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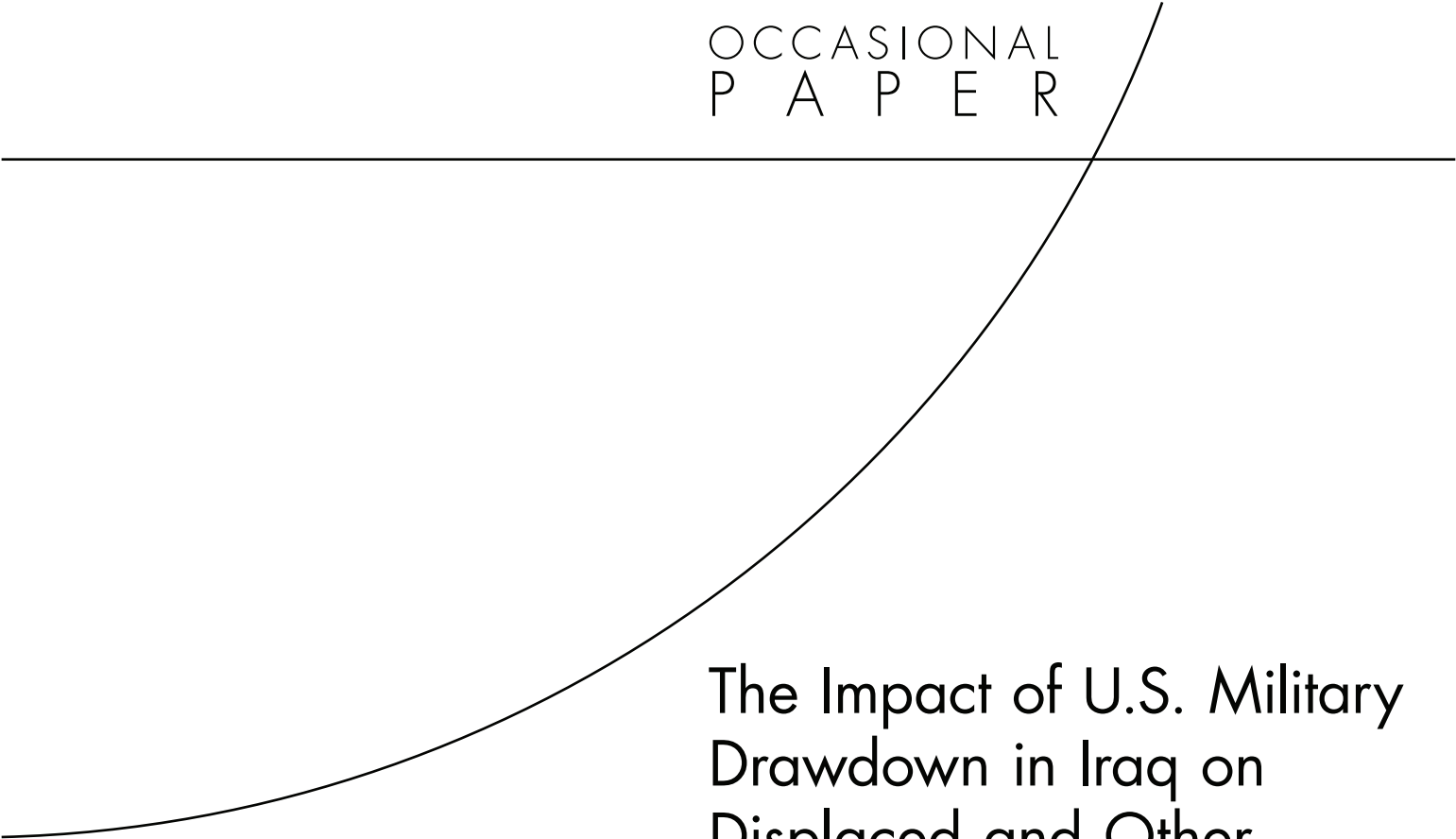
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The Impact of U.S. Military
Drawdown in Iraq on
Displaced and Other
Vulnerable Populations
Analysis and Recommendations

Olga Oliker, Audra K. Grant, Dalia Dassa Kaye

Prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited



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The research described in this paper was sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and conducted within the International Security and Defense Policy Center of the RAND National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the Department of the Navy, the Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the defense Intelligence Community under Contract W74V8H-06-C-0002.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The impact of U.S. military drawdown in Iraq on displaced and other vulnerable populations : analysis and recommendations / Olga Oliker, Audra K. Grant, Dalia Dassa Kaye.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-8330-4768-7 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Iraq War, 2003--Refugees. 2. Refugees--Iraq--Social conditions. 3. Violence--Social aspects--Iraq. 4. Iraq War, 2003---Social aspects. 5. Refugees--Government policy--Iraq. 6. United States--Armed Forces--Iraq. 7. Disengagement (Military science)--Social aspects--Iraq. 8. United States--Military policy. 9. Iraq--Military policy. I. Grant, Audra K. II. Kaye, Dalia Dassa. III. Title.

DS79.76.O45 2010

956.7044'31--dc22

2009053630

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Published 2010 by the RAND Corporation

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Preface

Although security in Iraq has improved substantially over the last year, Iraqis continue to face tremendous challenges in their daily lives due to fear of violence and shortages of food, electricity, water, and housing. Many have fled their homes for other parts of the country or to neighboring countries. As the United States continues to draw down its forces and eventually end its substantial military involvement in Iraq, the implications of that drawdown and withdrawal for Iraq's at-risk populations must be considered.

This paper assesses the risks and implications of drawdown and withdrawal for some of the Iraqis in greatest danger: (1) populations whose vulnerability to violence will increase specifically because of the U.S. drawdown and (2) Iraq's displaced population, both within Iraq and in neighboring states. It also forwards recommendations for U.S. policymakers for mitigating the problems we identify or anticipate. The paper expands on research carried out in support of a broader RAND study on the implications of the U.S. drawdown and withdrawal from Iraq for both Iraqi and regional stability and broader U.S. interests. That study was initiated in response to the fiscal year 2009 Defense Appropriations Act, which allocated funds to support an independent study to assess alternative plans to draw down U.S. forces. Its results are published in the RAND monograph *Withdrawing from Iraq: Alternative Schedules, Associated Risks, and Mitigating Strategies*, by Walter L. Perry, Stuart E. Johnson, Keith Crane, David C. Gompert, John Gordon IV, Robert E. Hunter, Dalia Dassa Kaye, Terrence K. Kelly, Eric Peltz, and Howard J. Shatz.

This paper should be of interest to senior officials in the U.S. government. This includes policymakers in the Departments of State and Defense, as well as the U.S. Agency for International Development and members of Congress and their staffs. It should also be of interest to the development and humanitarian aid communities, government officials in Europe and the Middle East, and all those with an interest in developments in Iraq and the broader region.

Both the broader study and this research were sponsored by the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and conducted within the International Security and Defense Policy Center (ISDP) of the RAND National Defense Research Institute (NDRI), a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Unified Commands, the Department of the Navy, the Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the Defense Intelligence Community.

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Summary

As the United States draws down its forces in Iraq, it behooves decisionmakers to recognize that this drawdown, which started in June 2009 and continues at the time of this writing, will affect vulnerable and at-risk populations. The ways in which it does so have significant implications for the evolution of Iraq and U.S. policy interests in that country and the Middle East more broadly. Regardless of how the security situation evolves in the years to come, these issues will continue to create humanitarian challenges, and it is in U.S. interests to take steps to address them.

