Iraqi Al Qaeda – and sent them to Baghdad, to secure neighborhood and stop sectarian violence.

Security operations in one neighborhood force the death squads and insurgents out. But then they regroup in unsecured areas and return to the neighborhoods we've cleared when our troops move on to the next hot spot.

A Strategy for Success

So that's where we are. The more important question is this: Where are we going?

Unfortunately, this administration does not have any discernible strategy for success in Iraq. Its strategy is to prevent defeat and hand the problem off when it leaves office. Meanwhile, more and more Americans, understandably frustrated, support an immediate withdrawal, even at the risk of trading a dictator for chaos and a civil war that could become a regional war. Both are bad alternatives.

The five-point plan Les Gelb and I laid out offers a better way.

We start from the premise that the only way to break the vicious cycle of violence—and to create the conditions for our armed forces to responsibly withdraw—is to give Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds incentives to pursue their interests peacefully. This requires a sustainable political settlement. To get there, we propose five steps:

First, the plan calls for maintaining a unified Iraq by decentralizing it and giving Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis their own regions.

The central government would be left in charge of common interests, such as border security and the distribution of oil revenue. While we've proposed three regions, the exact number should be left for Iraqis to decide. What matters is the principle of federalism as a way to manage competing interests and visions while keeping Iraq together.

But federalism will only work if each group believes that it has an economically viable region to govern. The Sunnis are in a unique position – they don't have any oil. They fear being permanently cut off from Iraq's natural wealth. That's why some of their leaders continue to resist federalism.

So the second element of our plan is a guarantee that each group will get a proportionate share of Iraq's oil revenue. For the Sunnis, that means about 20%.

Why would Shi'a and Kurds agree to share oil revenues? Because it's better for their bottom line. Without an oil sharing agreement, Iraq will not attract the massive investment it needs to increase production. If all sides agree to a formula for the distribution of proceeds and a unified oil policy, investment will flow, production will rise and each group will get a piece of a much larger pie.

Oil can become the glue that binds the country—peacefully.

The third piece of the plan is to improve the living conditions of the Iraqi people and create a significant number of jobs. That requires increasing, not ending, reconstruction aid. It also requires altering the way the money is spent, and tying it to the protection of minority rights.

The administration's early fixation on multinational mega projects has wasted tens of billions of dollars on mismanagement, corruption and security for the foreign reconstruction teams – with virtually no results to show in terms of electricity generation, sewage treatment, potable water or oil production.

Gen. Chiarelli, one of our finest military leaders, described to me a project to supply drinking water to much of Eastern Baghdad. The massive plant is complete, but there's one problem: no pipes to bring the clean water to Iraqi homes. Gen. Chiarelli calls the plant the "world's largest drinking fountain." That would be funny if these failures – and their implications – were not so serious... if they had not literally fed the frustration and violence.

This incompetence on reconstruction makes more aid a tough sell. But we must ramp up and revamp our reconstruction program in concert with others, not wind it down. To fund this effort, we should insist that our Gulf state allies – who have reaped huge oil profits – step up and put up.

Fourth, the plan calls for an international conference that would produce a regional nonaggression pact and create a Contact Group to enforce regional commitments.

There can be no lasting solution inside Iraq unless its neighbors use their influence with each faction to promote stability. Most of Iraq's neighbors don't want to

do us any favors. But being drawn into a civil war is in none of their interests, not even Iran's or Syria's.

Even if a Contact Group can't prevent a civil war, the more we can restrain the interventionist tendencies of Iraq's neighbors, the greater the odds that violence can be confined within Iraq's borders and a regional conflagration prevented.

Fifth and finally, under the plan we would begin the phased redeployment of U.S. troops this year and withdraw most of them by the end of 2007. We would maintain a small follow-on force to keep the neighbors honest, strike any concentration of terrorists, and train the security forces.

In the meantime, U.S. troops would concentrate on securing sectarian fault lines.

What Our Plan Is – And What it Isn't

I said at the outset that some critics have mischaracterized or misunderstood parts of our plan. So let me conclude by telling you what the plan is – and what it is not.

Our plan is consistent with Iraq's constitution, which already provides for Iraq's provinces to form regions jointly or individually, with their own security forces and control over most day-to-day issues.

Our plan is the only idea on the table for dealing with the militias, which are likely to retreat to their respective regions instead of continuing to engage in acts of sectarian violence.

Our plan is consistent with a strong central government that has clearly defined responsibilities. Indeed, it provides an agenda for that government, whose mere existence will not end sectarian violence.

Our plan is not partition—in fact, it may be the only way to prevent violent partition and preserve a unified Iraq. To be sure, the plan presents real challenges, especially with regard to large cities with mixed populations.

We would maintain Baghdad as a federal city, belonging to no one region, as stipulated in the Constitution. And we would require international peacekeepers there and for other mixed cities to support local security forces and further protect minorities.

For now, the participation of many other countries in a peacekeeping force is a non-starter. But a political settlement, a regional conference, and a Contact Group to

demonstrate international resolve could change their calculus and willingness to participate.

The example of Bosnia is illustrative, if not totally analogous. Ten years ago, Bosnia was being torn apart by ethnic cleansing. The United States stepped in decisively with the Dayton Accords to keep the country whole by, paradoxically, dividing it into ethnic federations. We even allowed Muslims, Croats and Serbs to retain separate armies. With the help of U.S. and European peacekeepers, Bosnians have lived a decade in peace. Now they are strengthening their central government and disbanding their separate armies.

At best, the course we're on in Iraq has no end in sight. At worst, it leads to a terrible civil war that turns into a regional war... and leaves a new haven for fundamentalist terror in the heart of the Middle East.

This plan offers a way to bring our troops home, protect our security interests and preserve Iraq as a unified country. To those who reject this plan out of hand, I have one simple question: What is your alternative?

**Speech by
U.S. Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Manatt-Phelps Lecture in Political Science
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
October 31, 2006**

I appreciate this turn out on Halloween. If you're wondering about my costume, I'm dressed as a United States Senator. I've been working on this outfit for 34 years. I hope you appreciate the attention to authenticity.

There is an election in one week, but this is a non-partisan event in a non-partisan setting. So I want to be as straightforward as possible.

This administration is full of bright, hard working Americans who want to do what's right for this county. I don't question their motives. I just have profound disagreements with their judgments, and doubts about their competence.

I will discuss two connected but distinct challenges we face—not as Democrats or Republicans, but as Americans: the so-called “Axis of Evil” and “Axis of Oil.” How we deal with each will go a long way toward shaping America's security over the next decades.

Tonight, I will argue we are not doing a very effective job meeting either challenge.

The “Axis of Evil”

Let me start with the “Axis of Evil”: Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. After 9/11, President Bush warned that these countries posed a grave danger and urged we act against them. Five years later, each member of this “axis” is even more dangerous than it was then.

In Iraq, a dictator is gone and that's good. But we may be on the verge of trading him for chaos and a new foothold for extremists in the Mid East. North Korea has tested a nuclear weapon for the first time, and it has 400 percent more fissile material than it did when President Bush took office. And Iran is closer to the bomb, and its reform movement is on the ropes.

So that's where we are. The question is: Where do we go from here to defuse the dangers these countries pose to the United States?

Iraq

Let me start with Iraq, because getting it right will give us much more freedom, flexibility, and credibility to meet these other challenges to our security.

