

Introduction

The Iraq War rages on: every day, every month, every year, worse than what came before. By waging a vicious, illegal war against the Iraqi people, our government has cost our nation over 3,300 young lives and hundreds of billions of dollars. While politicians in Washington smoke cigars, drink champagne, and design schemes to control Iraq's future, the repercussions of the war have ravaged our communities, ruining families and depriving US citizens of badly-needed resources. The result for Iraqis has been far worse yet: hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians have been killed, raped, and tortured since March 2003. Neither we nor Iraqis gain anything from the continued occupation.

In the event of military occupation of one country by another, the moral burden of justification rests on the occupying force. If the occupying power cannot justify its presence, it should withdraw immediately. Moreover, military occupation can only be justified if the occupier nation is under direct military threat, if the occupied population is better off under occupation than it would be otherwise, and if that population supports the occupation's continuation.

In the case of the Iraq War, many US citizens want their military to leave Iraq but, nonetheless, continue to support the occupation. There are a variety of reasons typically given for keeping US forces in Iraq, most of which assume that Iraqis are better off if we stay. This pamphlet scrutinizes the major arguments used to support the occupation (see page 3). None of the arguments hold up under close examination, making the continued occupation of Iraq morally unacceptable. We conclude that an *immediate* US withdrawal from Iraq is the only solution at the present time; though not a perfect solution, it is the best course of action if we are genuinely concerned about Iraq's future. Only when the US leaves Iraq will Iraqis truly be able to start rebuilding their lives and their country. There is, we argue, no reason to stay.

But the benefits of immediate withdrawal go beyond the reduction of the violence and death caused by the war. The massive amount of resources currently devoted to the war could be spent to rebuild Iraq and heal Iraqi society. In the United States, the money could be spent on health care, education, and other social programs for US citizens. By confronting our hawkish leaders and forcing an end to the war, our reputation as a people would rise dramatically throughout the world.

This pamphlet, produced by Wesleyan University's Students for Ending the War in Iraq (SEWI), reflects three years of continuous research, discussion, and action undertaken with the goal of ending the US military intervention in Iraq. We hope that in some small way it will help bring about the US military's rapid withdrawal from Iraq and a more humane foreign policy in the future.

Students for Ending the War in Iraq
Wesleyan University
Middletown, CT
May 2007

CONTENTS

Introduction.....1

I. COMMON ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF CONTINUING THE OCCUPATION:

“There will be more violence if we leave”2

“We need to help rebuild Iraq”4

“There will be no hope for democracy if we leave”5

“Islamic extremists will take over if we leave”7

“Conditions for Iraqi women will get worse if we leave”8

“We need to listen to the military”8

“We can’t abandon our troops”10

“A *phased* withdrawal is better than an immediate one”10

II. WHAT CAN BE DONE? Actions we can take to end the war and promote democracy in Iraq.....11

COMMON ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF CONTINUING THE OCCUPATION:

“There will be more violence if we leave”

This argument may seem reassuring to US citizens concerned about their government’s actions in Iraq, but there is little evidence to support it. Even [Western media outlets](#) have reported escalating levels of violence and death during 2006 and early 2007. [Estimates of Iraqi civilian deaths](#) alone for September and October 2006 are over 3,000 for each month, with a UN estimate of 6,376 for November and December. In mid-January, the UN released a [report](#) tallying 34,452 civilian deaths during 2006 (a figure that has been [criticized](#) as too low for not including unregistered deaths).¹ The level of violence has clearly risen since mid-2006. As journalist [Tom Clifford](#) noted in April 2007,

- almost half (44 per cent) of all violent civilian deaths after the initial invasion phase occurred in the just-ended fourth year of the conflict

- mortar attacks that kill civilians have quadrupled in the last year (from 73 to 289)
- massive bomb blasts that kill more than 50 people have nearly doubled in the last year (from 9 to 17)
- fatal suicide bombs, car bombs, and roadside bombing attacks have doubled in the last year (from 712 to 1476)²

The notion that “things are getting better” is delusional, as these numbers show. The occupation forces have not only killed [large numbers of civilians](#) but have also provided more justification for violent attacks by terrorists against civilians and US military personnel.³ Moreover, sectarian divisions have deepened significantly. The US invasion and occupation have accentuated sectarian divisions throughout Iraq, as most knowledgeable [observers](#) now agree.⁴

Not surprisingly, US conduct during the occupation has drawn numerous comparisons to that of Saddam Hussein. In fact, in many ways the US-led forces and the nascent Iraqi government have simply replaced Saddam, installing new officials but maintaining similar policies. In the 2004 assault on Fallujah, US forces used an internationally-banned chemical weapon (white phosphorus) to fight the insurgency there, producing in the words of one Iraqi “a grim reminder of Saddam Hussein’s gassing of the Kurds in 1988.”⁵ Abu Ghraib, now famous for the torture carried out there by US soldiers, was equally notorious under Saddam’s regime as the site of some of the dictator’s most vicious crimes.⁶ In late 2005 [Kenneth Roth](#) of Human Rights Watch stated that torture under the occupation forces had been adopted and used “as a matter of official policy,” citing the Bush administration’s official encouragement of “‘cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment,’ as long as the victim is a non-American held outside the US.”⁷ In fall 2006, UN legal expert [Manfred Nowak](#) said that “[t]he situation is so bad” in Iraq that “many people say it is worse than it has been in the times of Saddam Hussein.”⁸