A number of groups are at risk because of the U.S. drawdown and withdrawal, because they have depended on U.S. forces and force presence for their security over the last six years. In addition, the drawdown may exacerbate the already precarious circumstances of displaced Iraqis, both within the country and in neighboring states. That said, appropriate policies and actions can mitigate destabilizing regional scenarios and reduce the dangers faced by these populations in the years to come.

Vulnerable Groups

Groups at particular risk as U.S. forces depart Iraq include

- tens of thousands of Iraqis and their families who are affiliated with the United States in any of a variety of ways
- smaller minorities among Iraq's permanent citizens who have relied on U.S. forces for protection¹
- Palestinians who took refuge in Iraq under the Saddam Hussein government
- other refugee groups from outside Iraq who have taken shelter in that country over the years²
- the Mujheddin e-Khalq (MEK), a cult-like dissident group from Iran that received sanctuary in Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 1991 and whose members have since lived in their own enclave, from 2003 to early 2009 under the protection of U.S. forces³

¹ The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) lists the following minority religious and ethnic groups as at particular risk: Shabak, Christians generally, Sabaeen-Mandaeans, Yazidis, Baha'i, Kaka'i, Ahl i-Haq, Yarsan, Jews (of whom very few remain in Iraq), Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Armenians, and Roma (Kawliyah) (UNHCR, 2007).

² These include ethnic Kurds from Turkey, Iran and Syria, ethnic Arabs from Syria, and Ahwazi Arabs from Iran. A number of Sudanese refugees have recently been resettled.

³ They are now officially an Iraqi government responsibility.

- contractors from around the world who work for U.S., other coalition, and Iraqi companies in construction, food services, and myriad other jobs and who may lack documentation.

Violence against these populations is a real danger as U.S. forces draw down. It would surely present a humanitarian tragedy to which the global community may not be able to respond in time. The United States would likely be held at least partially accountable, with detrimental results for U.S. image, credibility, and influence. It could also serve as a starting point for renewed violence in Iraq.

Ongoing efforts to assist Iraqis with U.S. ties include the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program and the Refugee Resettlement Program, now available to Iraqis with U.S. ties. There has been significant improvement in the last year in the processing of refugees, especially, and the SIV program has been expanded. Instead of having to first leave Iraq, U.S.-affiliated Iraqis can now apply to come to the United States from Baghdad. Processing for both of these programs has remained slow and complicated, however, and no plan exists for rapid evacuation, which may be needed if the security situation deteriorates.

For the other groups, the response thus far has been an effort by the U.S. government to engage Iraqi counterparts to ensure these groups' safety and security, coupled with efforts by the UNHCR to resettle some of the refugees from elsewhere who cannot stay in Iraq. Success has been sporadic.

Displacement and Drawdown

The last four decades have led to tremendous displacement of Iraqis in the face of war and tyranny. Numbers have grown exponentially, however, since the 2003 Iraq war began. Today, about 4 million Iraqis are displaced, about 2 million of them within Iraq and the rest outside that country, primarily in Syria and Jordan.

Displacement has redrawn Iraq's sectarian map, turning the multiethnic, multisectarian parts of the country into a collection of monosectarian enclaves. It has also had what will be lasting effects on social and economic structures in Iraq and in the countries to which Iraqis have fled. The deepening poverty and lack of access to resources that displaced Iraqis face will not be quickly reversed. The fact that a disproportionate number of the displaced and impoverished are women and members of female-headed households bodes poorly for Iraq's future, as this marks a historical reversal for Iraq, and effective development is consistently correlated with the economic and educational empowerment of women.

The millions of Iraqis who have been displaced as a result of the war face increasing dangers as U.S. forces draw down. If violence in Iraq worsens as and after U.S. forces draw down, as it may well do in at least some disputed and multiethnic areas, displacement will increase yet again. Whether or not violence increases in the near term, however, this displacement crisis may well breed instability in its own right. Unless these problems are addressed as part of a broad development and integration agenda, displacement will not only be long term, but it may also lead to increased risk of violence in the future, as grievances over lost land combine with perceptions of social and economic inequities between the populations hosting the displaced and the newcomers, both in Iraq and in neighboring countries. This has the potential to undermine the stability of key regional states, such as Jordan, and a range of broader U.S. regional goals.

Mitigating Measures: Recommendations for U.S. action

Although the displacement crisis will be long term, and vulnerable populations will face increased risk as U.S. forces draw down, the dangers emanating from both of these situations can be mitigated. Indeed, the drawdown of U.S. forces can potentially create opportunities for the United States to more effectively address this crisis and gain regional and international assistance to do so.

A number of specific actions and general approaches can help ensure the protection of particularly endangered populations, mitigate the destabilizing effects of mass displacement, and prevent the chronic underdevelopment that may otherwise be its result.

Lower Risk of Violence

- Where practicable and useful, adapt troop withdrawals to ensure the longest presence where violence is most likely, specifically in the regions of Baghdad, Diyala, and along the KRG border.
- Improve security for the vulnerable and those at risk of deportation in Iraq by working with Iraq, regional governments, and other key international actors.

Make Resettlement Outside of Iraq Viable for Those Who Need It

- Ensure the recently named White House–level Refugee Coordinator can be effective.
- Improve refugee processing to support continued increases in the number being accepted into the United States.
- Working with the international community, pursue and fund creative resettlement solutions in nontraditional resettlement countries.

Enable Those in Immediate Danger to Reach Safety

- Working with the international community and the Iraqi government, resettle Iraq-based refugees of non-Iraqi origin.
- Prepare for the evacuation of those who may need it with a comprehensive database and evacuation plan.
- Improve refugee processing in Baghdad.

Treat Displacement and Its Effects as a Regional Issue

- Push for more regional funding, involving Saudi Arabia and other wealthy Gulf states, particularly.
- Work with Syria bilaterally and through international partners.

Support Sustainable and Effective Development

- Ensure that troop withdrawals do not mean that development and humanitarian efforts in Iraq are curtailed by finding ways to make sure that U.S., UN, and other civilian personnel adjust security requirements to make it possible to do their work after U.S. forces draw down.

- Continue to fund and assist the humanitarian response within and outside Iraq at high levels.
- Work with countries of first refuge and the Iraqi government to emphasize durable solutions, rather than return.
- Encourage funding and aid efforts by the government of Iraq.
- Continue to work with the government of Iraq to build capacity to manage displacement.
- Recognize the long-term nature of the problem and establish mechanisms for international involvement and oversight.
- Ensure that development approaches are holistic and reflect ethnic and gender realities and needs.

Acknowledgments

The authors of this paper would like to thank, first of all, the many experts and practitioners who were generous with their time and insights as we conducted this research. We are grateful to Richard Albright, Elizabeth Campbell, Elizabeth Ferris, Andrew Harper, Kirk Johnson, Natalie Ondiak, Amelia Templeton, Nabil al-Tikriti, and Kristele Younes. Useful comments were also provided by staff at OSD and MNF-I, which we greatly appreciate. We are no less thankful to a number of others, in Iraq and elsewhere, who asked that their names not be included in this document, but whose assistance was no less helpful.

In addition, we must thank our colleagues at RAND who facilitated this research. They include Walt Perry, who led the overall withdrawal project, and Keith Crane, who coordinated the effort on mitigating the risks created by withdrawal and drawdown. Nora Bensahel, Charles Ries, and Howard Shatz provided useful comments on earlier drafts of this material. James Dobbins made it possible for us to expand on our work to produce this paper.