Iraq has cost us dearly in lives and treasure. Because our forces are tied down, our ability to act against other threats is limited. Because we hyped the intelligence, our ability to convince allies and Americans of new dangers is diminished. Because we diverted resources from Afghanistan, it's on the verge of failure.

In my judgment, this administration has no strategy for success in Iraq. Its strategy is to prevent defeat and pass the problem along to the next President.

The overwhelming reality in Iraq is a sectarian cycle of revenge. No number of troops can stop it. We need a political settlement that allows each group to pursue its interests peacefully.

Six months ago, with Les Gelb, of the Council on Foreign Relations, I proposed a plan to do just that. It's like what we did in Bosnia. It would keep Iraq together by providing each group breathing room in their own regions, getting Sunni buy-in by giving them a piece of the oil revenues, creating a major jobs and reconstruction program to deny the militia new recruits, and bringing in Iraq's neighbors to support the political process.

If we do all that, we have a chance to bring most of our troops home by the end of 2007, without leaving chaos behind.

North Korea

The North Korean nuclear test was a deliberate and dangerous provocation. It could spark a nuclear arms race in Asia. North Korea could sell dangerous weapons to radical groups. North Korea is responsible for this mess and must be held accountable. But this administration is responsible for a failed policy.

The Clinton administration froze North Korea's plutonium program – the one that produced the fissile material for the bomb it tested. This administration rejected that approach, replacing it with threatening but hollow rhetoric. It drew red line after red line: don't process more plutonium, don't test your missiles, don't test a nuclear weapon. North Korea crossed each one.

We have to stop digging and start a policy that has a chance to achieve the de-nuclearization of North Korea. That requires two things:

First, we have to choose what's more important: a change in conduct or a change in regime. We won't get the former, if we remain fixated on the latter.

Think about it: How can it possibly work to say to the North Koreans: 'give up your one insurance policy against regime change and then, when you do that, we will

still try to take you out?' Pyongyang won't give up its weapons if it believes we're determined to topple it. That doesn't mean endorsing the regime or not continuing to oppose its loathsome policies. It does mean keeping our eyes on the prize of de-nuclearization.

Second, we have to combine effective pressure from our partners – especially China and South Korea – with incentives from us. They're mutually reinforcing.

If our partners see we are willing to go the extra diplomatic mile and forego regime change, which they oppose, they are more likely to exert pressure on North Korea. If Pyongyang sees that pressure—including a willingness to stop and inspect cargoes going into and out of North Korea—our engagement will be more effective.

North Korea wants face to face talks; the administration says only in the context of the 6 Party Talks. That's like arguing over the shape of the table. We can and should do both.

I am pleased that North Korea apparently has agreed to return to the 6 Party Talks, but there is a lot of heavy lifting ahead, and talks may not succeed.

So what do we do in the meantime to protect ourselves? Some people argue the nuclear test is justification for deploying a national missile defense, never mind it does not yet work. Instead, we should focus on a sea-based defense against medium-range missiles that North Korea possesses and that could hit Japan.

North Korea is years away from a missile that could hit the U.S. Even if it gets one, it would be committing suicide by sending a missile our way with a return address. Deterrence still works against countries. But there is a danger North Korea could sell weapons of mass destruction to the highest bidder, including radical groups we can't deter because they have no people or territory to protect.

So, as we try to freeze and roll back North Korea's program, we also have to convince it not to do that. We can – with a program to develop more technology to detect the "signature" of a nuclear explosion and to make it clear we will hold North Korea responsible for any use of a nuclear weapon, by any group, that we trace to them. When Congress returns, I will propose legislation to do just that.

Iran

The basic approach I'm proposing for North Korea could also work with Iran. For five years, the administration's policy was paralyzed by a stand-off between those promoting regime change and those arguing for engagement. During that time, Iran crushed the reform movement and moved much closer to the bomb.

Now, the administration has finally gotten behind the European effort to engage Iran. That was the right thing to do, but it's not enough. We should talk directly to

Tehran. Talking would not reward bad behavior or legitimize the government. It would allow us to make clear to Tehran—and to the Iranian people—what it can get for giving up its weapons program and what it risks if it does not. Going the extra diplomatic mile makes it more likely our allies will be with us for tougher action if diplomacy fails.

Iran is not a monolith. Our greatest allies against the theocracy are the Iranian people. They admire America. But we never get our side of the argument into Iran to the people who could insist, over time, that the government change course. They never hear our voice. America, whose greatest strengths are her ideas and ideals, has become afraid to talk. It's time to find our voice again.

The “Axis of Oil”

While the “Axis of Evil” has gotten more dangerous, this administration also has made us more vulnerable to an equally grave danger, what Michael Mandelbaum and others call the “Axis of Oil.” It stretches from Russia to Iran, from Saudi Arabia to Venezuela, from Nigeria to Burma.

The recent drop in gas prices can't mask the fact that our oil dependence is threatening our national security and undermining the effectiveness of our foreign policy. Our oil dependence fuels the fundamentalism we're fighting. More than any factor, it limits our options and our influence around the world, because oil rich countries pursuing policies we oppose can stand up to us, while oil-dependent allies may be afraid to stand with us.

Think about what we are trying to achieve -- and then consider how the widespread dependence on oil is undermining our efforts.

China needs oil from Iran so they won't confront Tehran. The world is confronted with genocide again, this time in Darfur, but China turns a blind eye because it has invested billions in Sudan's oil.

Hugo Chavez has described Venezuela's oil as a “geopolitical weapon.” It makes him believe he can displace Castro as the prime antagonist and anti-American troublemaker in the region. Last month, he stood before the United Nations, and called our President the devil and our country an empire bent on destroying the human species, yet we're still Venezuela's number one oil customer.

Ukraine's Orange Revolution is in jeopardy because Moscow is using energy as a weapon of extortion.

Nothing is more important to America's security than prevailing in the struggle between freedom and radical fundamentalism. But nowhere does oil have a more distorting effect than in the Islamic and Arab worlds, where its proceeds finance radical groups and prop up repressive regimes.

We're familiar with the facts: we have less than 2 percent of the world's oil reserves. We import about 12 of the 20 million barrels of oil a day we consume.

The market for oil is a world market. An expert explained it to me like this: all the world's oil is like the water in a swimming pool. If you add a little water the level of the whole pool doesn't rise much. You have to add a lot of water before the level goes up.

Even if we drilled all the oil reserves within the United States, we still would not be able to bring prices down. We just do not control enough of the world's oil. Add to that extraordinary growth of energy consumption in India and China.

China will put 120 million new vehicles on its roads by the end of the decade. This ensures demand will outpace the discovery of new supplies.

Competition for energy resources will increase. Right now excess capacity is so small the slightest disruption in production—a terrorist act in Saudi Arabia, tough talk from Tehran, or even a terrible storm here in America can send gas prices soaring again.

Think about where our oil comes from: 35 percent from Venezuela, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq – all of them potentially unreliable suppliers.

Venezuela has twice threatened to cut off oil shipments. In Nigeria, civil unrest has repeatedly disrupted production. Saudi Arabia is an oligarchy under siege. Iraq is in total disarray.

We did not go to war in Iraq for oil. But ensuring we do not leave behind a civil war that turns into a regional war is in part about oil. We are losing thousands of American lives, and spending hundreds of billions of dollars to avoid that.