But most importantly, Iraqis are overwhelmingly opposed to the US presence in their country. A secret [poll](#) conducted for the British Ministry of Defense in August 2005 found that 82 percent of Iraqis are “strongly opposed” to the occupation, and “less than one per cent of the population believes coalition forces are responsible for any improvement in security.”⁹ A year later, in September 2006, the Maryland-based [Program on International Policy Attitudes](#) (PIPA) found that [78 percent](#) of Iraqis believe that the US military occupation “is provoking more conflict than it is preventing.” The same poll found that 71 percent of Iraqis want the full withdrawal of US military forces by mid-2007.¹⁰ A PIPA poll from [January 2007](#) found that Iraqis still believe that the occupation causes more violence than it prevents: around two-thirds of respondents agreed that “‘day to day security for ordinary Iraqis’ would increase,” that “violent attacks would decrease,” and that “the amount of interethnic violence will decrease” if the United States withdraws by the summer of 2007.¹¹ In March 2007, another poll found that “[m]ore than seven in 10 Shiites—and nearly all Sunni Arabs—think the presence of U.S. forces in Iraq is making security worse.”¹²

Furthermore, increasing numbers of Iraqis state that they support the opposition’s attacks against US forces—61 percent in September 2006 compared with 47 percent in January 2006.¹³ In many cases Iraqis who did not previously support sectarian leaders started doing so when those leaders began attacking US forces. One survey of Shiites found that support for Shiite cleric [Moqtada al-Sadr](#) rose from 1 percent to 68 percent when al-Sadr began actively fighting the US military.¹⁴ The [January 2007](#) poll found that 73 percent of Iraqis believe that “there will

be an increase in the willingness of factions to cooperate in Parliament,” with 64 percent foreseeing a decrease in general crime after the US withdraws.¹⁵

Even if US forces were to restrict their activities to “peacekeeping,” current evidence suggests that their continued presence would only further inflame sectarian tensions. A US-led peacekeeping force would be doomed to failure for at least two reasons: first, given the history of the US intervention since 2003, the US military has little or no credibility among Iraqis; second, the US would be incapable of acting neutrally because of its interest in manipulating Iraqi politics to its liking. Any military-oriented action taken by the US would almost inevitably “[affect the sectarian balance of power](#)” in the country, because by attacking one group of insurgents the US would only anger the Iraqi civilians who support those insurgents, increasing resentment toward both the US and opposing sectarian groups.¹⁶

In truth, no one knows precisely what will happen when the US withdraws. An immediate withdrawal could bring hardship for many Iraqis in the short-term. But as historian [Howard Zinn](#) argued in 2004, “We face a choice between the certainty of mayhem if we stay, and the uncertainty of what will follow if we leave.”¹⁷ What *is* clear from recent statistics and polls in Iraq is that (1) the US presence is generating more violence than it is preventing, and that (2) the Iraqis whom we are supposed to be helping overwhelmingly oppose the occupation.

“We need to help rebuild Iraq”

The US has clearly failed to prevent violence and improve living conditions in Iraq. But in addition to inciting further conflict and encouraging terrorism, the US has ignored the basic needs of the Iraqi population. In mid-2005 US journalist [Dahr Jamail](#) published a lengthy analysis of Iraqi hospitals under the US occupation, reporting the “abject failure of the US to carry out even minimal humanitarian duties as occupying power.”¹⁸

The fact is that official “reconstruction” has been going on since 2003. But most of the money that the US government has allocated for it has gone to corrupt private corporations with little or no accountability to either Iraqis or to US taxpayers. Much of the money has been spent on projects which yield no benefit to Iraqis, such as the \$1-billion [US embassy](#) in Baghdad.¹⁹ As a result, executives and employees from Western companies like Halliburton and Bechtel, along with corrupt Iraqi officials, have stolen billions of dollars in taxpayer funds and Iraqi resources while accomplishing much less than their contracts stipulate. To put things in perspective, experts have estimated that the entire Iraqi public health system could be rebuilt for only \$1.7 billion—a small fraction of the money already doled out to unaccountable corporations and, incidentally, the financial cost of eight days of the US-led occupation.²⁰

Contrary to what many opponents of withdrawal say, most of those who are advocating immediate withdrawal fully agree that the US should pay reparations to Iraq. One unsuccessful House bill that proposed immediate withdrawal ([H.R. 4232](#)) sought to cut off funds for military operations, but did not seek to prohibit *all* funding for Iraq; it made exceptions for money spent to safely withdraw US troops, to provide “financial assistance or equipment to Iraqi security forces and international forces,” and to fund “social and economic reconstruction activities in Iraq.”²¹ The more recent [H.R. 508](#) makes similar stipulations, as does Dennis Kucinich’s 12-point withdrawal [plan](#).

Although the United States has obligations to rebuild Iraq, it has no moral authority and no right to play any leadership role in deciding the future fate of the country and its people. Any

funds contributed by the US must be given free of any conditionality or specifications as to how those funds are used. To prevent corrupt Iraqi officials and businessmen from misusing the funds, international auditing or supervision would likely be necessary for money given directly to the Iraqi government. Perhaps the best way to allocate reparations would be on the grassroots level; that is, the US should relinquish control over all funding, which will then be distributed under international auspices to Iraqi villages, local councils, and community organizations.²² At home, the US government should increase its allocations for veterans' health care, which could cost over **\$600 billion** over the next 40 years and which is drastically under-funded at the present time.

