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THE NEED FOR A UNITED NATIONS' SECURITY ROLE IN IRAQ

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In the aftermath of the U.S. intervention in Iraq, some unilateralists daydreamed about a decline or even collapse of the United Nations' role in helping provide for global security. Force had been used without the blessing of a second Security Council Resolution, and the new concept of a "coalition of the willing" seemed to offer promise in maximizing U.S. latitude for dealing with international problems. The UN had become unnecessary, and enemies of that institution saw the death throes of Saddam Hussein's regime as fatal to the UN's continued existence or at least relevance. "United they fall" in the words of one anti-UN ideologue viewing the way as clear for future attacks on Syria, Iran, Lebanon's Hizballah, and who knows where else, all conducted outside of the UN framework.

That was then, and how things have changed. The feel-good moment of Saddam's statue coming down in Baghdad is over, and the hard work of rehabilitating Iraq's shattered security, economic, and governance situation appears before us. In this task, the coalition of the willing approach isn't working well because there are not enough of the willing to help us out. Ever faithful Britain is with us, and Poland, which fears a revived Russia some day, is also there. Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain are also helping with notable numbers of troops. Beyond that, the United States can count mostly on small countries with contributions limited to small forces requiring U.S. funding.

The problem for unilateralists is that the UN is genuinely popular with large numbers of countries in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, and any decision to circumvent it leaves us with fewer allies than we need for this challenge. Many leaders of important countries have stated that they are willing to participate in Iraqi security operations, but only if a new Security Council Resolution creates a framework for them to do so. Nations that might be approached about participation under a UN framework include India, Pakistan, France, Germany, Russia, Egypt, Bangladesh, and others. With the help of these nations, our own troops will not have to be stretched so very thin.

If U.N.-sponsored troops do join us in Iraq, they will also have certain key advantages over our own forces in performing peacekeeping duties. Many middle and small powers have militaries that are extensively trained in peacekeeping and have vast experience in peace operations. Also, and more importantly, in some Iraqi circles, the fastest way to become a hero is to kill an American. The case is made that the United States is an imperialist power with a superpower agenda. It is Israel's closest ally, it is hungry for oil, and it has never been particularly understanding of Arab nationalism. Conversely, middle range and small powers are not usually viewed as nations with

imperial agendas. Bangladesh and Fiji have long and distinguished roles in UN peacekeeping, but one can say with complete confidence that no one ever worries about becoming a colony of Fiji or Bangladesh. Likewise, no one in Iraq becomes a hero for killing a Fijian.

A U.N role in Iraq would also dampen the impact of foreign media broadcasts which often inform Iraqi citizens of America's purported bad intensions on a daily basis. The indisputably popular al Jazeera or the Iranian 24 news al-Alam television are hardly fans of the U.S. presence in Iraq, but are much more measured in their treatment of the UN. Stability operations have much better prospects of success in instances where angry media outlets are not working continuously against them.

Finally, it must be noted that the time to involve the UN is now. Whatever virtues the UN has, speed is not usually one of them. A resolution, probably involving a parallel U.S./UN command, must be put together in the Security Council. Most nations that would consider joining us under a UN flag will take time to deploy their troops as well, and it is important that they get there soon. Our security problems in Iraq may get better, but they may also get worse. In addition to Saddam regime remnants, the United States must worry about the growing strength and assertiveness of Islamic radicals, militant Sunnis Arabs who fear power-sharing with Iraq's other communities, and individuals who just don't like superpower troops on their soil. An approach involving U.N.-sponsored security operations will help undercut the activities of these adversaries while freeing up at least a portion of our troops for other pressing duties.