Energy Security

These days you hear much talk about energy independence. I think we should be talking about energy security. Independence is a worthy aspiration. But it will not happen any time soon and it will not solve our foreign policy problems.

Our independence is not China's independence. If China and India don't follow suit, our foreign policy will remain in a straitjacket. That is why we should focus America on energy security. We must encourage other major countries, like China and India, to do the same.

And we should be developing and exporting our clean technologies – like clean coal and biofuels – to these fast-growing economies.

We can do this. Right here in Iowa you're already doing it. We can avoid another oil crisis – and we don't need to wait for hydrogen cars or next generation technology to succeed. We have the technology to make these changes today.

We know where to start: expand alternative fuels and improve vehicle efficiency. Americans – Democrats and Republicans – want more fuel efficient cars and alternative fuels. We want to pull up to the gas pump in an American flex fuel car, and buy a gallon of biodiesel or E85 made in America, grown by farmers here in Iowa.

Four Steps To Energy Security

So, I've proposed four steps we can take to reduce our dependence on oil now. This is not an entire energy policy. We need to keep all options on the table, including nuclear, wind, solar, and to invest in research and innovation much beyond what we've already done. But I am so tired, in Washington, of no one coming up with measures we can take that could have an immediate impact.

First, let's understand that famous expression from a popular movie – build it and they will come. Our fields of dreams are full of corn and switch grass. Build the biofuel infrastructure and people will use it.

In five years, half of all cars sold in this country should be able to run on homegrown biodiesel or E85. By 2016, every car – 100 percent of new cars sold in America – should be able to run on alternative fuel. We don't need to redesign cars to make this switch. Five million American cars and trucks already run on E85. It costs manufacturers less than \$100 per car.

Second, we need to make sure people can pull into their gas station, in their own neighborhood, and fill up their new tanks. We should require half – 50 percent – of all gas stations operated by major companies to have alternative fuel pumps. That would be about 42,000 gas stations nationwide. Today, just 700 have E85 pumps.

Third, we must encourage the production of our home grown fuels. We now produce about 4.5 billion gallons of ethanol – that's just 3 percent of the fuel we use. Let's increase the renewable fuel standard: by 2010, let's produce at least 10 billion gallons; by 2020, 30 billion – that would be a quarter of our fuel grown by American farmers.

Fourth, we need to increase fuel economy standards. If every year we increase fuel efficiency for cars and SUVs by just one mile per gallon, we would reduce the oil used in the transportation sector by 10 percent. That's almost as much as we imported from Saudi Arabia last year.

Japan's fuel economy requirements are 45 miles per gallon, and headed higher. China is increasing its standards to 37 miles per gallon. Our corporate average fuel economy standard is stuck at 27.5 miles per gallon. We can do better, and Senator

Harkin, I, and some others have proposed a new approach that sets standards based on the size and weight of a vehicle.

The Election

Americans get this. They understand both the “Axis of Oil” and “Axis of Evil.” They know our dependence on foreign oil undermines our security. And they don’t like the war we’re in.

The American people—they want something different.

In my view, the election in one week is a referendum on our Iraq policy. Another war-time President, facing a divided nation after he was re-elected in 1864, said: “the most reliable indication of public purpose in this country is derived through our popular elections.”

Next week, when Americans decide our public purpose, they know there are no easy answers. There were none for Lincoln.

But they also know with the right leadership, America will prevail—she always has.

Speech by
U.S. Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Iraq's Future and America's Interests
The Brookings Institution
Washington, DC
February 15, 2007

This is a time of tremendous challenge for America in the world. We must contend with the on-going war in Afghanistan, the genocide in Darfur, nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea, the rise of China and re-emergence Russia, the growing insecurity of our energy supply, the fragility of our climate, and the threat posed by radical fundamentalism.

But one issue dominates our national debate: Iraq. If we deal with it successfully, we can recover the freedom, flexibility and credibility to meet these other challenges.

That's what I want to talk about today. Listen to the debate about Iraq here in Washington. It centers on a false choice that is also a bad choice: Do we continue on President Bush's failing course and hand off Iraq to the next President? Or do we just leave and hope for the best?

I believe there is a better choice. It is still possible to bring our troops home without trading a dictator for chaos that engulfs Iraq and spreads to the Middle East. That must be our goal. Leaving Iraq is necessary—but it is not a plan. We also need a plan for what we leave behind.

Nine months ago, with Les Gelb of the Council on Foreign Relations, I proposed just such a plan. Go to "planforiraq.com," to read its details. Our plan recognizes that there is no purely military exit strategy from Iraq. Instead, we set out a roadmap to a political settlement in Iraq—one that gives its warring factions a way to share power peacefully and offers us a chance to leave with our interests intact.

The plan has five major pieces.

First, maintain a unified Iraq by decentralizing it and giving Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis breathing room in regions – as the Iraqi constitution provides. The central government would be responsible for common concerns, like guarding Iraq's borders and distributing its oil revenues.

Second, secure support from the Sunnis – who have no oil – by guaranteeing them a fair share of oil revenues. Allow former Baath party members to go back to work and reintegrate Sunnis with no blood on their hands.

Third, increase economic assistance to Iraq and its regions. Insist that the oil-rich Gulf states put up most of the money, tie it to the protection of minority rights, and create a major jobs program to deny the militia new recruits.

Fourth, initiate a major diplomatic offensive to enlist the support of Iraq's neighbors. Create an oversight group of the U.N. and the major powers to enforce their commitments. These countries have a profound stake in preventing chaos in Iraq and the credibility we lack to press for compromise by all Iraqis. If a political settlement fails to take hold, these same countries are vital to any strategy to contain the fall out within Iraq.

Fifth, instruct the military to draw up plans for withdrawing U.S. combat forces from Iraq by 2008. Leave behind a small force to take on terrorists and train Iraqis. The best way to focus Iraq's leaders on the political compromises they must make is to make it clear to them that we are leaving.

Many of you have heard me talk about this plan before. What's new is the growing support it's receiving. That support was evident during the four weeks of hearings we just held in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

It is evident in the new National Intelligence Estimate for Iraq – a consensus report of all U.S. intelligence agencies. The NIE and virtually all of our witnesses agreed that the fundamental problem in Iraq is self-sustaining sectarian violence.

Yes, jihadists, Baathists, criminal gangs and intra-sect violence all contribute to the growing chaos. But Sunnis killing Shiites and Shiites killing Sunnis is the heart of the matter. That's what we have to stop if we want to leave Iraq with our interests intact.

How do we stop this sectarian cycle of revenge? If history is any guide, we have to wait until one side wins or both sides exhaust themselves. That could take years of bloodletting... years that we do not have.

History also suggests it is possible to short circuit sectarian strife. A decade ago, Bosnia was being torn apart by ethnic cleansing, which threatened to engulf the Balkans. The United States stepped in with Dayton Accords, which kept the country whole by, paradoxically, dividing it into ethnic federations. Muslims, Croats and Serbs retained separate armies and presidents. Since then, Bosnians have lived a decade in peace. Now, they are slowly coming back together.

Iraq presents a similar possibility. Here's what the National Intelligence Estimate says we need: "Broader Sunni acceptance of the current political structure and federalism... [and] significant concessions by Shia and Kurds to create space for Sunni acceptance of federalism."