“There will be no hope for democracy if we leave”

This argument might be plausible if not for one simple, overriding fact: the United States military occupation has deliberately and systematically worked to *prevent* a genuine democratic opening in Iraqi society since the initial invasion in 2003. The most obvious manifestation of the US government's disdain for democracy is the consistent refusal to recognize and respect the **wishes of the population** by withdrawing from Iraq (see section “*There will be more violence if we leave,*” above). But aside from staying in Iraq against the popular will, the United States has worked constantly to undermine the efforts of secular organizations that seek a true democratization of daily life in Iraq.

Although US government leaders typically point to Iraq's series of political elections as proof of our concern for democracy, US actions following the invasion suggest otherwise. **Noam Chomsky** observes that US authorities “tried, in every possible way, to prevent elections in Iraq,” and the elections of January 2005 happened only “because of mass nonviolent resistance” from Iraqi activists.²³ A March 2005 editorial in the *Financial Times* also commented on the United States' opposition to the elections, pointing out that

The triumphalists in Washington who now claim total vindication for their almost totally bungled strategy are right to point out that these elections would not have taken place under Mr Hussein. But they should reflect that the reason they took place was the insistence of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who vetoed three schemes by the US-led occupation authorities to shelve or dilute them.²⁴

There is a simple reason for the Bush administration's opposition to elections: once Iraqis get a taste of democracy, there is a real danger that they will want more. Too much popular participation in the political system would endanger Washington's ability to manipulate Iraqi politics to its liking.

Popular participation, if it goes too far, could also affect the United States' control over the Iraqi economy—namely, over the oil which constitutes 95 percent of Iraqi export wealth. Iraqis who get too caught up in democratic ideals could also begin to demand a say in how their country's natural resources are used, and it's safe to assume that many Iraqis might not like the idea of Western corporations taking the profits from oil sales. The proposed law brought before the Iraqi Parliament in early 2007 would establish “production sharing agreements” between the Iraqi government and private (mostly foreign) corporations. The bill, if passed into law, will give foreign corporations access to at least two-thirds of known oil reserves in Iraq and would guarantee that those corporations receive around 75 percent of oil profits initially. Eventually the

share of foreign corporations would decrease but would stay at 20 percent, a figure “[that is twice the industry average for such deals](#).”²⁵

At the same time that the occupation has invited foreign corporations to harvest Iraq’s wealth, it has also suppressed the Iraqi labor movement in order to keep wages low and to maintain a climate favorable for business. In this respect the occupation has continued the work of Saddam Hussein, who outlawed labor unions in 1987. The US-led occupation has [preserved the 1987 law](#), and has fostered an environment in which those who do attempt to organize and demand basic rights at the workplace are arrested, fired, and even [murdered](#).²⁶ Nonetheless, Iraqi workers have continued demanding the right to form unions, and in some cases have even done so despite the occupation’s fierce repression of labor organizing. Labor activists have been some of the most vocal opponents of the occupation’s schemes to hand over Iraqi oil to foreigners. The president of Iraq’s [General Union of Oil Employees](#) (GUOE) recently sent a fiery [message](#) to occupation authorities regarding the proposed “sharing agreements” whereby foreign corporations would be given preferential access to Iraqi oil, saying that “[i]f those calling for production-sharing agreements insist on acting against the will of Iraqis, we say to them that history will not forgive those who play recklessly with the wealth and destiny of a people.”²⁷ In this country [US Labor Against the War](#) (USLAW) has also strongly [condemned](#) the occupation’s repression of popular organizing, putting it bluntly: “The US and the government it created can not claim to be for democracy while attempting to strangle Iraq’s labor movement.”²⁸

But Iraqi workers are not the only ones who have faced repression due to the occupation. The rights of women have been virtually eliminated in many parts of the country where extremist Islamists have risen to power. The US occupation has deepened sectarian divisions and empowered conservative clerics and others who wish to restrict women’s rights. The US has not only pushed ordinary Iraqis into the hands of extremists, but has also *funded* those extremists as well. As [Yifat Susskind](#) reports, “in 2005, the Pentagon began providing the Shiite Badr Brigade and Mahdi Army with weapons, money, and military training in the hope that these groups would help combat the Sunni-based insurgency.” Susskind charges that “the US has only replaced Saddam’s secular tyranny with an Islamist tyranny.” In fact, she argues that “Iraqi women are *worse off* than they were under the Baathist regime” because “the secular—albeit brutal—Baathist regime protected women from the religious extremism that denies freedom to a majority of women in the Arab world.”²⁹ (For more on the situation of Iraqi women under the occupation, see below.)

If “democracy” means the guarantee of basic human rights and popular participation in the political system, then the occupation of Iraq is not advancing the cause of democracy but is actively stifling it. Many of the secular organizations working to democratize Iraq oppose both the US occupation and the violent resistance to it, but see the occupation as the root of the problem and advocate immediate US withdrawal (for an example, see the fall 2006 [interview](#) with OWFI’s Houzan Mahmoud, as well as Mahmoud’s [blog](#)).³⁰ Unfortunately many of the individuals and organizations working to guarantee basic rights to workers, women, and other victims of Saddam’s regime have seen their efforts blocked by US and occupation authorities. If we truly want a secular democracy for Iraq, then we must wonder why so many secular civilian organizations in Iraq are so strongly opposed to the occupation, and why they feel that the occupation must end before a real democracy can develop.

