



# PROJECT *on* Middle East Democracy

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## Hearing of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations “Iraq in 2012: What Does it Look Like and How do We Get There?”

419 Dirksen Senate Building, 3 April 2008, 9:30 AM

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing on what Iraq could look like in 2012 and how we get there. The hearing featured the following witnesses: **Dr. Carole O’Leary**, Program Director, Scholar in Residence, Center for Global Peace, American University; **Dr. Dawn Brancati**, Fellow, Institute of Quantitative Social Studies, Harvard University; **The Honorable Carlos Pascual**, Vice President, Director of Foreign Policy, Brookings Institution; **Dr. F. Gregory Gause, III**, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Vermont; and **Dr. Terrence K. Kelly**, Senior Operations Researcher, RAND Corporation

**Chairman Joseph R. Biden (D-DE)** began his opening remarks by asking, “**what’s the endgame? What do we want this country to look like?**” He argued that the United States is at a potential turning point where we can possibly change/adopt a strategy to change the course of events. “If the best-case scenario is that we keep worse things from happening, that may be a policy strategy, but it will not sell in a democracy.” Biden felt that the U.S. cannot continue to make this up as we go along, and instead **lasting stability will come in Iraq only with political settlements with the various factions**. He remarked that the political arrangements Iraqis are willing to accept is a lacking topic in policy debate. Biden proposed his own strategy for Iraq, arguing that **Iraq’s best path is decentralized government encompassed in federalism**, especially considering federalism is enshrined in the Iraqis’ constitution.

**Chairman Dick Lugar (R-IN)** felt it was important to analyze how Iraq impacts the U.S.’s geo-strategic importance in the Middle East.

**Dr. Carole O’Leary** started her testimony with several key recommendations that she feels can build a stable, federal, and democratizing Iraq: **Gradualism is the way forward to establish federal and good governance**; The term “partition” is not helpful, perhaps even detrimental, and makes Iraqis suspicious of power sharing and decentralization; **the U.S. should support workshops with international experts and Arab Iraqis on federal systems across the globe to teach idea of federalism**. Emphasis should be placed on the United Arab Emirates example of federalism; Should distribute resources in the tribal context, not an ethnic one; “Reconciliation” has been a divisive term and thus O’Leary recommended to drop the term; **Strategic planning for capacity building is critical**.

**Dr. Dawn Brancati** discussed the need for a viable federal system. She argued that federalism is not about partitioning. She claimed **decentralization reduces intra-state conflicts**, etc. While she highlighted that federalism is not a common practice in the Middle East, she felt that instilling federalism must be the first step for Iraqis after the war is over.

**Dr. Terrence K. Kelly** argued that the conflict in Iraq is not likely to resolve soon and that **reconciliation is at least a generation away**. Kelly argued that the U.S. is trying to do too much in Iraq. He feels that we “must ask what we must do, not what we would like to do.” Violence must be controlled and a modus vivendi is needed. Kelly feels the U.S. should work with Iran and other neighbors to achieve the best outcome in creating provinces. We must put US interests first. Kelly believes **Iraqi political leaders and foundations will play more of an important role in the long-term than military forces**.

**Dr. F. Gregory Gause, III** outlined 5 elements to an optimistic and plausible, but what he felt is unlikely scenario: the Iraqi government remains loosely united; **Arab-Sunni awakenings are integrated into the state structure through elections, etc; parliamentary and electoral alliances have to cross sectarian divides; and the Iraqi central government has to control oil profits**. In presenting what he felt are the 3 regional powers in the region, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran, he argued that the most important regional question is, can Saudi Arabia and Iran find a regional arrangement? Gause feels it is imperative to understand the U.S.-Iran relationship, and how it requires engagement. He feels **engagement could strengthen those in Iran who are asking for moderate regional goals**.

**The Honorable Carlos Pascual** argued that the failure of American policy in Iraq provides an untenable situation. He feels the **core issues are an understanding of federal-regional issues, an understanding of sharing of oil revenues, militias and their roles must be formalized, an understanding of the protection of minority rights, the need to work out provisions for political inclusion, and understanding of Kirkuk and Kurdish areas to provide them independence but inclusion**. Pascual feels political settlement is very critical right now for sustaining reductions in political violence. He also is a proponent of bringing in the United Nations to be an arbiter.

To start of the question-and-answer period, Senator Lugar asked about the level of U.S. presence sustained over time, specifically how many people are required and how do we do this with a limited number of people? Carlos Pascual responded by saying 50,000 troops of an international multinational force would be needed by 2012, once political agreement is ensured. Pascual continued with the argument that the **U.S. needs to refocus its attention on political progress that in turn dictates what is a viable and sustainable troop level**. He feels that we find ourselves at a juncture point. Lugar then asked, how do we know international forces will agree to this multinational force, to which Pascual responded by saying many countries are asking for a signal of change in the political progress to ensure investment in troops/money.

Senator Biden asked Carlos Pascual about the fact that the U.S. doesn't have a lot of credibility in the region and with European/Asian allies, so how do we put this multinational force together? Pascual argued that there is an indication of U.N. willingness to be the broker, and thus the U.S. has to be willing to engage with the U.N. on this issue.

Senator Biden asked Gregory Gause about whether the U.S. should be doing more through to alleviate the high costs of the refugee burden. Gause argued that the Jordanians are overburdened and thus they need money from us. Also, while the U.S. is not friendly to Syria, Syria is the recipient of the vast bulk of Iraqi refugees and thus we need to throw money to them through the U.N.