That is exactly the strategy behind the Biden-Gelb plan. During our hearings, witness after witness—including former secretaries of states, foreign policy experts, and elected officials—came to a similar conclusion. So have a growing number of opinion makers.

What more and more people are beginning to recognize is that there are very few possible futures for Iraq in the near term—and only one that protects America's interests.

Think for a minute about Iraq's possible futures. The Bush administration has one vision: that Iraqis will rally behind a strong, democratic central government that keeps the country together and protects the rights of all citizens equally.

But since the Samarra Mosque bombing a year ago, that vision has been engulfed by the flames of sectarian hatred. The hard truth in Iraq is that there is no trust within the central government... no trust of the government by the people... and no capacity by the government to deliver services and security. And there is no evidence – none – that we can build that trust and capacity any time soon.

There are two other ways to govern Iraq from the center: A foreign occupation that the United States cannot long sustain. Or the return of a strongman, who is not on the horizon. Even if he were, replacing one dictator with another would require a savagery to rival Saddam's worst excesses.

So where does that leave us? It leaves us with an idea a large majority of Iraqis have already endorsed in their constitution and that our plan would help make a reality: federalism. Federalism would keep Iraq together by vesting real power in the regions.

It would bring decisions and responsibility down to the local level and give Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds control over the fabric of their daily lives: security, education, marriage, jobs.

Very few have read Iraq's constitution. Fewer still understand that legislation to implement its articles on federalism takes effect in 15 months.

Federalism is Iraq's best possible future. But unless we help make federalism work for all Iraqis, the violence will not stop. We have to convince the major powers and Iraq's neighbors that a federal Iraq is the best possible outcome for them, too, and to put their weight and influence behind it. Then, together, we have to bring in the Sunnis and convince the Shiites and Kurds to make concessions.

That is what the Biden-Gelb plan proposes. It demands the kind of sustained, hard headed diplomacy for which this administration has shown little interest or aptitude. But it offers the possibility – not the guarantee – of producing a soft landing in Iraq.

If we fail to make federalism work, there will be no political accommodation at the center. Violent resistance will increase. The sectarian cycle of revenge will spiral out of control. At best, the result likely will be the violent break up of Iraq into multiple failed states. At worst, the result will be Iraq's total fragmentation into warring fiefdoms.

The neighbors will not sit on the sidelines. Already, Iraq has aggravated a deep Sunni-Shiite divide that runs from Lebanon through Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. This fault-line intersects with other cultural and political rifts – between Arabs and Persians, Turks and Kurds, jihadis and the Muslim mainstream – to create the conditions for a cataclysmic explosion.

Iran and the Arab states will back Shi'a and Sunni extremists as part of a proxy war. Eventually, they will intervene directly. Sunni Jihadis will flood Iraq to confront the Persian and Shi'a threat, creating a new haven for terrorists. Turkey will move into the North to crush Kurdish ambitions. Sunni-Shi'a tensions will rise from Beirut to Karachi.

Individually, these would be bad developments. Together, they would do terrible damage to American interests. We must lead a determined regional and international effort to end the Iraqi civil war, or contain it if we can't.

The Bush administration is heading in exactly the wrong direction. Instead of a diplomatic and political offensive to forge a political settlement, it proposes a military offensive that would send 17,500 Americans into the middle of a sectarian conflict in a city of 6.2 million people.

This military surge in Iraq is not a solution – it is a tragic mistake. If we should be surging forces anywhere, it is in Afghanistan.

I'm glad the President has recognized what many of us have been saying for years: unless we surge troops, hardware, money, and high-level attention into Afghanistan, it will fall back into the hands of the Taliban, terrorists and drug traffickers. I support the steps he announced today but I hope they are the first steps – not the last – in a recommitment to Afghanistan.

The House is about to pronounce itself on the President's surge plan for Iraq and the Senate will, too.

Some minimize the significance of a non-binding resolution. If it is so meaningless, why did the White House and the President's political supporters mobilize so much energy against it?

Opposing the surge is only a first step. We need a radical change in course in Iraq. If the President won't act, Congress will. But Congress must act responsibly. We must resist the temptation to push for changes that sound good but produce bad results.

The best next step is to revisit the authorization Congress granted the President in 2002 to use force in Iraq. That's exactly what I'm doing.

We gave the President that power to destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and, if necessary, to depose Saddam Hussein.

The WMD were not there. Saddam Hussein is no longer there. The 2002 authorization is no longer relevant to the situation in Iraq.

I am working on legislation to repeal that authorization and replace it with a much narrower mission statement for our troops in Iraq. Congress should make clear what the mission of our troops is: to responsibly draw down, while continuing to combat terrorists, train Iraqis and respond to emergencies. We should make equally clear what their mission is not: to stay in Iraq indefinitely and get mired in a savage civil war.

Coupled with the Biden-Gelb plan, I believe this is the most effective way to start bringing our troops home without leaving a mess behind.

I want to leave you with one thought. For our sake and for the sake of the Iraqi people, we should be focused on how we get out of Iraq with our interests intact.

Everyone wants to bring our troops home as soon and as safely as possible. But tempting as it is, we can't just throw up our hands, blame the President for misusing the authority we gave him, and walk away without a plan for what we leave behind.

So I'll end where I began. Leaving Iraq is a necessity, but it is not a plan. We need a plan for what we leave behind. That is what I have offered. To those who disagree with my plan, I have one simple question: What is your alternative?

ON THE SENATE FLOOR
Speeches by
U.S. Senator Joe Biden



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“Don’t send more American troops into the middle of a civil war.”

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I would like to make a few brief comments this morning on the Warner resolution and the negotiations that went on yesterday, led by Senator Levin, to deal with Iraq.

Three weeks ago before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary Rice presented the President’s plan for Iraq. The Presiding Officer, among others, was there. Its main feature was to send more American troops into Baghdad, in the middle of a sectarian war, in the middle of a city of over 6 million people.

The reaction to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from Republicans and Democrats alike ranged from profound skepticism to outright opposition. That pretty much reflected the reaction across the country.

Consequently, Senators Hagel, Levin, Snowe, and I wrote a resolution to give Senators a way to vote their voices, vote what they had said. We believe, the four

of us, and I know the Presiding Officer does, as well, that the quickest, most effective way to get the President to change his course is to demonstrate to him that his policy has little or no support in this Senate, in our committee, or, quite frankly, across the country.

After we introduced our resolution, Senator Warner came forward with his resolution. The bottom line of the resolution is essentially the same, and it was: Don’t send more American troops into the middle of a civil war.

There was one critical difference between the Biden-Levin and the Warner amendment. Senator Warner’s resolution, in one paragraph, left open, I think unintentionally, the possibility of increasing the overall number of American troops in Iraq—just not in Baghdad. So from our perspective it wasn’t enough to say don’t go into Baghdad with more troops; we wanted

to say don't raise the number of troops, as well.

The provision in the Warner amendment that allowed for that, if read by the President the way he would want to read it, I believe, would have allowed an increase in troops. We believe very strongly—Senator Levin, myself, Hagel, Snowe—that would send the wrong message. We ought to be drawing down in Iraq, not ramping up. We ought to be redeploying, not deploying into Baghdad. We should make it clear to the Iraqi leaders that they have to begin to make the hard compromises necessary for a political solution.