“Islamic extremists will take over if we leave”

Many if not most of the civil organizations working to guarantee basic human rights in Iraq favor a secular government; they seek to prevent Islamic doctrine from influencing political and legal structures. But the US occupation has undercut the efforts of secular Iraqi activists, and has *empowered* those who seek to turn Iraq into a closed, theocratic nation, including those who employ terror tactics against the civilian population.

Members of the US intelligence community have been very clear on this point. Since April 2006, various [National Intelligence Estimates](#) (NIEs) have argued that the occupation has strengthened terrorist groups in Iraq and has undermined efforts to combat terrorism in Iraq and elsewhere.³¹ The organization [Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity](#) (VIPS) noted in March 2007 that the US presence in Iraq “continues to be a windfall for terrorist recruiters,” pointing out that “[t]here is wide consensus among experienced observers that the war in Iraq makes it immensely more difficult to deal with the real threat of international terrorism.”³² The US occupation has pushed secular Iraqis into the hands of religious extremists; as noted above, Shia support for cleric Moqtada al-Sadr skyrocketed from 1 percent to 68 percent when al-Sadr started fighting US forces.

Many intelligence officials also believe that the US occupation has deepened sectarian divisions in Iraq, and that a US withdrawal should be the first step toward healing those divisions. As the members of VIPS argue, “[o]nce a U.S. departure is under way there is an increased likelihood that the Sunnis and Shias will move toward a political accommodation of some sort since at that point neither can count on the United States to fight on their side.”³³

Iraqis seem to agree. A January 2007 [PIPA](#) poll measured Iraqis’ predictions of what would result if the US withdraws by summer 2007:

- 73 percent of Iraqis think the “willingness of factions in parliament to cooperate” will increase
- 67 percent think that the “availability of public services such as electricity, schools and sanitation” will increase
- 64 percent think that crime will decrease
- 67 percent think that the “day-to-day security of ordinary citizens” will increase³⁴

Two of the groups that we might presume to be most knowledgeable about the situation in Iraq—US intelligence officials and Iraqis themselves—therefore seem to agree that sectarian divisions and violence against civilians will *decrease* given a near-term US withdrawal.

Secular Iraqi feminist [Hazoun Mahmoud](#) expresses an opinion widespread in Iraq, arguing quite simply that terrorists will lose their support base if the US withdraws:

Every day we see the situation is getting worse; I think we haven’t seen any week or any day in a month that there haven’t been hundreds of people killed—suicide bombings, terrorist attacks—and they are using occupation as a pretext to justify these criminal acts. Having the occupation there is not solving any of this, actually. It’s just deepening the problems, just deepening the division among people. So therefore, I think the withdrawal of troops, actually, is going to ease a lot of problems. The majority of Iraqi people want to see every soldier leave Iraq.

And these armed militias—what other excuse will there be to terrorize people or to kill them or to kidnap them? What other excuses will they have?³⁵

“Conditions for Iraqi women will get worse if we leave”

Imperial powers in recent centuries have frequently used the pretext of “saving poor, defenseless native women” as a way of justifying military intervention in Third-World countries. Certainly US policymakers have cited this rationale to explain the United States’ ongoing involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. But in fact, since the 2003 invasion, Iraqi women have lost many of the rights they had secured under the secular Ba’athist regime. The 1970 Ba’ath [constitution](#) formally declared all women and men equal before the law. Strong education laws, ample maternity leave, and a [Unified Labor Code](#) that provided benefits for men and women enabled women to find employment, and by the early 1980s women comprised 40 percent of the workforce.³⁶ The 1959 [Family Law Act](#) had also guaranteed women legal protection from domestic violence

The US invasion has led to the rise of a group of politicians aligned with the most conservative faction of Shia clerics. The conservative Shia parties were influential in drafting the new [constitution](#), while representatives of the secular women’s movement were excluded from the negotiations. As a result, the constitution “elevate[s] Islamic law over constitutional rights for matters pertaining to personal and family matters.”³⁷ Article 2 says that Islamic law is “a fundamental source” of legislation. With the new constitution Iraqi women have lost some of their most basic political rights. And although Islamic law is always evolving, current [fundamentalist readings](#) of the law are harmful to Iraqi women’s struggle for legal equality. For instance, only men have the right to unilateral divorce, and men inherit double the amount of their sisters.³⁸

Additionally, [violence towards women](#) perpetrated by their family members, typically for extramarital sex, has greatly increased since the invasion. Although there were honor killings under Saddam’s rule, Iraqi professionals report that the frequency of these killings has greatly increased since the US invasion.³⁹ Iraqi sociologist [Shatha al-Dulaimy](#) says that “[t]he occupation has brought nothing but suffering, death or kidnapping to women here.”⁴⁰ The evidence of escalating violence against women is stunning: the [Organization of Women’s Freedom in Iraq](#) (OWFI) estimates “that no less than 30 women are [executed](#) monthly for honor related reasons.”⁴¹ Many women throughout Iraq are terrified of leaving their homes “because of the likelihood of being beaten, raped, or abducted in the streets.”⁴²

More generally, the violence that continues to increase under the US occupation certainly affects women. Because conditions for women have only worsened under the occupation, it is counter-intuitive to argue that Iraqi women benefit from the US presence. Only when the US troops leave will there be hope for Iraqi women.