We also deeply appreciate the inputs of Elizabeth Ferris of the Brookings Institution and Charles Ries of RAND, who provided reviews of this paper. Their excellent suggestions greatly improved its clarity and, we believe, enabled us to strengthen its arguments.

Finally, we thank our editor, James Torr, for ensuring clarity of thought and grammar, and Meagan Smith, whose administrative assistance kept everything moving smoothly.

In expressing our thanks to all of the above, we would like to emphasize that any errors, faults, or misconceptions in this paper remain ours alone.

Abbreviations

DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
IDP	internally displaced person
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
MEK	Mujheddin e-Khalq
MoDM	Ministry of Displacement and Migration
NGO	nongovernmental organization
PDS	public distribution system
SIV	Special Immigrant Visa
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Introduction

As the United States draws down its forces in Iraq, it behooves decisionmakers to consider how that drawdown will affect vulnerable populations, both for humanitarian reasons and because of the substantial implications for U.S. and Iraqi security interests.

A number of groups, both native to Iraq and otherwise, may face increased danger as a direct result of U.S. drawdown and withdrawal. These include those from other countries who have sought shelter in Iraq, such as Palestinian refugees. Many of them have relied on U.S. forces for security. Iraqis who have provided assistance to the United States will be increasingly susceptible to targeting by hostile groups as U.S. forces leave. Other minority and foreign groups face similarly precarious situations as foreign troop presence dwindles. Both the United States and Iraq will be held accountable for any failure to protect these people, collectively and individually, and both stand much to lose if this happens.

Meanwhile, displacement driven by war and insecurity has changed Iraq's ethnic, economic, and social maps in ways that will long affect the country's political and economic development even if security improves. As many Iraqis have fled to neighboring countries, and as the situation in Iraq affects the rest of the Middle East, it would be foolish to believe that the consequences will be limited to Iraq. Indeed, they will be lasting throughout the region. Many of the problems already posed by displacement could be exacerbated by the drawdown, for example, if the security situation worsens as U.S. troops leave and U.S. forces become unavailable and unable to provide security for civilian government and international representatives responsible for development and humanitarian aid.

The ways in which the United States carries out its drawdown and withdrawal, and how it defines its future policy toward Iraq, can mitigate the problems and dangers presented both by the conflict itself and by drawdown and withdrawal specifically. Ensuring that planning for departure incorporates these concerns can make peace in Iraq more durable and effective development more likely.

This paper assesses the relationship between U.S. drawdown and Iraq's development as these relate to Iraq's most vulnerable populations. It also proposes mechanisms that can help mitigate the prospective problems and challenges posed. We begin with a discussion of how U.S. drawdown and withdrawal will affect vulnerable populations in Iraq. We then turn to a discussion of the displacement crisis and the risks it poses in the context of drawdown and withdrawal. Our analysis concludes with a set of concrete policy recommendations for policymakers to mitigate the risks and negative long-term consequences of Iraq's displaced and vulnerable communities.

Vulnerable Populations

While security in Iraq has now been improving steadily for some time, the concern that the situation could reverse itself remains substantial. The possibility that it will do so during, and indeed because of, the drawdown of U.S. forces can neither be ignored nor dismissed. If this happens, there is no question that a broad range of Iraq's residents, including those in female-headed households, women, minorities in ethnically mixed areas, and the internally displaced (discussed in the next section), will be at increased risk relative to the population as a whole.¹ However, there also exist a number of groups who may become more susceptible to violent attack as and after U.S. forces draw down and withdraw from Iraq, whether or not violence as a whole increases substantially:

- Tens of thousands of Iraqis and their families may face danger because of their affiliation with the United States (both with governmental or nongovernmental groups), which makes them targets for a variety of extremist and militia groups. Well over 100,000 Iraqis work and have worked for the U.S. government in Iraq, providing critical services in the areas of translation, construction, engineering, and office work, to name a few. Many have become displaced within and outside Iraq (Human Rights First, undated).
- Smaller minorities among Iraq's permanent citizens have faced violence and been able to successfully turn, to varying extents, to U.S. forces for protection, which includes patrols and oversight of Iraqi forces.²
- Palestinian refugees received housing and other benefits from the Saddam Hussein government. They became targets of attacks after he was overthrown. Many fled. Today, hundreds remain trapped in camps near the Syrian border, and about 9,000 remain in predominantly Shia areas of Baghdad, where they have been particularly under threat from the Mahdi Army. Efforts to resettle Palestinians have found very little success. U.S. forces have protected Palestinians in Baghdad through patrols and oversight.
- Other refugee groups from outside Iraq who have taken shelter in that country over the years are seen as suspect by Iraq's native populations and may face reprisals and even more

¹ Women, particularly, face challenges and restrictions in finding work to support themselves and their families.

² The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) lists the following minority religious and ethnic groups as at particular risk: Shabak, Christians generally, Sabaeen-Mandaeans, Yazidis, Baha'i, Kaka'i, Ahl i-Haq, Yarsan, Jews (of whom very few remain in Iraq), Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Armenians, and Roma (Kawliyah) (UNHCR, 2007).

difficult conditions after U.S. forces leave.³ Some, such as the Iranian ethnic Kurds, are being integrated into Iraq. Most continue to live in refugee camps.

- The Mujaheddin e-Khalq (MEK) is a cult-like dissident group from Iran. Because of its violent opposition to the Iranian regime, its members received sanctuary in Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 1991. They are not integrated into Iraqi society, having lived in their own enclave for decades. Because of their use of terrorist methods, the MEK is designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the United States. About 3,400 MEK members are now living at Camp Ashraf (now "Camp New Iraq") in Iraq. Until February 2009, the MEK was under U.S. military protection, which was granted at the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom when MEK members willingly laid down their weapons. Protection of the MEK at the camp became a GOI responsibility in accordance with implementation of the U.S.-GOI Security Agreement. The MEK and its advocates have expressed fears that camp residents will be deported to Iran and/or otherwise endangered. At the time this report went to press, statements and actions by the Iraqi government indicated that these fears are not without foundation.
- U.S., other coalition, and Iraqi companies have brought in workers from around the world to carry out construction, food services, and myriad other tasks. Camps of contractor personnel have sprung up around Iraqi airports and elsewhere. While many workers, particularly those directly employed by the U.S. government, are unlikely to be at particular risk, there is less information about other groups. Some workers are reported to have been smuggled or trafficked in to work in Iraq. They may not have appropriate documentation or means to leave Iraq. Some may face resentment from Iraqis for having jobs when many Iraqis are unemployed. It is not clear that the Iraqi government has taken particular care to police this situation, and it is easy to imagine the potential problems, including tremendous personal and economic insecurity, that these people could face if they come to be stranded in Iraq.

All of these groups have little reason to believe that Iraqi Security Forces will protect them should they be targeted by hostile actors. Many have directly depended on U.S. forces for security, and others count on the influence U.S. forces exercise over Iraqi Security Forces. In principle, the government of Iraq is responsible for providing security for all of these people. In practice, however, history does not give much reason to assume that the Iraqi government will have the capacity and will to protect them.