A political solution everyone virtually agrees on is the precondition for anything positive happening in Iraq. Now, I make it clear, I and everyone else in this Senate knows that it is not an easy thing for the Iraqi leadership to do, but it is absolutely essential.

So we approached Senator Warner several times to try to work out the difference between the Biden and the Warner resolutions. I am very pleased that last night, through the leadership of Senator Warner and Senator Levin, we succeeded in doing just that. The language Senator Warner removed from his resolution removed the possibility that it can be read as calling for more troops in Iraq.

With that change, I am very pleased to join Senator Levin, now known as the Levin-Warner resolution, as a cosponsor of that resolution. For my intent, at the outset when I first spoke out about the President's planned surge of American forces in Iraq, when I spoke out before the new year, I made it clear that my

purpose was to build bipartisan opposition to his plan because that was the best way to get him to reconsider. That is exactly what this compromise does.

Now we have a real opportunity for the Senate to speak clearly. Every Senator will have a chance to vote on whether he or she supports or disagrees with the President's plan to send more troops into the middle of a civil war. If the President does not listen to the majority of the Congress—and I expect the majority of Congress will vote for our resolution—if he does not respond to a majority of the Congress and a majority of the American people, we will have to look for other ways to change his policy. But this is a very important first step.

Also, I would like to take a moment to present what I believe are the principal findings of our 4 weeks of hearings, over 50 hours, if I am not mistaken, of hearings in the Foreign Relations Committee. While no unanimous prescription has emerged, there is remarkably broad consensus on three main points: First, American troops cannot stop sectarian warfare in Iraq, only a political settlement can do that; the second point of consensus, we must engage in intensive regional diplomacy to support the settlement among Iraqis; third, the U.S. military should focus on combating terrorists, keeping Iraq's neighbors honest, training Iraq's troops—not on policing a civil war. Indeed, combat troops should start to redeploy as soon as our mission is narrowed.

Those three points were overwhelmingly agreed upon by an array of the most well informed foreign policy

experts, both military and civilian, that we have arrayed before that committee in a long time.

Since a political settlement is so critical, we have examined this issue in detail. We have looked at the benchmarks the President has proposed—on oil law, de-Baathification reform, constitutional reform, and provincial elections—but the divisions are so deep and passions run so high now in Iraq we may be beyond the point where such modest measures can stabilize Iraq.

I believe, and have believed for some time, something much broader is necessary, something much bolder is necessary. Les Gelb, the chairman emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations and a former Defense Department official, and I put forward just such a proposal 9 months ago. It is premised upon our conviction that the heart of the administration's strategy—building a strong central government—will, in fact, not succeed. As a matter of fact, in the testimony we heard, most pointed out where countries have been drawn by the slip of a pen by world leaders after World War I and World War II—the Balkans, Iraq, and many other places we could name—there have basically only been two models that have brought stability: A straw plan, a la Saddam, or a Federal system, a la the Iraqi Constitution.

The reason a strong central government will not work, although desirable, is there is no trust within the Government, no trust of the Government by the people of Iraq, no capacity of the Government to deliver

services, no capacity of this new Government to deliver security.

In a sense, it is understandable. Indeed, we must bring Iraqis' problems and the responsibility of managing those problems down to local and regional levels where we can help the Iraqis build trust and capacity much more quickly and much more effectively.

We have proposed that the Iraqis create what their constitution calls for: three or more "regions" they call them—not republics—three or four more regions consistent with their constitution. We call for Iraq's oil to be shared equally with a guarantee that the Sunnis get their share and have some international oversight to guarantee it. We call for aggressive diplomacy—which, again, most every witness called for, including the Iraq Study Group—we call for aggressive diplomacy in the creation of a contact group consisting of Iraq's neighbors and the major powers in the world, including large Islamic countries to support a political settlement.

We believe we can redeploy most, if not all, of America's troops from Iraq within 18 months under this plan, leaving behind a small force in Iraq or in the region to strike at terrorists, the jihadists, the al-Qaidaists, keeping the neighbors honest, and training Iraqi forces. The time has demonstrated this plan is more relevant and inevitable than it was even the day we put pen to paper and set it out 9 months ago. It takes into account the harsh reality of self-sustaining sectarian violence; it is consistent with Iraq's Constitution; and it can produce a phrase used by a New York Times columnist in describing our

plan. It can produce “a soft landing” for Iraq and prevent a fullblown civil war that tears the country apart and spreads beyond its borders.

I might also add, as people have come to understand, what I am calling for is not partitioning, not three separate republics; what I am calling for is what the Iraqi Constitution calls for: decentralization of control over security and local laws with the central government having responsibility for the Army, distribution of resources and currency and other things that a central government must do.

As that has become clearer and clearer, some of the most powerful voices in the American foreign policy establishment have come forward to suggest it makes sense.

Secretary Kissinger told our committee yesterday:

I’m sympathetic to an outcome that permits large regional autonomy. In fact, I think it is very likely this will emerge out of the conflict that we are now witnessing.

Former Secretary of State Albright said:

. . . the idea of the . . . constitution of Iraq as written, which allows for and mandates, in fact, a great deal of regional autonomy, is appropriate.

James Baker, former Secretary of State, coauthor of the Baker-Hamilton commission report told us that there are indications that Iraq may be moving toward three autonomous regions, and “if it is, we ought to be prepared to try and manage the situation.”

Time is running out. We are going to have as a consequence of the compromise reached between the Biden-Levin resolution and the Warner resolution, now known as the “Levin-Warner whoever else is attached to it” resolution—we are going to have for the first time a full-blown debate in the Senate.

I hope the administration will be listening. I suggest we are coequal—Congress, along with the President—in deciding when, if, how long, and under what circumstances to send Americans to war, for shedding America’s treasure and blood.



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“Mr. President, you are leading us off a cliff. Stop.”

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, our troops don't lose wars; bad policy and bad leadership lose wars. We should have the courage to stand up and tell the administration they have had a God awful policy. They put our troops in a position that, in fact, has made it virtually impossible for them to succeed at the outset. They deserve a policy, a plan, but there is no plan.

We went to war with too few troops, we went to war unnecessarily, and we went to war with men and women who were ill-equipped, and they are coming home ill-served. It is about time we have the courage to stand up and say to the President: Mr. President, you have not only put us in harm's way, you have harmed us. You have no policy, Mr. President.

I am so tired of hearing on this floor about courage. Let's have the courage to tell the administration to stop this ridiculous policy they have.

We are taking sides in a civil war. I was there in Srebrenica. I was in Tuzla. I was in Sarajevo. I was in Brcko in the Balkans. How did we solve that? We solved that with a policy of separating the parties.

This is a cycle of self-sustaining sectarian violence that 20,000, 30,000, 50,000, 100,000 Americans will not be able to stop. This is ridiculous. There is no plan. I ask the President and everyone else who comes forward with a plan, whether it is capping or surging or whatever they have: Will it answer the two-word test: Then what? Then what? Then what? What happens after we surge these women and men?

And by the way, he said General Petraeus is one who believes. He may be the only one who believes this is a good idea. Virtually no one else thinks it is a good idea. Look, in this story about the Constitution, we gave the President

specific authority, which is our responsibility. It was to take down Saddam, if need be, it was to get rid of weapons of mass destruction that did not exist, and it was to get compliance with the U.N. resolution. Every one of those have been met. Saddam is dead, there were no weapons, and Iraq is in compliance with the U.N.