“We need to listen to the military”

In 1956 sociologist C. Wright Mills commented on the role of military officials in the making of US foreign policy:

“From the standpoint of the party politician, a well-trained general or admiral is an excellent legitimator of policies...Politicians thus default upon their proper job of debating policy, hiding behind a supposed military expertise.”⁴³

What Mills noted a half-century ago is even truer today: military generals and other high-ranking officers still serve to legitimate aggressive, militaristic policies overseas, with the current war in Iraq being a prime example. Many politicians today cite these military leaders to justify their own support for the continued occupation of Iraq.

Military officials not only legitimate wars; they often *initiate* aggressive militaristic actions. The US military leadership has a long history of hawkish fanaticism. To cite a few examples:

- General [Leslie Groves](#), along with various other members of the political and military elite, was instrumental in the decision to drop two atomic bombs on the civilian centers of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.
- During the Korean War, General [Douglas MacArthur](#) strongly advocated the use of nuclear weapons against North Korea.
- Gen. [Curtis LeMay](#), another engineer of the Korean War and the director of numerous firebombings of Japanese civilians during WWII, once said that “[t]here are no innocent civilians” and that “it doesn’t bother me so much to be killing the so-called innocent bystanders.”⁴⁴
- In the 1980s military leaders like Rear Admiral [John Poindexter](#) and Lt. Colonel [Oliver North](#) helped to provide illegal funding for terrorist operations in Central America.

Current military officials likewise tend to be among the most hawkish voices in elite circles, even if they are often wise enough to limit their ambitions to what they think is “achievable.” Generals [Tommy Franks](#), [John Abizaid](#), and [David Petraeus](#) have all strongly opposed troop withdrawals from Iraq, and Petraeus has supported the 2007 “surge.”⁴⁵

Most importantly, such men represent only a tiny and isolated fraction of “the military.” They often come from the upper class in society, they do not fight, and their interests are very different from—and often directly opposed to—the interests of the enlisted men and women who compose the rank and file, who come primarily from the working class and who do the actual fighting. The feelings of ordinary soldiers are clear from a February 2006 Zogby/LeMoyne College [poll](#) which found that 72 percent of US active-duty military personnel in Iraq favored withdrawal by the end of 2006.⁴⁶ For this precise reason the US military, like most militaries, is deliberately anti-democratic: if US soldiers had their way, the US would have withdrawn from Iraq months ago. The severe disillusion of many US soldiers is apparent in the outspoken [opposition](#) of many returning soldiers to the war, and the refusal of soldiers like [Camilo Mejía](#), [Agustín Aguayo](#), and [Ehren Watada](#) to deploy or re-deploy to Iraq. As of May 2007, almost 2,000 members of the US military had lobbied Congress for “[the prompt withdrawal of all American military forces and bases from Iraq](#).”⁴⁷

In a sense, the argument that we should listen to the military is correct: we certainly DO need to listen, but not to the generals and admirals who are far removed from the pain and

suffering of the battlefield and who have little shared interest with the enlisted men and women who risk their lives daily. We must listen to the *real* military, to those members of the rank and file who tend to come from poor and working-class backgrounds, who stand to gain little by giving their lives to serve the interests of a few elites. These people have spoken, if we're willing to listen.

“We can't abandon our troops”

None of the major proposals which call for a rapid US withdrawal would involve leaving US troops in Iraq without funding or protection. The bills [H.R. 4232](#), [H.R. 508](#), and Rep. Dennis Kucinich's 12-point [plan](#) for immediate withdrawal all prohibit further funding for the war, but make exceptions for money spent to ensure safe troop withdrawal and the reconstruction of Iraq. None of these proposals involve “abandoning the troops,” as right-wing demagogues typically claim they do.

Moreover, a full withdrawal would free up billions of dollars which could be re-allocated for veterans' medical care and benefits. A more general, long-term reduction in our country's astronomical military budget would make hundreds of billions of dollars available for health care, education, and social assistance for needy groups including children, the elderly, the handicapped, and the poor and working class. A long-term reorientation of government spending to address the social needs of the US population would do infinitely more for members of the military (the vast majority of whom come from working-class backgrounds) than would staying in Iraq.

Who has really abandoned the troops, then? Has it been those corporations and politicians who, in the words of [Antonia Juhasz](#), “are holding US troops hostage in Iraq until they get what they want,” and who hypocritically claim to support the troops while simultaneously [cutting budget allowances for veterans](#)?⁴⁸ Or has it been the anti-war movement and progressive members of Congress who have listened to the 72 percent of US military personnel in Iraq who wish to come home, and who have also advocated increased veterans' benefits and social spending?

“A PHASED withdrawal is better than an immediate one”

In light of the facts presented in the above sections, any moral justification for remaining in Iraq quickly dissolves. If we genuinely value peoples' right to self-determination, then we must obey Iraqis' wishes and withdraw immediately. A “phased” withdrawal would only make sense if the US presence in Iraq was producing more benefit than harm for Iraqis and US soldiers. As the above sections make clear,

- The US occupation is not reducing the violence in Iraq; on the contrary, the levels of violence have increased steadily over the past 12-16 months.
- The US occupation is not promoting democracy; it has systematically under-mined secular democratic organizations in Iraq, especially the Iraqi labor movement and secular women's organizations.