Risks and Implications of Drawdown

Substantial violence against vulnerable groups would, without question, present tremendous humanitarian concerns. In addition, it would have a variety of adverse repercussions for the United States, Iraq, and the region more broadly. As the country globally seen as responsible for the Iraq war, the United States would be held accountable for any negative humanitarian repercussions. Perceptions of the United States, at home and abroad, may be particularly eroded by failure to effectively protect and assist U.S.-affiliated Iraqis. Failure of the United

³ These include ethnic Kurds from Turkey, Iran, and Syria, ethnic Arabs from Syria, and Ahwazi Arabs from Iran. A number of Sudanese refugees have recently been resettled.

States to protect and help the people who were willing to help Americans would be rightly seen as a particularly egregious moral violation. In the Middle East and around the world, this would feed into and would be used to build anti-U.S. sentiment. That, in turn, would hamper U.S. efforts on a broad range of issues as the United States seeks to rebuild its global image and influence. Importantly, such a deleterious outcome would ultimately set a poor precedent for future U.S.-led military operations, making local citizens elsewhere less likely to help the United States.

Successful attacks against the truly vulnerable may also be a starting point for broader violence in Iraq if group tensions escalate into cycles of provocation and reprisal. A demonstrated failure of the Iraqi Security Forces to keep these people safe would also undermine faith in Iraq's government more broadly, feeding violence and instability and damaging security not just in Iraq, but the broader region.

The likelihood that there will be substantial violence against vulnerable people varies somewhat from group to group. Some level of violence against minorities, such as the Yazidis, and refugee groups, such as the Palestinians, who live within Iraqi communities, is fairly likely, as are some attacks against U.S. allies. Such violence is also more likely if the government of Iraq does not place a priority on the protection of the vulnerable. High levels of violence are more likely if the overall security situation worsens.

Current Policy Responses

U.S.-Affiliated Iraqis

Congressional and public concern about the plight of U.S.-affiliated Iraqis, who already have been targeted by a variety of groups, has resulted in a number of important policy steps in the past year, particularly those geared toward easing immigration to the United States for those who seek it. The Special Immigrant Visa program and the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program are the two currently extant mechanisms by which Iraqis with affiliations to the United States can come to America.⁴

The *Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program* as it applies to Iraq adapts a State Department program (of the same name) that rewards long-term local employees of embassies abroad. The adaptation of this program to Iraq (and Afghanistan) was driven by a need and desire to provide a resettlement option for local staff who might be at risk. As of 2008, eligibility is open to any Iraqi who has worked for the U.S. government or military (including military contractors) for at least a year and who is or was threatened as a result. Unlike the SIV program as it applies in other countries, the SIV program for Iraq and Afghanistan provides resettlement assistance in the United States similar to that provided to refugees to the United States. SIV applicants must prove their service with documentation and letters of recommendation from present or former U.S. government personnel. As of fiscal year (FY) 2008, the program is authorized to accept 5,000 Iraqis per year and their immediate family members (spouses and unmarried

⁴ In addition, the Department of Defense has the capacity to rapidly evacuate limited numbers of people affiliated with department staff and at specific, demonstrated near-term risk through the Significant Public Benefit Parole program. It has been used both to evacuate Iraqis in danger because of their ties to the United States and those facing life-threatening medical emergencies that require treatment outside of Iraq.

children under age 21). Actual numbers have lagged, however, with fewer than 600 applicants admitted in FY2008.

The *U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program* is the main way that refugees from around the world come to the United States. Prospective refugees are required to prove a well-founded fear of persecution. As of 2008, the U.S. government has deemed that Iraqis who are or were employed by the U.S. government, U.S.-headquartered media or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and entities closely associated with the U.S. mission that received U.S. government funding are qualified. Also qualified are those who are members of persecuted religious groups and those with close family in the United States. Other people in need may also be qualified. Everyone who is eligible for the SIV program is eligible for the refugee program, but the reverse is not true. Specifically, employees of nongovernmental entities and employees of contractors to any U.S. government agency other than the Defense Department are eligible only for the refugee program.⁵ The refugee program also allows some applicants, on a case-by-case basis, to bring a broader set of family members with them, including, for example, parents and married children.

Iraqis with ties to the United States can apply to either or both of these programs in Jordan, Syria, and other countries of first refuge after they have fled Iraq. As of summer 2008, they can also apply at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.⁶ However, processing, including investigations, interviews, and so forth, includes multiple U.S. government agencies and contractors and takes many months to complete. A new applicant for the refugee program through the U.S. Embassy might expect to wait two years. The wait for the SIV program is shorter, in some cases as short as nine weeks, because of recent increases in staffing and the use of electronic processing via the Internet. All processing, though, is delayed by various bottlenecks. For example, security screening that is supposed to take 30 days per case generally takes 150 days. Candidates, moreover, must also wait for Department of Homeland Security (DHS) interviews, which occur when DHS personnel visit the region.

Plans for evacuation: One of the greatest dangers for U.S.-affiliated Iraqis is that in the event of an emergency, the threat will increase, but U.S. capacity to assist will not. In line with this, 2008 legislation has called on the U.S. government to develop a database of Iraqis eligible for resettlement to the United States. According to most of those involved, the United States has access to the records needed for such a database. However, it has not yet been developed. U.S. Embassy personnel note that this has not been a problem to date, as most Iraqis seeking resettlement are able to provide the necessary documentation, but it would be a problem if processes needed to be rapidly sped up.

Other Groups at Risk

The MEK: The MEK's history of violent activity makes resettlement in the United States, Europe, or elsewhere unlikely. The United States has sought and received assurances from the Iraqi government that MEK members will receive humane treatment. The U.S. Embassy and U.S. government continue to engage the Iraqi government on these issues. However, there is concern among staff of both the U.S. government and nongovernmental organizations that

⁵ This has had a significant effect on the U.S. Agency for International Development, as the organization depends heavily on contractors.

⁶ The fact that many of those eligible already have access to the U.S. Embassy minimizes the security concerns this might otherwise pose.

the Iraqi government may subsequently turn them over to Iran. Indeed, the Iraqi government indicated in late 2009 that it intends to forcibly evict MEK members from Camp Ashraf/New Iraq (Londoño, 2009). Because of their history, MEK members fear violent reprisal if they return.⁷ MEK leaders and advocates also assert that residents at the camp are in danger even if they stay in Iraq, citing a July 2009 security force action at the camp that resulted in the arrest of 36 camp residents and reportedly the deaths of nine (Cody, 2009).

Refugees from other states: UNHCR has sought resettlement for the Palestinians and other refugees living in Iraq. As a result, a few have found new homes in Chile, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and Switzerland. The United States has agreed to take 1,350 displaced by fighting (Jordan, 2009). Many others, however, remain stranded in abysmal conditions. In late 2008, about 100 Sudanese refugees who had fled Baghdad due to attacks on their community and had lived in a desert camp for over two years were found homes in Romania. Such limited successes indicate that solutions are possible. They also underline the difficulties and long time-lines of resettlement.

For the thousands of Palestinians in Baghdad, resettlement en masse is unlikely. The United States is working with the Iraqi government to ensure that this Palestinian community receives new ID cards and to acquire assurances that their rights as residents of Iraq will be upheld. There remain concerns that such steps will be insufficient to ensure the long-term safety of this group.