So if one wants to be literal about it, his mission no longer has the force of law. Everyone I have spoken with, including from the Biden-Gelb plan, straight through to the Iraq Study Group, says: Look, use our troops wisely; use them wisely. What are their missions? We have the right and obligation constitutionally, and we should have the courage constitutionally, to exercise our responsibility to say: Why are our troops there?

Did anybody on this floor, did anybody count on the utter incompetence of this administration when they were getting the authority they were getting? Absolute incompetence. I stood on this floor 3 years ago saying we need another 100,000 troops before the sectarian violence became self-sustaining and warned, as others did, that once it did, all the king's horses and all the king's men could not hold that country together.

So what is our objective here? Our objective is to leave Iraq relatively stable within its own borders, not a threat to its neighbors and not a haven for terror.

What is the President and my friend from Arizona and others insisting on? What can never be: a central government that is a democracy that is

going to be fair to the rest of its citizens. It is not possible, mark my words.

So as long as the President keeps us on this ridiculous path, taking us off a cliff, I ask my colleagues: Does anybody think they are going to be able to sustain keeping American forces in Iraq at 160,000 for another year and a half? What do you think? What do you think is going to happen in Tennessee, in Delaware, in Illinois? Are we going to break this man's and woman's Army? What are we going to do here? How many times do we have to ask those 175,000 marines to rotate, three, four, five, six, seven times?

And what is the President's political solution? I love this. Everyone says there is no military solution, only a political solution. Name me one person who has come up with a political solution—one other than me and Les Gelb.

There is a political solution. It is what history teaches us. When there is self-sustaining sectarian violence, there is only one of four possibilities:

They either, one, expire, kill one another off; two, you impose a dictator; three, you have an empire; or, four, you have a Federal system.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 30 more seconds.

The acting president pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I am tired of hearing about courage. The only courage being evidenced in this country is by those folks out on the battlefields getting shot at, getting killed. Why are

they there? Let's get on with this. This is the only rational way to move. All this malarkey about cutting off funds—this is about the mission.

Mr. President, you are leading us off a cliff. Stop.



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“Protecting our Troops is a Moral Imperative”

Mr. BIDEN: Madam President, I wish to begin by stating very simply that this amendment is literally, not figuratively, a matter of life and death. I have been here for many years. I have never begun a discussion of an amendment—and I have sponsored some serious amendments and pieces of legislation—by saying something as graphic and drastic as this is literally a matter of life and death. But it is. This is not hyperbole. This is not an exaggeration.

What my amendment will do is allow the military to put 2,500 more mine resistant ambush protected vehicles—known in the military by its acronym, MRAP—in the field by the end of this year.

Now, let me explain what I am talking about. First, I want to point out that the committee acknowledged the need for these vehicles and included \$2.5 billion in this bill. But what I propose in this amendment is forward-funding money from next year's 2008 budget into this supplemental. In that way, we can build more of these vehicles which have one purpose—the specific purpose of saving lives, American lives. The fact is, as most

of my colleagues know, 70 percent of American casualties in Iraq are caused by improvised explosive devices, or IEDs.

Many of my colleagues, including the Presiding Officer, have been to Iraq. They have had the same experience I have in my seven trips—visiting field hospitals. There, you see amputees and people with serious head injuries who, because of the incredible skill and triage capability of our military doctors and nurses, are able to be kept alive. Most of those injured at Walter Reed and at Bethesda naval hospital are victims of these devices, sadly now familiar to all Americans from the nightly news. We have tried very hard—although this administration has done so belatedly—to better equip our troops to withstand IEDs. God forbid they find themselves victim of an IED attack, but if they do, we want them to be able to survive.

MRAP vehicles provide four to five times more protection to our troops than up-armored HMMWVs. That statement, that these MRAPs provide four to five times more protection than

up-armored HMMWVs, is not my estimate. That is the judgment of our military leaders. The Commandant of the Marine Corps, GEN. James Conway, with whom I spoke as recently as this afternoon, wrote on March 1 to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He said:

Multi-National Forces—West [that is, the Marines in Iraq] estimates that the use of the MRAP could reduce the casualties in vehicles due to IED attack by as much as 80 percent.

He went on further and said that even though the MRAP is not expeditionary:

It is, however, the best available vehicle for force protection. He concluded by saying: Getting the MRAP into the Al Anbar Province is my number one unfilled warfighting requirement at this time.

Let me repeat that: Getting the MRAP into the Al Anbar Province is my number one unfilled warfighting requirement at this time.

He went on to tell me today that although there is some disagreement in terms of priorities within this building, he was speaking to me from the Pentagon, he said, "I believe this is a moral imperative."

How many generals with four stars or three or two or one on their shoulders have you heard use that phrase? How often is something so fundamental it is called "a moral imperative? This is a man who is heading back out to Iraq soon. He is talking about protecting his kids, his troops.

On my last trip into Anbar Province last summer, I went to Fallujah. I met with the commanding Marine general and roughly 30 to 40 of his commanders and noncommissioned officers. I was taken outside a building to see what they were trying to do to diminish the casualty rate of American forces required to patrol Fallujah. They showed me what they called a rhino, a big vehicle, looks like a Caterpillar bulldozer with a great big proboscis on it, a great big arm that is used when an IED is identified, to disarm it. It was interesting. I observed for the first time—maybe others knew about it—the hull. The bottom of it looked like a ship out of water. It had a V-shaped bottom. A humvee, like your SUV or your automobile, has a flat bottom. In a humvee, even if it is reinforced, it is still flat. The rhino had a V-shaped bottom or floor. I asked why. They said it made them much more blast resistant and it could protect the troops inside. That is the first time I heard about this concept. They did not have MRAPs yet, but they had this rhino, a much bigger vehicle for a different purpose.

As I talked to them, I remember asking the question, why aren't we building more of these things? You know, the folks on the ground, these kids and many not so young women and men who are climbing into these coffins, know that even in an up-armored vehicle if they are struck, deadly force may be exerted, scrambling their brains or outright killing them. The number one requirement of the Commandant of the Marine Corps is to get more of these vehicles. I respectfully suggest to all who care—and every one of us cares about the fate of the troops—if there is any place we should not consider the cost—

emphasize again, not consider the cost—it is when there is a consensus that what we are purchasing can save lives. We have made no sacrifice in this country to fight this war except for the families of those who have gone to the war. We should not hesitate to save the lives of those who are sacrificing because of cost.

A couple of my colleagues off the floor, none of whom are on the floor at this moment, have told me it might not be cost effective because the military is working on a new vehicle. Give me a break. Cost effective? I wonder how many people asked, when we were talking about the invasion of Normandy in World War II: You know, we better be careful. We may build too many landing craft. We might have some left over. What are we going to do with them after the war?

We have no higher obligation than to protect those we send into battle. We have received a pretty good dose of this administration's willingness to send people into battle not prepared. Rumsfeld's famous comment: You go with the Army you have, not the Army you like or need. That is paraphrasing him from a couple of years ago. When we find a way to protect people better in battle, then it seems to me we have an overwhelming obligation to act.