- The US occupation continues to increase the threat of terrorism, both in Iraq and globally.
- Strong majorities of Iraqis and US soldiers are opposed to the occupation, and want the US to withdraw quickly.
- A full US withdrawal will free up billions of dollars for reparations to Iraq, thereby allowing Iraqis to begin rebuilding their country's infrastructure and democracy. Withdrawal will also make money available for social projects here in the US, including education, health care, veterans' benefits, and social assistance for the poor, sick, and those who are unemployed or cannot work.

Given these indisputable realities, a “phased” withdrawal would serve no discernible purpose other than to allow more time for the US government and foreign corporations to tighten their hold over Iraq. The US has already taken concrete steps to assure long-term control over the country, including the construction of up to 14 [permanent military bases](#) and the recent “[production-sharing agreements](#)” which aim to guarantee foreign corporations access to Iraqi oil in coming decades.⁴⁹

In the meantime, a “phased” withdrawal would also lead to the deaths of many more soldiers and civilians. Furthermore, the morale of US soldiers would only decline further once withdrawal begins: as returning Vietnam vet [John Kerry](#) famously asked the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1971, “How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?”⁵⁰

Immediate withdrawal is not a perfect solution, but it is clearly the most moral and most logical course of action. The near future may not be pretty for Iraqis, but as historian Howard Zinn says, immediate withdrawal “gives the Iraqi people a chance. Continued US occupation gives them no chance.”⁵¹

WHAT CAN BE DONE? Actions we can take to end the war and promote democracy in Iraq

As [Noam Chomsky](#) asked in January 2006, “Will we be on the side of the occupying forces trying to prevent democracy and sovereignty? Or will we be on the side of the Iraqi people?”⁵² Taking the side of Iraqis at this point requires two things: that we advocate the rapid withdrawal of US forces from their country and that we each do what we can to promote democracy and Iraqi-led reconstruction following the US withdrawal. [Phyllis Bennis and Robert Jensen](#) observe that “[w]e clearly owe the Iraqi people massive reparations for the devastation our illegal invasion has brought.”⁵³

If we are serious about reducing the threat of war, violence, and militarism in the future, we must demand not only an end to the current war in Iraq but also, in Bennis and Jensen's words, “the justice that makes possible real peace.” This justice will only be achieved when all nations are subject to international law and when the world's material resources are distributed more justly within and among countries. We as citizens face a simple choice: will we stand by idly in a world where two billion people live on less than \$2 a day, and where the rich and powerful are free to wage unnecessary wars that kill thousands of innocent people—or will we commit ourselves to working for peace, democracy, and socioeconomic justice here and abroad?

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- **Connect with other peace activists through Wesleyan's Students for Ending the War in Iraq, which meets Saturdays at 5pm at the University Organizing Center at 162 Church Street. To get on the listserve, email Emily Caffery (ecaffery@wesleyan.edu). SEWI also has a website, <http://www.wesleyan.edu/wsa/sewi>.**
- **Pressure your political representatives to sign H.R. 508 and to vote against further funding for the war by calling their offices or writing a hand-written letter, and by encouraging others to do the same. To find your representatives, check out <http://www.congressmerge.com/onlinedb/index.htm>.**
- **Support military dissenters and participate in counter-recruitment efforts**
- **Ask your representatives to increase veterans' benefits and to trim down the military budget so that money may be spent on social needs**
- **Write to your local newspaper editor saying why you think withdrawal is necessary**
- **Attend demonstrations like SEWI's recent May 4th demonstration, which called on Wesleyan to divest from weapons contractors, and call your local newspaper and Congressional representative to tell them what you're doing**
- **Support solidarity with Iraqis by donating to Iraqi grassroots and humanitarian groups, now and after the occupation ends**
- **Support efforts to impeach George W. Bush and Dick Cheney for lying to the country and for repeatedly authorizing war crimes**

Each of us has the power to influence our government's policy. We are all in a unique position to help bring about withdrawal and thus to reduce the levels of violence and death in Iraq, just as a massive anti-war movement did during the Vietnam War. To those who question whether their own personal actions will make a difference in the current war, would it be worth it to you if your efforts saved even a single life?

¹ Estimates taken from two sources: "Iraq Civilian Toll Continues to Rise," *BBC News*, 2 Jan. 2007 [internet]; accessed 11 Jan. 2007 from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/6224047.stm>; and Hannah Fischer, "Iraq Civilian Deaths Estimates," Congressional Research Service [online]. Accessed 11 Jan. 2007 from <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22537.pdf>. The estimates for September and October are from the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). For the recent UN estimate, see UNAMI, "Human Rights Report: 1 November-31 December 2006," 2 [online]; accessed 19 Jan. 2007 from <http://www.uniraq.org/FileLib/misc/HR%20Report%20Nov%20Dec%202006%20EN.pdf>. And for Jon Weiner's criticism of the UN figure for 2006, see "Iraqi Death Toll: Why the U.N. Can't Count," *Alternet*, 17 Jan. 2007 [online]. Accessed 20 Jan. 2007

from <http://www.alternet.org/story/46872/>. The first two sub-sections of this pamphlet are revised versions of an article published in the spring 2007 issue of *Incite* magazine (see www.incitemagazine.org).

² Quoted from “A Surge in Iraqi Civilian Deaths: The Bloodiest 12 Months of the War,” *Counterpunch*, 20 Apr. 2007 [online]. Accessed 21 Apr. 2007 from <http://www.counterpunch.org/clifford04202007.html>.