Guest workers: As with the other groups at risk, the U.S. Embassy and government are aware of the relevant issues and concerns and discuss them with their Iraqi colleagues. Specifically, the U.S. government has sought to ensure that its own contractors do not violate U.S. laws and that all laborers they bring in are treated and compensated appropriately. DoD contractor KBR, for example, reportedly responded to an over-hiring problem by repatriating the unneeded employees with a few months' pay. Little has been done, however, on broader issues of ensuring the security of contractor personnel, regardless of who hired them. When U.S. forces depart, much of the leverage the United States has to help address concerns related to any contractors other than those directly reporting to the U.S. government will depart with them.

⁷ A few hundred have returned to Iran through a Red Cross/Red Crescent–sponsored process, and Iran has granted all but the top leadership amnesty, suggesting that a full return of all MEK members might be possible. However, it is understandable that MEK members would not be willing to accept these indicators as sufficient evidence of safety.

Displacement and U.S. Drawdown and Withdrawal

Even with political violence subsiding, Iraq's citizens continue to live in one of the most dangerous places in the world. Millions of Iraqis suffer in varying degrees from food insecurity, lack of medicine, poor water access, and/or the threat of violent crime (ReliefWeb, 2008; World Food Programme, 2008; O'Hanlon and Campbell, 2009). One result has been massive displacement. Over the past four decades, thousands of Iraqis have been displaced because of war or domestic policies. But numbers have grown exponentially since the 2003 Iraq war began, and particularly since 2006.

Today, as many as 4.7 million Iraqis have been forced from their homes. Up to 2 million are displaced outside of Iraq, including roughly 1 million in Syria and some 500,000 in Jordan.¹ Approximately 2 million are displaced within Iraq. This crisis surpasses the Palestinian displacements of 1948 and 1967 combined and affects one in seven Iraqis. It also disproportionately affects women and members of female-headed households, which bodes ill for Iraq's future, given the substantial evidence linking countries' successful economic development to equal education, opportunity, and economic power between the sexes.²

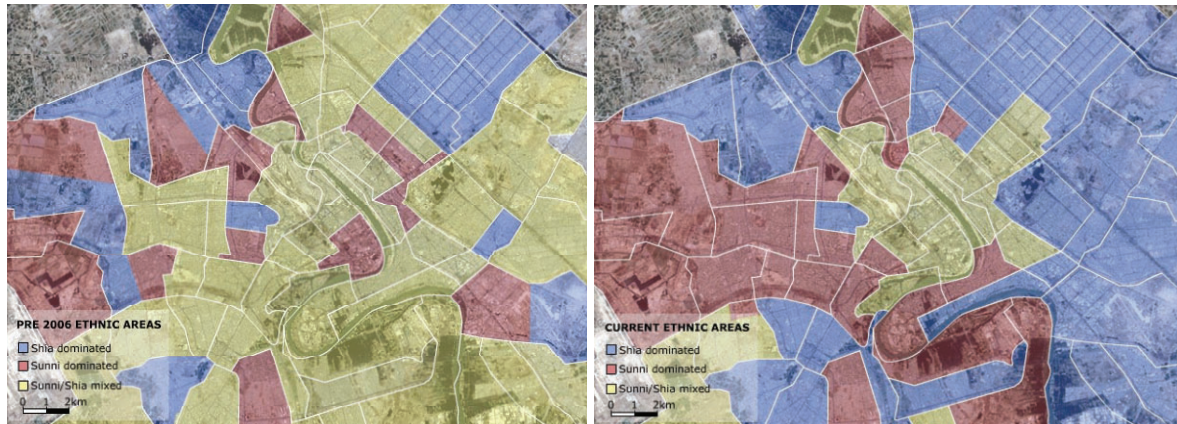
Displacement patterns in Iraq reflect the balkanization of the country: Minorities in formerly multisectional areas have either left the country or relocated to parts of Iraq where theirs is the majority group. (Figure 3.1 shows how Sunni and Shia have consolidated within Baghdad between 2006 and mid-2007.) Over two-thirds of the displaced are displaced from Baghdad alone, and many have relocated within that city.³ Of the Iraqi refugee population, more than half are Sunni. Conversely, over half of Iraqis displaced internally are Shia (Barnes, 2009; IOM, 2009a, 2009b).

¹ Refugee numbers are unreliable and difficult to estimate for many reasons, e.g., Iraqis who are in neighboring countries illegally fear discovery; not all estimates count Iraqis who left the country before 2003; some Iraqis travel to Jordan and Syria regularly for business and personal reasons, and it is difficult to disaggregate their numbers from those fleeing conflict; most Iraqis who have fled do not wish to be referred to as "refugees." Of note, in 2007, Fafo, a Norwegian nongovernmental organization, undertook a rigorous survey-based enumeration of the displaced Iraqi population in Jordan in cooperation with the Jordanian Department of Statistics. Although the survey results on their own put the number of Iraqis in Jordan at a mere 161,000, Fafo also considered a number of other sources and estimates and, in an effort to reconcile them all, arrived at a figure of between 450,000 and 500,000 Iraqi refugees in Jordan (Fafo, 2007). Prior to this, the Jordanian government had put refugee figures at between roughly 750,000 and 800,000. Fafo's estimate became the more accepted one, but controversy remains. These assessments underscore the wide variation in estimates of Iraq's displaced population, and that one should regard numbers through a cautionary lens.

² The literature on this topic is far-ranging. Good, brief overviews can be found in Buvinic and Morrison (2008, pp. 4–7) and World Bank (2007, pp. 107–111).

³ Post-2006, 90 percent of displacement took place in Baghdad, as well as Diyala and Ninewa; 85 percent of returns are located in these three areas as well (IOM, 2009b, 2009c).

Figure 3.1
Baghdad Ethnic/Sectarian Mix



SOURCE: BBC, 2009. Used with permission.

NOTE: "Current" numbers are from mid-2007.

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Although displacement rates have slowed as a result of diminished violence, both refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)⁴ face increasing danger of poverty (Fagen, 2007; Barnes, 2009; IOM, 2008, 2009b, 2009c). Thus far, the vast majority of Iraq's displaced population have avoided camps, but they have not been integrated in host communities. Rather, the displaced, whether living with friends and family, renting housing at reportedly unaffordable rates, or squatting, increasingly find their situations unsustainable.

In Syria and Jordan, Iraqi refugees cannot work legally.⁵ In Iraq, IDPs often have difficulty finding work and report limited access to the public distribution system (PDS) on which many Iraqis depend for food.⁶ Health care and education are consistent problems: Governorates are unable or unwilling to provide services to the displaced and at times seek to deny them entry (IOM, 2008). Many displaced are members of female-headed households, and women face particularly dire conditions within and outside Iraq.

Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and other states view the displacement crisis as temporary. Policies are based on the assumption that the displaced will return to their homes sooner rather than later. As a result, no efforts are made to integrate the displaced where they reside through employment, sustainable housing, and services.

Although the Iraqi government has attempted to provide incentives for return and many indicate a desire to do, returnee numbers remain very small. The vast majority of those who

⁴ We follow standard terminology based on international law: Refugees are those who are displaced outside of their home country, and IDPs are those displaced within it.

⁵ As neither country is a signatory of the Refugee Convention, they are not legally obligated to provide for Iraqis as refugees. However, the UNHCR has been able to work in both countries and to register some Iraqis and provide some services.

⁶ In part, this is because communities hosting IDPs have tremendous employment problems, but IDPs reportedly have particular difficulty. In regards to PDS, many IDPs do not register for PDS in a new location because they fear losing voting rights at home.

return are IDPs (MoDM/IOM, 2008; IOM, 2009a). Of refugees, few are returning or have clear plans to return.⁷

The displacement crisis will continue regardless of when or whether U.S. forces leave. However, drawdown and withdrawal can exacerbate risks, and they will result in less U.S. influence over relevant Iraqi policies.