Let me explain the specifics of the MRAP. Each vehicle can hold 4 to 12 troops. Like the rhino, these vehicles have raised steel, V-shaped hulls and chassis. The raised hull is valuable because it gives the blast more time to expand, lessening the impact. The V-shape pushes the blast up the sides of the vehicle and away from the

occupants. With an up-armored HMMWV or any humvee, the flat bottom sends the blast through the floor right into the occupants. In addition, the vehicles have side armor and bulletproof glass, and they also have tires that can be driven when flat.

Ever since the military began using MRAPs in Iraq, the requirement has grown, as commanders realize how much better they are at protecting their personnel. In May of last year the requirement was only 185. By July, it had risen to 1,185. By November, it had risen to 4,060. By February of this year, after the supplemental request was submitted, it rose to 6,738. One month later, the requirement went up again to the current level of 7,774. At this point every one in the military agrees, we need 7,774 MRAPs.

The Marines are the executive agents for this program, meaning they are managing it for themselves and the other services. Every service has a need for the vehicle for explosive ordinance units as well as regular patrols. The Marines need 3,700 of them. The Army needs 2,500. The Air Force needs 697. The Navy needs 544, and the Special Operations Command needs 333. The cost of 7,774 MRAPs is \$8.4 billion. This administration's current plan is to spend \$2.3 billion this year and \$6.1 billion next year. But I believe we can and must do much better, and so do the Marines. If we simply put more funds up front, spend them in the supplemental rather than allocate them a year later in the 2008 budget, the same money that we are going to spend anyway next year, if we move it up, we can accelerate production drastically.

Some have said the extra production capacity does not exist. Again, speaking to the Commandant of the Marine Corps today, he indicated that there are eight companies they are dealing with and he has confidence that they can build all they can purchase, all they can afford. That is also what the Chief of Staff of the Army thinks.

On March 14, General Peter Schoomaker told the Appropriations Committee that with the MRAPs, "We can build what we get the funds to build. It is strictly an issue of money."

Let's assume the Commandant of the Marine Corps and General Schoomaker are wrong. Let's assume they have made a mistake. Let's assume we can't build as many as the money we give them. So what. So what. We are not talking about building a highway on time. We are talking about an informed judgment by the United States military, to build not a new weapons system, but to build a new protection system for their forces.

I respectfully suggest, if we are going to err on one side or the other, for God's sake, for a change, let's err on the side of doing something that will protect American fighting women and men.

Quite frankly, if the Marines believe we can do it, then my money is on the Marines getting it right. If General Schoomaker says he needs it, and more money will get the vehicles, then I take him at his word. I would rather take a chance, and I believe the American people would also, to protect more Americans under fire than not.

What does this mean specifically? Well, by adding \$1.5 billion, which my

amendment does, to the supplemental today, the Marines will have \$4 billion to work with. Based on their estimates, that will mean 2,500 vehicles get to the field 6 months sooner than under the current plan. You may say: What is 6 months? Ten of thousands of lives is what 6 months is. Figure it out: Four to twelve people in 2,500 more vehicles. Add up the numbers. That's 10,000 to 30,000 Americans. Look at the casualty rates that come from IEDs striking up-armored HMMWVs. Do the math, and tell me if their lives are not worth taking a financial risk to protect.

If we move this money forward, on October 1 of this year, instead of having only 2,000 MRAPs, we would have 4,500 in the field. On January 1, 2008, instead of 3,500 MRAPs, we would have 6,000 in the field. By February, we would fulfill the entire requirement, instead of waiting until next July. We are still going to spend \$8.4 billion, but spending it faster will make a major difference.

If you want to be callous about this, it would also save the American taxpayers a whole lot of money because for every one of those injured soldiers who comes back—to put it in Machiavellian terms—who needs a lifetime of medical care, there are hundreds of thousands of dollars committed per casualty. I can find no logical argument for delaying this.

Let me end where I began. This is a matter of life and death. Madam President, 2,500 more vehicles means literally that 10,000 to 30,000 more Americans will have a four to five times greater chance of surviving a hit with an IED while on patrol than exists today if

we do not act. Madam President, 10,000 to 30,000 Americans will not be added to the casualty and death numbers if we move this money up.

To use the phrase of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, at 3 or 4 o'clock today, on the phone with me: This is a moral imperative. I agree. It is a moral imperative that we protect these troops as soon as possible.



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“The President’s Double-Talk on Iraq is Reaching New Heights of Hypocrisy.”

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, President Bush has spent the last 2 weeks talking up the “progress” we are making in Iraq and talking down the Democrats and some of our Republican colleagues for trying to bring this war to a responsible end. But sometimes that is a problem because you have to deal with the facts. The facts are not as the President wants them to be but as they exist on the ground. The fact is, the President is totally out of touch with reality. He is out of touch with the American people and with America’s interests in the region.

I have been here a while, and I can say I have never seen a President as isolated since Richard Nixon. The President appears to be totally removed from reality. He tells us that

Attorney General Gonzales has done a great job, when anybody who watched it views it as one of the least impressive appearances of an Attorney General. He tells us that the President of the World Bank, an American, is doing a great job,

oblivious to the damage being done to America’s reputation around the world. And against the advice of some of the most gifted military men and women in a generation, he has adopted a policy in Iraq that is a disaster.

The President argues that the surge is succeeding, but with every welcome development he cites there is an equally unwelcome development that gives lie to the claim that we are making any progress. For example, while death squad violence against Iraqis is down in some Baghdad neighborhoods where we have surged, suicide bombings have increased by 30 percent over the last 6 weeks. Violence is up dramatically in the belt ringing Baghdad. The civilian death toll has increased 15 percent from February to March. When we squeeze a water balloon in one place, it bulges somewhere else. Moqtada al- Sadr has not been seen, but he has been heard, rallying his followers with anti-American messages and his thugs to take on American troops in the south. Last week, he pulled his ministers from

the coalition government, and intelligence experts believe his militia is simply waiting out the surge.

Closing markets to vehicles has precluded some car bombs, but it also has prompted terrorists to change tactics and walk in with suicide vests. The road to the airport to Baghdad may be safer, but the skies above it are more lethal; witness the ironic imposition of “no-fly zones” for our own helicopters.

Tal Affar is the most damaging evidence of the absolute absurdity of this policy. The President cites it as progress.

Architects of the President’s plan called Tal Affar a model because in 2005 we surged about 10,000 Americans and Iraqis to pacify the city. Then we left, just as our troops will have to leave the Baghdad neighborhoods after calm is established, if it is.

But what happened in Tal Affar? It was the scene of some of the most horrific sectarian violence to date. A massive truck bomb aimed at the Shiite community led to a retaliatory rampage by Shiite death squads, aided by Iraqi police. Hundreds were killed. The population of Tal Affar, which was 200,000 people just a year or two ago, is down to 80,000.

There is an even more basic problem with the President’s progress report, and it goes to the heart of the choices we now face in Iraq. Whatever tactical progress we may be making will amount to nothing if it is not serving a larger strategy for success. The administration’s strategy has virtually no prospect for success, and his strategy, in a nutshell, is the hope that the surge will buy President Maliki’s government

time to broker the sustainable political settlement that our own military views as essential, and that is premised upon the notion of a central government in Baghdad with real power.

But there is no trust within the government, no trust of the government by the people it purports to serve, and no capacity on the part of the government to deliver security or services. There is little, if any, prospect that this government will build that trust and capacity any time soon.

