

Iraq 2012: What Can it Look Like?
How Do We Get There?
Opening Statement
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I welcome our witnesses.

In some ways, this session is the most important we will have during these two weeks of hearings on Iraq. Before the war began, this Committee warned that the failure to plan and define realistic objectives in Iraq would cause us to pay a heavy price.

We cannot continue to make it up as we go along. We must mark a direction on our strategic compass -- and deliberately move in that direction.

Ironically, despite all the debate in Washington and beyond about our Iraq policy, there is one premise just about everyone shares: lasting stability will come to Iraq only through a political settlement among its warring factions. So the single most important question you would think we would be debating is this: what political arrangements might Iraqis agree to and what are the building blocks to achieve them?

Yet we almost never ask ourselves those questions. Today we will.

We've asked each of you to think ahead: in a reasonable, best case scenario, what might Iraq look like politically four years from now, in 2012, and what policies should we pursue now -- inside Iraq, in the region and beyond -- to help Iraq get there?

My own view, as my colleagues know all too well, is this: absent an occupation we cannot sustain or the return of a dictator we cannot want, Iraq will not be governed from the center at this point in its history. I believe Iraq's best chance to remain unified and stable is through a decentralized system of government that devolves considerable power to the local and regional levels, but that has a real, identifiable, and effective central government. In a word: federalism.

We cannot impose this or any other solution on Iraqis – and we don't have to because federalism is enshrined in the Iraqi constitution. And it is a vision my colleagues in the Senate and House have endorsed and put into our law. I am not wedded to my plan. If there is a better way to meet our objective of leaving Iraq without leaving chaos behind, I will support it.

As important as defining the objective is how we get there. It is critical, in my view, that we establish a process that gets Iraq's neighbors and the world's major powers much more actively involved in helping Iraqis arrive at a political accommodation. Our influence in Iraq is a waning asset. The influence of Iraq's neighbors and the major powers is a wasted asset.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses, who have given great thought to a vision of the future Iraqis might share and how the international community can help them realize it.

Professor Carole O'Leary is Program Director and Scholar in Residence at the Center for Global Peace at American University. Dr. Dawn Brancati is a Fellow at the Institute of Quantitative Social Studies at Harvard University. Dr.

Gregory Gause is an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Vermont. Dr. Terrence Kelly is Senior Operations Researcher at RAND Corporation. And Ambassador Carlos Pascual is Vice President and Director of Foreign Policy at Brookings Institution.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for being here.

Senator Lugar.