Risks and Implications of Drawdown

Risks posed by displacement fall into four categories: (1) violence, (2) underdevelopment and long-term insecurity in Iraq, (3) regional implications, and (4) threats to U.S. interests. We examine each in turn.

Violence

If U.S. drawdown in Iraq is marked by increased conflict, it is likely to spur additional displacement, particularly from the few urban areas that remain somewhat confessionally or ethnically mixed. Violence would therefore accelerate the continuing sectarian segregation of Iraq.

While more violence will likely mean more IDPs, it may not mean more refugees. First, most of those with the resources and inclination to leave Iraq have already done so. Second, Jordan and Syria will not welcome additional refugees and have already imposed significant limits, Jordan having all but closed its doors.⁸

Efforts to return can also spark violence. At present, U.S. forces and oversight help ensure that Iraqi Security Forces protect and assist returnees who attempt return to their homes, even in ethnically mixed areas. With less U.S. oversight, Iraqi Security Forces may not be able or willing to respond to problems, for instance if Shia police are called upon to evict Shia families in favor of Sunni families in predominantly Shia neighborhoods. This will be worse if drawdown and withdrawal spur more returns (which we deem possible, although not in high numbers). Either way, clashes over property could escalate into interethnic violence. Meanwhile, refugees who return to Iraq but cannot sustainably reclaim their homes may become displaced again within Iraq.⁹

The areas of most concern after U.S. drawdown and withdrawal are therefore those which remain confessionally or ethnically mixed to some extent and those to which returns are likely. Baghdad, the importance of which to Iraq's security cannot be overstated, will be particularly vulnerable to further violence, as will Diyala and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) border regions. Kirkuk is very high-risk, as is eastern Mosul, specifically the areas of El Nabi, Al Jazaer, and Hay Al Risala. Problems may resurge in Ninewa, where minorities have recently fled intimidation, threat, and attack. In Diyala province, areas of past and potentially future

⁷ Four percent of respondents in a survey of refugees in Syria in 2008 planned to return to Iraq. The vast majority (89.5 percent) had no plans to return (UNHCR and IPSOS, 2008). Fafo found in 2007 that some 40 percent of Iraqis in Jordan surveyed wished to return, but of them, 95 percent said they would not do so before the security situation allowed for it and had no near-term (within one year) plans to do so (Fafo, 2007).

⁸ A Syrian official told a human rights group representative that if renewed violence spurred additional refugee flows, Syria would not allow additional Iraqis into its towns and cities and would instead set up refugee camps. This would, of course, create a host of additional humanitarian and security concerns.

⁹ There is evidence that this is already occurring among the few who have attempted return from abroad.

violence include Khanaqin, Baquba, Muqdadaya, Mandali, Al Abar, Al Khalis, Hay Askari, Khan Bani, and Sa'ad district. Because a large number of displaced have sought shelter in the KRG, particularly Dahuk and Erbil, non-ethnic Kurdish IDPs may be forced into secondary displacement if Arab-Kurd violence erupts. Overall, the KRG-Arab border regions have the highest potential for instability and conflict as U.S. forces withdraw.

Whether and how much violence occurs depends a great deal on the capacity and will of Iraqi Security Forces and on the actions of Iraq's various factions and their armed contingents. The fundamental question is just how critical U.S. presence has been to preventing conflict. The answer will only be clear once drawdown is well under way.

Underdevelopment and Long-Term Insecurity in Iraq

While it is possible that violence will be manageable, it is unlikely that large numbers of people will return to their former neighborhoods to recreate the prewar multiethnic fabric. Sectarian division of Iraq will be long-term. Moreover, even if displacement stops tomorrow, numbers will continue to grow through natural increase. This has three important implications. First, absent concerted efforts to integrate displaced populations into new homes and safeguard their lives and livelihoods, poverty among the displaced will worsen, disproportionately affecting women, female-headed households, and minorities. This bodes ill for Iraq's overall economic development, both because it affects so many, and because of the particular impact on women. As already noted, globally, female access to education and economic power is correlated with effective development, and lack thereof with the reverse.

Second, there is substantial concern that Iraq has lost the population that would ideally help the country rebuild politically and economically: Flight out of Iraq has been characterized by Iraq's Ambassador to the United States as a "flight of 'moderation'" (Sumaida'ie, 2008) as well as a brain drain comprising some of Iraq's most capable and most educated.¹⁰

Third, over the long term, displacement and related economic disparities pose significant dangers to Iraq's stability. Growing resentment over inability to recover property, combined with economic and political frustration, could stoke conflict. The lack of adequate mechanisms for recovering property, resolving competing claims, and implementing decisions is likely to be a destabilizing factor for years, perhaps decades, to come. Relatedly, the risks of radicalization among youth and future generations of both the displaced and host communities may also increase, exacerbated by poverty and limited access to education.

These development concerns exist regardless of U.S. force drawdown, but they are magnified by the fact that drawdown and withdrawal will limit the international community's capacity to respond as long as security remains a concern. Many of those involved in development assistance (to the displaced and Iraqis as a whole), particularly U.S. government and UN personnel (including UNHCR staff) are constrained by regulations that make them dependent on U.S. forces for security when they move within Iraq. With fewer forces, they will have far less freedom of movement, a problem already in evidence. Some NGOs who have limited contact with military personnel argue that the reduction in U.S. forces will have no impact and might actually ease their work. However, the capacity to oversee and assess that work on the part of the U.S. government and UN staff will be limited, at least in the mid-term.

¹⁰ A substantial literature arguing that a middle class is necessary for stable democracy is well summarized by Przeworski (1991) and applied to the Middle East by others (Glain, 2004; Salame, 1994; Sarsar, 2006; Robinson, 1993).

Regional Implications

Because mass refugee returns are unlikely, the displacement crisis also is likely to have a long-term impact on neighboring countries that host refugees. Here, as in Iraq, failure to integrate the displaced will have adverse effects on stability and development. Historical experience suggests that the potential for distrust, resentment, and conflict between refugees and host communities is significant. The record to date shows that resentment is already evident (Fagen, 2007).

Jordan is a special concern with regard to the refugee issue because of its turbulent history. The country's stability has long been buffeted by the exogenous shock of Palestinian refugees, spurred by chaos in neighboring states, making Jordan particularly sensitive to avoiding any parallel structures for Iraqi refugees that could create Iraqi statelets within the country. Iraqis in Jordan have also increasingly become a scapegoat for larger economic problems in the country such as the end of fuel subsidies, unemployment, inflation, and a housing shortage. Radicalization among marginalized and idle Iraqi youth is a further concern.

In Syria, the situation is potentially even more serious, as its Iraqi population is generally poorer than those fleeing to Jordan, and the state has even fewer resources to accommodate the largest Iraqi displaced population outside Iraq. Syria's initial opening of its borders to the refugees appears to have been driven largely by ideology, to boost its pan-Arab bona fides on the regional stage, with little regard for the economic consequences. But with refugees likely to stay put, the situation is becoming more dire. Eighty to ninety percent of Iraqi refugees have clustered in Damascus, resulting in overcrowding and increasingly unsanitary living conditions. As in Jordan, the Syrian populace has begun blaming Iraqis for the escalating costs of housing, goods, and services. Lower-class Syrians and those on fixed incomes are especially at risk. This is an important constituency for the regime, and the anger of large numbers of lower-class Syrians could lead to a future hardening of the country's policies toward Iraqis. Although sectarian tensions among Iraqi refugees in Syria have not surfaced, the Iraqi refugee population has changed the demographic composition of areas that were formerly Syrian. The suburb of Jarmana is a good example; the area was predominantly Syrian Druze and Christian before the Iraq war, but now has a distinctly Iraqi feel to it (one section is nicknamed "Fallujah"). Such developments suggest that this crisis will pose a long-term challenge for host countries and the broader region.