How many times have colleagues heard, beginning in January, how there is an oil agreement, that they have gotten that deal? Has anybody seen that deal, after we heralded it time and again as essential to pulling this country together?

In short, the most basic premise of the President’s approach—that the Iraqi people will rally behind a strong central government, headed by Maliki, in fact will look out for their interests equitably—is fundamentally and fatally flawed. It will not happen in anybody’s lifetime here, including the pages’.

If the President won’t look at a program that is different than he is now pursuing if his plan doesn’t work, what will he do? History suggests there are only a couple of ways, when there is a self-sustaining cycle of sectarian violence, to end it, and it is not to put American troops in the middle of a city of 6.2 million people to try to quell a civil war.

Throughout history, four things have worked. You occupy the country for a generation or more. Well, that is not in our DNA. We are not the Persian Empire or British Empire. You can

install a dictator, after having removed one. Wouldn't that be the ultimate irony for the U.S. to do that after taking one down. You can let them fight it out until one side massacres the other—not an option in that tinder box part of the world. Lastly, you make federalism work for the Iraqis. You give them control over the fabric of their daily lives. You separate the parties, you give them breathing room, and let them control their local police, their education, their religion, and their marriage. That is the only possibility. We can help Iraq change the focus to a limited central government and a Federal system, which their constitution calls for. I cannot guarantee that my strategy will work, but I can guarantee that the road the President has us on leads to nowhere with no end in sight.

We have to change course to end this war responsibly. That is what we are trying to do in Congress. Later this week, we will send to the President an emergency supplemental bill on Iraq that provides every dollar our troops need and more than the President requested. It also provides what the majority of Americans expect and believe is necessary: a plan to start to bring our troops home and bring this war to a responsible end, not escalate it indefinitely.

If the President vetoes the emergency spending bill, he is the one who will be denying our troops the funding they need. He is the one who will be denying the American people a path out of Iraq. The President's double talk on Iraq is reaching new heights of hypocrisy. I don't say that lightly.

On April 16, the President claimed that setting a timetable to start bringing our troops home would "legislate defeat."

Just 2 days after that, 2 days later, his own Secretary of Defense had this to say:

The push by Democrats to set a timetable for U.S. withdrawal from Iraq has been helpful in showing Iraqis that American patience is limited . . . that this is not an open-ended commitment.

Then, in arguing against the supplemental, the President claimed that by sending him a bill he would somehow be forced to veto, the military would run out of money for Iraq in mid-April—which is not true, by the way—and as a result, he would have to extend the tours of duty of the troops already in Iraq.

Extending those tours, the President said, "is unacceptable." "It's unacceptable to me, it's unacceptable to our veterans, it's unacceptable to our military families, and it's unacceptable to many in this country."

Unacceptable? The very next day, the administration announced its plans to do the "unacceptable" and extended the tours of every American ground troop in Iraq by 3 months.

Talk about hypocrisy: Telling us the path out of Iraq is a way which is forcing him to veto a bill that will require him then to extend tours because of that veto and that is unacceptable, and the very next day he extends the tour of every person on the ground. Once one gets over the hypocrisy, that announcement is an urgent warning that the administration's policy in Iraq cannot be sustained without doing terrible long-term damage to our military.

If this administration insists on keeping this many troops in Iraq until

next year, we will have to send soldiers back for third, fourth, and fifth tours, extend deployment times from 6 months to a year for marines, from 12 months to 16 to 18 months for the Army. The military will also be forced to end the practice of keeping troops at home for at least 1 year between deployments, to fully mobilize the National Guard and Reserve, and to perpetuate this backdoor draft.

This President is breaking—is breaking—the military. We don't have to guess at the impact on this relentless readiness, its impact on retention and recruitment. This month, we learned that recent graduates of West Point are choosing to leave Active-Duty service at the highest rate in more than three decades. This administration's policies are literally driving some of our best and brightest young officers out of the military.

Instead of working with Democrats in Congress in a way forward, this President, divorced from reality, is accusing us of emboldening the enemy and undermining our troops. I have a message for you, Mr. President: The only thing that is emboldening the

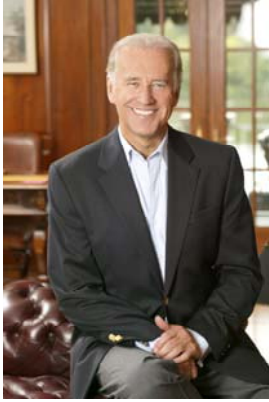
enemy is your failed policy. Mr. President, the only mission you have accomplished is emboldening the enemy with your failed policy.

Instead of escalating the war with no end in sight, we have to start bringing this to a responsible conclusion. If the administration insists on keeping this many troops next year, we are in serious, serious jeopardy.

I conclude by saying that I believe it is my obligation as a Senator—and I hope the obligation of everyone else—to keep relentless, unending pressure on this President to come to grips with reality, to continually push every single day to say: Mr. President, stop; stop this policy of yours.

It is my hope, even though he is likely to veto this bill, that we will keep the pressure on and ultimately convince at least a dozen of our Republican colleagues it is time to stop backing the President and start backing the troops. It is time, Mr. President, to begin to responsibly bring this war to an end.

BIOGRAPHY
of
U.S. Senator Joe Biden



U.S. Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

For over three decades, Joe Biden has played a pivotal role in shaping U.S. foreign policy. He has become respected at home and abroad for his well-informed, common-sense approach to international relations.

As the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Biden has earned a reputation for working on a bipartisan basis with his Republican colleagues. Senator Richard Lugar, currently the Ranking Minority Member on the committee, said:

"Senator Biden has a very strong commitment to a bipartisan foreign policy and serves as a good example for everyone in Congress. He has a very broad, comprehensive view of the world. He's a good listener, but he's also a strong and effective advocate of his position."

Senator Biden has been a leading and consistent voice against the Administration's failed policy in Iraq. He is the co-author of the Biden-Gelb Plan for Iraq – a detailed, five-point plan for a way forward in Iraq. The Biden-Gelb plan calls for decentralizing Iraq – separating the parties and giving them breathing room in their own regions, held together by a limited central government. The plan has garnered support from political leaders, foreign policy experts and opinion leaders across the nation.

Senator Biden is also recognized as one of the nation's leading experts on terrorism. Before the 9/11 attacks, he warned that the Bush Administration's intense focus on missile defense might cause us to divert our attention from other, more likely threats, stating that the new threat to the United States "would not come from an inter-continental ballistic missile with a return address" but in "the belly of a plane" or from a "vial smuggled in a backpack or a bomb in the hold of a ship." After the attacks of 9/11, he authored legislation to address the threats of bioterrorism, nuclear and radiological terrorism.

In addition to his leadership on foreign policy, Senator Biden is widely recognized for his work on criminal justice issues. A former Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, he has been instrumental in crafting virtually every major piece of crime legislation over the past two decades, including the 1994 Crime Bill which dramatically increased funds spent on law enforcement. Senator Biden also wrote the landmark Violence Against Women Act which contains a broad array of ground-breaking measures to combat domestic violence and provides billions of dollars in federal funds to address gender-based crimes.

Senator Biden lives in Wilmington, Delaware with his wife Jill and commutes by train to Washington, DC when the Senate is in session. The Bidens have three children and five grandchildren.