³ See Sarah Boseley, “One in 40 Iraqis ‘Killed Since Invasion,’” *The Guardian*, 12 Oct. 2006 [online]. Accessed 30 Mar. 2007 from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,,1920166,00.html>. Boseley discusses the fall 2006 *Lancet* report which estimates upwards of 655,000 “excess deaths” in Iraq since March 2003, and in which “[n]early a third of the deaths (31%) were ascribed to the coalition forces.”

⁴ For one example, see Phyllis Bennis, “The Iraqi Constitution: A Referendum for Disaster,” *United For Peace and Justice Talking Points*, no. 33 (13 Oct. 2005). Available online at <http://www.ipsdc.org/comment/Bennis/tp34constitution.htm> (quoted in Anthony Arnove, *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal* (New York: The New Press, 2006), 74). Bennis says that “In historically secular Iraq, the shift in primary identity from ‘Iraqi’ to ‘Sunni’ or ‘Shia’ (although Iraqi Kurdish identity was always stronger) happened largely in response to the US invasion and occupation; it does not reflect historical cultural realities.”

⁵ Anonymous Iraqi quoted in George McGovern and William R. Polk, *Out of Iraq: A Practical Plan for Withdrawal Now* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 57.

⁶ Arnove, *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal*, 21-23.

⁷ Kenneth Roth, “Terrorism Suspects Need to Be Prosecuted Not Tortured,” *Financial Times*, 23 Nov. 2005 [online]. Accessed 9 Jan. 2007 from <http://search.ft.com/searchArticle?page=2&queryText=kenneth+roth&javascriptEnabled=true&id=051123001117>.

⁸ “Iraq Torture ‘Worse after Saddam,’” *BBC News*, 21 Sept. 2006 [online]. Accessed 23 Sept. 2006 from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/5368360.stm.

⁹ Sean Rayment, “Secret British Ministry of Defense Poll: Iraqis Support Attacks on British Troops” *The Telegraph*, 22 Oct. 2005 [online]. Accessed 10 Jan. 2007 from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/10/23/wirq23.xml>.

¹⁰ The Program on International Policy Attitudes for WorldPublicOpinion.org, “The Iraqi Public on the US Presence and the Future of Iraq,” 27 September 2006, 4-5 [online]; Full text of report accessible at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/sep06/Iraq_Sep06_rpt.pdf. See also “Poll Says Most Iraqis Want US Out,” *The New York Times*, 29 Sept. 2006 [online]. Accessed 29 Dec. 2006 from <http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F70E17F73D540C7A8EDDA00894DE404482>.

¹¹ PIPA, “What the Iraqi Public Wants,” 31 January 2007, 6 [online]; Full text available at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/jan06/Iraq_Jan06_rpt.pdf.

¹² Gary Langer, “Voices from Iraq 2007: Ebbing Hope in a Landscape of Loss,” *ABC News*, 19 Mar. 2007 [online]. Accessed 26 Apr. 2007 from <http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=2954716&page=1>.

¹³ PIPA, “The Iraqi Public on the US Presence and the Future of Iraq,” 4-5.

¹⁴ Gareth Porter, “How Basra Slipped Out of Control: Portent in the Shiite South?” *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 12 Oct. 2005, quoted in Arnove, *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal*, 59.

¹⁵ PIPA, “What the Iraqi Public Wants,” 6.

¹⁶ Patrick Cockburn, “The Great Wall of Baghdad May Be Going Up, But There’s Still Carnage on the Streets,” *The Independent*, 6 May 2007 [online]. Accessed 7 May 2007 from http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/article2516744.ece.

¹⁷ “How to Get Out of Iraq: A Forum,” *The Nation*, 6 May 2004 [online]. Accessed 23 November 2006 from <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040524/forum/2>.

¹⁸ Dahr Jamail, *Iraqi Hospitals Ailing Under Occupation* (21 June 2005), 34. Available online at <http://dahrjamailiraq.com/reports/> and <http://www.brusseltribunal.org/DahrReport.htm>. (quoted in Arnove, *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal*, 15).

¹⁹ AP, “New US Embassy in Iraq Cloaked in Mystery,” 14 Apr. 2006 [online]. Accessed 2 May 2007 from <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12319798/>.

²⁰ McGovern and Polk, *Out of Iraq*, 120. On the massive waste of funds and sheer lack of accountability under the US-led “reconstruction” there is increasingly abundant documentation online and in recent books. See *Out of Iraq*, 108-122; Arnove, *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal*, 14-16; and Christian Parenti, “Fables of the Reconstruction,” *The Nation* (30 Aug. 2004) [online]. Accessed 23 Oct. 2006 from <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040830/parenti>.

²¹ Introduced in the House, November 4, 2005. “H.R. 4232[109]: End the War in Iraq Act of 2005.” Available at <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=h109-4232>.