Impact on U.S. Interests

Because of its impact on Iraq's stability and development, the displacement crisis has the potential to undermine U.S. goals for a stable and secure Iraq in the near and long term. The potential disruption in the broader region, particularly Syria and Jordan, would also be greatly detrimental to U.S. foreign policy interests. Jordan is a particularly critical U.S. partner for a number of regional objectives (including counterterrorism cooperation), so challenges to Jordanian stability posed by a festering refugee problem should be of significant concern to U.S. policymakers. Although displacement itself is here to stay whether or not the United States draws down and/or withdraws, its effects may be exacerbated by force drawdowns if more violence erupts.

Finally, the humanitarian aspect of this crisis is consistently viewed around the world as a U.S. responsibility. Failure to respond not only runs the risk of generating ill will toward America, but creates a tremendous vacuum, as other states are unwilling to act if the United States does not lead. The United States has increasingly accepted this reality over the past year, accepting more Iraqi refugees itself and stepping up its funding of UNHCR appeals, although

resources continue to fall short of needs. Since the crisis will almost certainly continue, the United States can expect to be called on to play an important role in the coming years.

Continued displacement is a near certainty. The extent to which it results in violence and lasting problems depends on U.S., Iraqi, and international actions. Whether or not the United States accepts a moral responsibility to respond, it has practical and pragmatic reasons to try to mitigate the damage as its forces leave Iraq.

Conclusions: Mitigating Risks and Recommendations for U.S. Government Action

Time is limited, but much can still be done. Indeed, the drawdown of U.S. forces can potentially create opportunities for the United States to more effectively address this crisis and gain regional and international assistance to do so. In this context, the period of drawdown and withdrawal is something of a “golden hour” in which the United States can use what leverage it has to set more-effective plans and policies in motion for the longer term. It also can continue to lead by example, for few states will be willing to offer up resources and effort if the United States does not.

As the United States continues to draw down and prepares to eventually withdraw forces from Iraq, it must consider the impact on security for particularly vulnerable groups and define mechanisms to minimize dangers and adverse effects. Regardless of how the security situation evolves in the years to come, these challenges will remain relevant, and it is in U.S. interests to take steps to address them.

A number of specific actions and general approaches can help ensure the protection of particularly endangered populations, mitigate the destabilizing effects of mass displacement, and help prevent the chronic underdevelopment that may otherwise result. Key to all of them are (1) the need to enable rapid action where it is needed to help the most vulnerable and (2) a sustained, holistic view of the longer-term problems and their solutions.

Lowering the Risk of Violence

Where practicable and useful, adapt troop withdrawals to ensure longest presence where violence is most likely. It is not clear that higher likelihood of violence is correlated with troop drawdown and withdrawal in a general sense. However, maintaining U.S. forces and some oversight in areas where there remain substantial ethnically mixed populations, and thus higher risk of violence, may make sense. This means maintaining forces longer in Baghdad, Diyala, and along the border of the KRG.

Improve security for the vulnerable and those at risk of deportation in Iraq. The U.S. government has been working with the Iraqi government to receive assurances of the security of key groups. This is not enough for the long term. The United States must consider what more can be done and what repercussions the Iraqi government might face if it fails to protect the most vulnerable. Working with key international actors and organizations to ensure progression of this dialogue is key.

There is no way to accurately predict the impact of the timing of drawdown and withdrawal on this situation. The key variable is whether the government of Iraq will be willing and able to take on responsibility for the security of these groups in an effective way. While there may be a relationship between timing and this variable, that relationship is not clear, and may not be clear until drawdown is well under way.

Encourage the Iraqi government to establish mechanisms to enable Iraqis to recover their property. As mentioned, this is likely to emerge as a major source of tension as those who want to return to their homes do so in increasing numbers. If managed well, however, it need not spark conflict. A successful approach would be one in which the Iraqi government makes it publicly clear that all rights to property will be upheld, and that those who are currently displaced will not be penalized for having left their homes. The United States and the international community should assist the Iraqi government in implementing mechanisms to recover property or obtain compensation when restitution is not possible. Simple, effective procedures, preferably administrative ones that do not clog up the judicial system, that are well publicized and accessible to all Iraqis, will be most effective. Informal mechanisms of dispute resolution may also be of value when they are acceptable to the parties involved, and should, in those cases, be supported.

Making Resettlement Outside of Iraq Viable for Those Who Need It

Ensure the White House–level Refugee Coordinator can be effective. Legislation passed in 2008 required the appointment of a White House–level Refugee Coordinator who is responsible for addressing the range of refugee issues, including those discussed in this paper. In August 2009, Samantha Power, Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights at the National Security Council, was given the role of coordinating U.S. government policy relating to Iraq’s displaced, including both refugees and IDPs. Ensuring that Power has sufficient resources to do this job effectively and that the organizations she coordinates see these programs as priorities is crucial. Power should, among other things, take on the substantial task of ensuring that plans and mechanisms are in place before U.S. forces leave because a scramble for solutions will mean lost lives.

Accept more refugees to the United States and improve refugee processing. Over the past year, the United States has drastically increased the numbers of Iraqis admitted to the United States as refugees (although U.S. admissions continue to lag far behind the numbers of Iraqis admitted to Sweden).¹ These numbers, however, continue to fall far short of UNHCR referrals (which focus on people particularly qualified for U.S. resettlement due to ties to the United States).²

¹ Specifically, the numbers rose from the 66–202 Iraqi refugees admitted each year from FY2004–FY2006 to the 1,608 admitted in FY2007, and the 13,823 admitted in FY2008. Nine months into FY2009, 13,537 people have been admitted (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Office of Admissions, Refugee Processing Center, 2009).

² As of October 31, 2008, 34,793 people had been referred by UNHCR to the United States. Note that not all of the U.S. admissions are UNHCR referrals, as refugee applicants to the U.S. are not obligated to go through UNHCR (UNHCR, 2007, 2008).

Processing, not absorption capacity, is the bottleneck. U.S. refugee resettlement agencies have the capacity to resettle far more if asked and resourced to do so. Agencies involved in resettlement (such as DHS, whose staff travel to the region to conduct interviews, and the intelligence community, which carries out screenings) should be required to make this process a priority and to demonstrate that they have done so by meeting benchmarks and targets—and they should also be given the resources they need to do so. Processing at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad for Iraqis with U.S. ties should be a particular focus, as discussed under “Enabling Those in Immediate Danger to Reach Safety.”

Pursue and fund creative resettlement solutions. Many countries could benefit greatly from the educated and capable population presented by Iraqi refugees. Those that are not traditional resettlement countries³ lack institutions, mechanisms, and resources for accepting and integrating new residents. The United States can and should work with UNHCR and others to channel funding and technical assistance that can make it possible for willing countries in the Middle East and elsewhere to welcome Iraqis in a substantial win-win for all involved.

