

**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**Chairman Richard G. Lugar**  
**Opening Statement for**  
**Hearing on Iraq Policy**  
**October 19, 2005**

The Committee on Foreign Relations is pleased to welcome Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Today we will continue our ongoing oversight of U.S. policy towards Iraq.

We are engaged in a difficult mission in Iraq, and the President and Congress must be clear with the American people about the stakes involved and the difficulties yet to come. Almost 2,000 heroic Americans have died in Iraq during the past two and a half years. During the insurgency, thousands of Iraqi Muslims have been killed by other Muslims. Each day, the Iraqi people are living with the fear caused by these tragic and senseless acts of violence, but they continue to show their resilience.

This is the 30<sup>th</sup> full committee hearing on Iraq held by the Foreign Relations Committee since January 2003. In addition, we have held numerous other hearings that have partially touched on the subject of Iraq. We have maintained this focus because success in Iraq is critical to U.S. national security. Permanent instability or civil war in Iraq could set back American interests in the Middle East for a generation, increasing anti-Americanism, multiplying the threats from tyrants and terrorists, and reducing our credibility.

In late July our Committee held a series of three hearings on Iraq. Our intent in these hearings was to go beyond describing conditions in Iraq or highlighting strategies that have not worked. Our goal was to systematically examine options for improving security, advancing political development, and demonstrating economic progress in Iraq. With the help of nine distinguished experts, we considered whether changes in military tactics, alliance strategy, resource allocations, Iraqi military training, or other factors should be adopted. We asked whether there are ways to overcome ethnic and sectarian divisions that would produce a workable, if imperfect, consensus on the structure of Iraq's government.

The experts, while expressing qualified optimism on some issues, testified that there are few easy answers in Iraq. The insurgents and terrorists continue violent attacks intended to incite internal ethnic and religious conflict and provoke a civil war among Iraqis. Progress in training and equipping Iraqi forces is painstaking work that does not lend itself to shortcuts. Some of Iraq's neighbors, particularly Syria and Iran, are interfering in Iraq for their own purposes. Any final political settlement will have to address thorny issues such as who controls oil revenues, who runs the court system, who leads the security forces, and who has the power to tax.

Today's hearing provides the Committee with a chance to engage Secretary Rice on many of these subjects, as well as discuss the Constitutional referendum that has just occurred in Iraq.

This past weekend, millions of Iraqis voted to pass a Constitution. The apparent success of the vote was a welcome development, although it does not solve the fundamental political problem of ethnic and sectarian fragmentation. A majority of Sunnis opposed the Constitution, and voters in two Sunni-dominated provinces overwhelmingly rejected the document. Thus, even as passage of the Constitution allows elections for a new government to go forward in December, the larger hope of reaching a political settlement between all the major ethnic groups has not been realized. Further, we

cannot assume that the establishment of democratic institutions in Iraq in the short term will yield a corresponding diminishment in the insurgency.

The Constitution and Iraqi attitudes toward it reflect the divisions within society. The Kurds and the Shiites who have dominated the drafting of the Constitution have opted for a weak central government structure that maximizes their autonomy in the regions where they predominate. Meanwhile, most Sunnis reject such an arrangement as leaving them with few resources and little power. These perceived inequities fuel the insurgency by Sunni rejectionists and threaten civil conflict that could mean the permanent division of Iraq.

It has become common in discussions of Iraq to say that without security little can be achieved politically or economically. But it is also important to understand that there is no purely military solution in Iraq. Success depends on establishing a political process that gives all the major ethnic groups a stake in the government. It is notable that insurgent attacks in some Sunni areas were intentionally suspended during the voting to allow Sunni voters to go to the polls in the hope of defeating the Constitution at the ballot box. This demonstrated that a substantial element of the insurgency is focused on the political outcome in Iraq, not merely on nihilistic terrorist philosophies.

For the next two months, until the December elections, the task before the Coalition is convincing the Sunni minority to participate in the process despite their distrust of the Constitution. To this end we must also prevail on the Shiites and Kurds to be flexible, even though they already have much of what they want in the current Constitution. We appreciate the creativity and energy that Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad has applied to these objectives in the run up to the vote last weekend, and we are eager to hear from Secretary Rice if more can be done to support his efforts.

The December elections stand as a rallying point for Iraqis who want to make the political process work. The election of a parliament offers the prospect of tangible political power for the Sunnis, while demonstrating to all Iraqis that the benefits of political self-determination have arrived. During this period we must explore whether we can convince disaffected Sunnis, including the elements of the insurgency that are focused on a rational political outcome, to negotiate or otherwise replace violence with political means.

As we pursue these issues, we should recognize that most Americans are focused on an exit strategy in Iraq. Even if withdrawal timelines are deemed unwise because they might provide a strategic advantage to the insurgency, the American people need to more fully understand the basis upon which our troops are likely to come home. That is part of the reason why this Committee has spent a great deal of time examining the training of Iraqi forces and the progress of the Iraqi political process -- two elements that can lead to short-term improvements in Iraq and a drawdown of American troops.

The American people also need realistic and clear assessments of our progress in Iraq, even when the indicators are sobering. Beyond Iraq, they need more information about how the outcome in Iraq relates to U.S. national security and the broader war on terrorism. They also need to see an all-out diplomatic effort aimed at addressing regional issues, including maintaining the momentum of the Arab-Israeli peace process.

These are all vitally important issues to America's foreign policy. We are grateful to Secretary Rice for joining us today, and we look forward to an enlightening discussion.

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