

'commonalities' that suggested 'a transition plan that could stop most of the guerrilla attacks, allow the introduction of UN civilian and military forces, and facilitate the withdrawal of large numbers of American troops.' <<http://tinyurl.com/869et>>

Among the commonalities was this: 'Give the United Nations overall control of the Iraqi transition process, even though not all attacks will cease. Baathists insist that the United Nations is not the enemy, despite the terrorist bombings in August and September that caused it to flee the country. "If the United Nations is acting by itself, and not just on behalf of the Americans, it will be welcomed," said a former high-ranking Foreign Ministry official. "When I see a blue helmet, it's totally different from seeing an American helmet, even psychologically. If the United Nations took over from the Americans, it would create a new atmosphere.'" <<http://tinyurl.com/869et>>

THE UN'S FLAWS

The UN's record in Iraq since the war is awful, as is admitted by Salim Lone, former UN Communications Director in Baghdad. <tinyurl.com/9mha8> **The UN is not a panacea.** However, as Lone argues, 'The only way to undercut the insurgency is through a political, not military, solution, and to negotiate a complete political and military handover to a UN mission with a strong Arab and Muslim component,' a force unmistakably free from US-UK control. <tinyurl.com/4td76>

UN inspectors defied the US drive to war. With support from the international community, UN troops and diplomats can defy US domination, and help Iraq to find its own way to independence. If we can force the US out of Iraq, we can force the US out of a UN mission to Iraq.

LAST WORD

Juan Cole: 'My main point was to try to find a progressive/centrist approach to Iraq that avoided the two extremes of a) agreeing with the Bushies that we should stay "until the mission is accomplished" or b) simple-mindedly chanting "bring the troops home" with no thought for the world-class disaster that might befall us from the resulting power vacuum.' <<http://tinyurl.com/9pv4t>>

IRAQ: US/UK OUT, UN IN

Insurgents And Experts Favour UN Troops JNV Anti-War Briefing 83 (26 July 2005)

US-UK OUT

The US policy of attacking any potential threat to its troops causes massive civilian casualties. An Oct. 2003 Human Rights Watch report found 'a pattern by U.S. forces of **over-aggressive tactics, indiscriminate shooting in residential areas** and a **quick reliance on lethal force.**' <<http://tinyurl.com/4mzyt>> This pattern continues to this day, and is the major driver of the Iraqi insurgency.

Given the US-UK role in generating violence in Iraq the starting point for discussion must be **US-UK withdrawal from Iraq.**

THE FT: A STRUCTURED WITHDRAWAL

The *Financial Times* has proposed one way out of Iraq: 'The core question to be addressed is this: **is the continuing presence of US military forces in Iraq part of the solution or part of the problem?** As occupying power, the US bears responsibility for Iraq under international law, and is duty-bound to try to leave it in better shape than it found it. But **there is no sign of that happening.**'

'The time has therefore come to consider whether **a structured withdrawal of US and remaining allied troops**, in tandem with a workable handover of security to Iraqi forces and a legitimate and inclusive political process, can chart a path out of the current chaos.'

'... Until eventual withdrawal, there would have to be **a policy of military restraint**, imposed above all on those US commanders who have operated without reference to their own superiors, let alone the notionally sovereign Iraqi government. [There also needs to be] **an amnesty**, which should help Iraqi authorities acquire the

legitimacy to crush jihadist and other hold-outs. Ideally, the US would accompany withdrawal by stating it has **no intention of establishing bases** in Iraq, and instead wishes to facilitate regional security agreements.’ (FT, 10 Sept. 2004 <<http://tinyurl.com/5h4ce>>)

JUAN COLE: THE UN OPTION

Juan Cole, perhaps the world’s most respected commentator on Iraq, recently put forward a complementary proposal. The US-led forces cannot defeat the insurgency; their actions fuel the insurgency; and Iraq is coming closer to civil war. However, ‘If the US drew down its troop strength in Iraq too rapidly, the guerrillas would simply kill the new political class and stabilizing figures such as Grand Ayatollah Sistani. Although US forces have arguably done more harm than good in many Sunni Arab areas, they have prevented set-piece battles from being staged by ethnic militias, and they have prevented a number of attempted assassinations.’

His solution? **‘In an ideal world, the United States would relinquish Iraq to a United Nations military command, and the world would pony up the troops needed to establish order in the country in return for Iraqi good will in post-war contract bids.’** (25 May 2005 <<http://tinyurl.com/dukcd>>)

We should note two aspects of the Cole Plan: firstly, this is ‘a **peace-enforcing**, not a peace-keeping, force. That is, its rules of engagement should allow robust military operations to prevent the parties from massacring one another, and UN troops should always be permitted to defend themselves resolutely if attacked.’ Secondly, Juan Cole is willing to accept ‘perhaps, one or two remaining US divisions’ in this force—**JNV does not accept such a possibility** for the reasons given above. (Cole Plan <<http://tinyurl.com/adu3s>>)

ACCEPTABLE TO THE IRAQIS?

This military presence should be accompanied by a UN political mission designed to support Iraqi parties in reaching agreement on a new political structure. Cole writes: ‘All Iraqis would see the United Nations as having more legitimacy than the United States. The UN would be much more likely to be able to negotiate a settlement among the Sunnis and Shiites than is the US.’

He asks: ‘Would the Iraqi government accept a United Nations military mission? Almost certainly. Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani has often attempted to involve the UN, and would welcome such a development. The Sunni Arabs would also much prefer to deal with the UN than with the US.’

THE PEOPLE ARE AGNOSTIC

A national ORI poll of Iraq in March 2004, and a six-city IIACSS poll in May 2004, found little confidence in the UN (though dramatically more than in the occupation forces).

By June 2004, however, a national ORI poll found 58 per cent expressing confidence in the UN, and 42 per cent not. The UN came out just ahead of the new Iraqi ministries, and way ahead of Iraqi political parties. 42 per cent of those polled favoured a UN transitional government of Iraq, and 58 per cent did not. (Polls collated by Iraq Analysis Group <<http://tinyurl.com/cay38>>)

The evidence from mid-2004, then, is that there is quite possibly majority support for the UN; certainly not wholehearted rejection.

No publicly-available poll, however, has asked the key question: would you rather Iraq was under a US-UK occupation, a UN peace-enforcing mission/transitional administration, or just be left alone.

SHIA INSURGENTS PREFER THE UN

As negotiations broke down before the US onslaught on Najaf, a spokesperson for Muqtada al-Sadr called for UN troops to replace US troops: ‘We prefer the UN to the [US-led] occupation forces, because Iraq is a member of the United Nations,’ Sheikh Ahmed al-Shaibani said. ‘There is a big difference between the blue helmets [of UN troops] and the occupation troops.’ <<http://tinyurl.com/cm7z7>>

SUNNI INSURGENTS PREFER THE UN

In December 2003, US journalist Robert Collier interviewed ‘dozens of Shiite leaders, Sunni clerics, and Baathists of all levels in Baghdad and the nearby cities of Falluja, Samarra, and Sadr City’: ‘I asked them two simple questions: **What would stop the rebellion?** And what would persuade them and the guerrillas to give some breathing space to a new foreign coalition?’ Collier found differences, but also