Enabling Those in Immediate Danger to Reach Safety

Resettle Iraq-based refugees of non-Iraqi origin. The United States should work with UNHCR and others to ensure that groups such as the Palestinians, who are at particular risk, can find new homes, either in the United States, which, as noted, has the capacity to absorb a great many people each year, or elsewhere. Recent progress is heartening, but far from sufficient to meet the continued need. Many of the recommendations on improving refugee processing and seeking creative alternatives for resettlement, discussed elsewhere in this section, apply to these populations as well.

Prepare for the evacuation of those who may need it. In the context of the current Iraq war, nations such as Poland, Denmark, and the UK have successfully evacuated their local staff. In its own recent history, the United States has consistently demonstrated an ability to evacuate tens of thousands of people and process them for resettlement.⁴ Developing an effective database and evacuation plans, as well as resettlement options, in the United States and elsewhere, would enable the rapid and effective evacuation of large numbers of people if needed. Evacuation itself is not difficult if planning and preparation are undertaken in advance. People are much easier to move, after all, than equipment. The Center for American Progress has recently

³ Traditional resettlement countries are those with substantial refugee resettlement programs and institutions in place. They include Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. Smaller programs exist in Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Iceland, Ireland, Spain, and the UK. Other countries, such as Japan, are developing their capacity.

⁴ The United States used airlifts to third countries and other mechanisms in Vietnam, Kosovo, and, indeed, to evacuate ethnic Kurds from Iraq in 1996. One million Vietnamese came to the United States this way, over 100,000 of them between May and December of 1975 alone. Kosovar evacuees were processed at Fort Dix, New Jersey; Vietnamese and Kurdish evacuees were processed in Guam. Those who could not be resettled in the United States were generally sent to third countries.

published an excellent report laying out options for such an evacuation (Ondiak and Katulis, 2009).

Evacuation planning can assist not only U.S.-affiliated Iraqis but also other at-risk groups if conditions worsen for them. This would not necessarily require resettling them all in the United States, but rather simply using U.S. capacity to help ensure their survival. Contingency plans should also consider, with the aid of international organizations such as UNHCR, how such evacuations might be effectively implemented in concert with other organizations. Failure to assist those in need would be a humanitarian disaster with long-term repercussions for the region and the United States.

Improve refugee processing in Baghdad. The recommendations for improving processing, outlined previously, are crucial to assisting the particularly vulnerable, especially those with U.S. ties. In addition, the United States should increase staff and capacity for refugee and SIV processing at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. Current staff say that they could substantially increase their throughput with just a few more personnel. They should be given resources appropriate to do so.

Treating Displacement and Its Effects as a Regional Issue

Push for more regional funding. The United States should make it a priority to involve regional states, particularly Saudi Arabia and other wealthy Gulf states, in responding to this crisis. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states can offer direct financial support to the Jordanian government for this purpose. For Saudi Arabia, particularly, this can help its global image and aspirations to Sunni leadership. Because the GCC will not be willing to provide this sort of direct assistance to Syria, the United States should also encourage sizable financial contributions through UNHCR and other international organizations. That way, the funds can be justified as helping all fellow Muslims while avoiding support to less-than-friendly governments.

Work with Syria bilaterally and through international partners. Syria has been generous and hosts more Iraqi refugees than any other state. It reports significant strain on its economy as a result. Yet, Jordan, which hosts fewer refugees, has received the bulk of assistance. The United States should work cooperatively with Syria and UNHCR to raise additional funds and facilitate the ability of the Syrian government to improve its social services. This can be a helpful first step toward rebuilding a cooperative relationship with Syria, which could also improve the prospects for long-term stability in Iraq and the region and reduce Syrian incentives to intervene in Iraq in ways that counter U.S. interests.

Supporting Sustainable and Effective Development

Ensure that troop withdrawals do not mean that development and humanitarian efforts in Iraq are curtailed. In concert with the government of Iraq, the U.S. government should work with the UN and others to adapt procedures and define mechanisms to make sure that civilian personnel are and remain able to do their work. Options include lowering and adjust-

ing security requirements, relying on the Iraqi Security Forces for security, hiring private security, etc. NGOs and contractors should be surveyed to establish what support they do and do not find helpful. It is especially imperative that progress on this issue as it affects U.S. government and United Nations staff be made quickly.

Continue to fund and assist humanitarian response within and outside Iraq at high levels.

U.S. leadership is critical to reach and maintain goals. If the United States does not make this issue a priority, and devote to it appropriate financial and policy resources, it is highly unlikely that others will do so. The consistent recent increases in resourcing and attention are only the first steps. Because responding to these issues is in the U.S. interest, the United States must be prepared to remain at the forefront of that response.

Work with countries of first refuge and the Iraqi government to emphasize durable solutions, rather than return.

Jordan, Syria, and other countries fear the implications of a large Iraqi diaspora in their midst in the long term. Communities within Iraq that host large numbers of IDPs are also unwilling to accept the displaced as permanent residents. For both refugees and IDPs, the government of Iraq offers incentives for return, but provides no assistance to the displaced or the Iraqi communities that host them. The United States must use its influence and assistance, through both bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, to help countries hosting Iraq's displaced to find realistic ways forward. Assistance with both finding resettlement alternatives abroad and managing the resource and capacity strains caused by displacement would be welcome and could serve as a means of engaging Syria and supporting Jordan and others. In Iraq, the United States should work with the Iraqi government to provide support not only to the displaced themselves, but also to communities hosting them, creating incentives for effective integration.

Encourage funding and aid efforts by the government of Iraq. The Iraqi government has repeatedly pledged to make displacement issues a priority. The Iraqi government must be encouraged to back this with resources and action. The United States should also continue to encourage the Iraqi government to provide funds to countries of first refuge (a small amount has been disbursed to Jordan, through the UNHCR, but far more could be done). The Iraqi government must also effectively provide for communities hosting large numbers of displaced with allocations of funding for housing, food, education, social services, and other support.

Continue to work with the government of Iraq to build capacity to manage displacement.

Iraq's Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) will be the key actor in providing for the displaced and facilitating returns, both on the national and provincial/local levels. Consequently, the United States, as well as other international actors, should continue to work in concert with the MoDM to help build its capacity to develop and implement effective policies to minimize the damage displacement causes. This includes property dispute resolution mechanisms (ideally in a community framework), development assistance, and so forth. The displacement issue must be a primary factor in Iraq's development agenda, or that agenda will fail.

Recognize the long-term nature of the problem and establish mechanisms for international involvement and oversight. The U.S. government, UNHCR, and other key actors

must recognize the displacement crisis for what it is: a long-term development challenge for Iraq and the region. This means a long-term assistance and oversight role, with appropriate incentives, in the context of overall planning for Iraq's development. It is critical to establish the mechanisms to do this sooner rather than later, to ensure that the government of Iraq is aware of both challenges and expectations before U.S. forces are gone. The United States and the international community must then hold Iraq to its commitments and promises through conditionality and incentives.

Ensure that development approaches are holistic and reflect ethnic and gender realities and needs. No less important than understanding the long-term nature of the problem is ensuring that development efforts take into account its specific characteristics. The critical need to reverse the disempowerment and particular vulnerabilities of women and girls, through assistance focused on ensuring equal opportunity, must be a priority of aid efforts. Similarly, aid should recognize new ethnic and sectarian realities, and work with the Iraqi government to define realistic priorities to ensure equal treatment and opportunity for all groups.

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