-
- ²² This proposal for reparations reflects SEWI's own views, although George McGovern and William Polk have proposed something along these lines. *Out of Iraq*, 108.
- ²³ Noam Chomsky, "Iraq, Iran, and China: A New Global Alliance?" *Counterpunch*, 10 January 2006 [online]. Accessed 23 Nov. 2006 from <http://www.counterpunch.org/chomsky01102006.html>.
- ²⁴ "Winds of Change in the Middle East," *Financial Times*, 5 Mar. 2005 [online]. Accessed 20 Mar. 2007 from <http://search.ft.com/ftArticle?sortBy=gadatearticle&queryText=Grand+Ayatollah+Ali+Sistani&aje=true&id=050305001100&page=7>.
- ²⁵ Quote from Danny Fortson, Andrew Murray-Watson, and Tim Webb, "Future of Iraq: The Spoils of War," *Independent*, 7 Jan. 2007 [online]. Accessed 21 Mar. 2007 from http://www.agrnews.org/?section=archives&cat_id=63&article_id=1677&rowx=0. See also Antonia Juhasz, "Whose Oil Is It, Anyway?" *New York Times*, 13 Mar. 2007 [online]. Accessed 21 Mar. 2007 from <http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F00B10F73B550C708DDDA0894DF404482>; Antonia Juhasz, "Spoils of War: Oil, the US-Middle East Free Trade Area and the Bush Agenda," *In These Times*, 15 Jan. 2007 [online]. Accessed 17 Jan. 2007 from <http://www.inthesetimes.com/site/main/print/2979/>; Kathlyn Stone, "A David and Goliath Story: Iraqi Labor vs. Big Oil," *Counterpunch*, 24-25 Feb. 2007 [online]. Accessed 26 Feb. 2007 from <http://www.counterpunch.org/stone02242007.html>; James Paul, "Confidential Document on Iraq Oil Lobbying," *Global Policy Forum*, 14 July 2006 [online]. Accessed 23 Nov. 2006 from <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/oil/2006/0714confidential.htm>.
- ²⁶ See Stone, "A David and Goliath Story," and David Bacon, "Saddam's Labor Laws Live On," *The Progressive* (article is updated on the website but it is probably from 2003) [online]. Accessed 11 Jan. 2007 from <http://www.progressive.org/node/979>.
- ²⁷ GUOE president Hassan Jumaa Awad al Assadi, quoted in Stone, "A David and Goliath Story."
- ²⁸ Quoted in Ibid.
- ²⁹ "Violence against Women under US Occupation: Iraq's Other War," *Counterpunch*, 8 Mar. 2007 [online]. Accessed 10 Mar. 2007 from <http://www.counterpunch.org/susskind03082007.html>. Emphasis added on last quote.
- ³⁰ Sara Burke, Sam Diener, Joseph Gerson, and Paul Shannon, "'We are the Hope': Voices from the Secular Resistance Movement in Iraq," *Peacework*, 20 Dec. 2006 [online]. Accessed 22 Mar. 2007 from <http://www.peacework-magazine.org/node/39>.
- ³¹ For the January 2007 NIE, see National Intelligence Council, "Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead," January 2007 [online]. Accessed 28 Apr. 2007 from <http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/wdc/documents/nie020207.pdf>.
- ³² "Memo to Congressional Leaders on Iraq Funding: Denouement on Iraq: First Stop the Bleeding," 15 Mar. 2007 [online]. Accessed 15 Mar. 2007 from <http://www.counter-punch.org/vips03152007.html>.
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ See above, note 11.
- ³⁵ Quoted in Burke, et al., "'We are the Hope': Voices from the Secular Resistance Movement in Iraq."
- ³⁶ Center for Media and Democracy, "Iraqi Constitution and Women's Rights," 2 Sept. 2005 [online]; Accessed 21 Apr. 2007 from http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Iraqi_Constitution_and_women's_rights. See also the long list of articles linked at the bottom of the webpage, all critiquing the new constitution's position on women's rights. For a concise yet nuanced analysis of women's rights under Saddam's regime, see Human Rights Watch, "Background on Women's Status in Iraq Prior to the Fall of the Saddam Hussein Government," November 2003 [online]; Accessed 29 Apr. 2007 from http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/wrd/iraq-women.htm#P22_6643. The HRW paper points out that women's rights declined somewhat following the 1991 end of the Gulf War and the start of US-led sanctions against Iraq. Nonetheless, the paper argues that "[h]istorically, Iraqi women and girls have enjoyed relatively more rights than many of their counterparts in the Middle East."
- ³⁷ Kavita N. Ramdas, "Iraqi Women's Bodies are Battlefields for War Vendettas," *Alternet*, 19 Dec. 2006 [online]. Accessed 18 Feb. 2007 from <http://www.alternet.org/story/45540/>.
- ³⁸ Juan Cole, "The Iraqi Constitution's Downside for Women," Reprinted from *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 1 Sept. 2005 [online]. Accessed 16 Apr. 2007 from <http://www.juancole.com/2005/09/iraqi-constitutions-downside-for-women.html>.
- ³⁹ Vivienne Walt, "Marked Women," *Time* (19 July 2004) [online]. Accessed 14 Apr. 2007 from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1101040726-665048,00.html>.
- ⁴⁰ Quoted in Dahr Jamail and Ali Al-Fadhily, "No Safety for Women in Iraq," *Alternet*, 15 Dec. 2006 [online]. Accessed 17 Feb. 2007 from <http://www.alternet.org/story/45476/>.
- ⁴¹ Paraphrased in Ramdas, "Iraqi Women's Bodies are Battlefields for War Vendettas."

⁴² Susskind, "Violence against Women under US Occupation."

⁴³ *The Power Elite* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000 [1956]), 200.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Michael S. Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 287.

⁴⁵ Here it should be noted that the few members of the military hierarchy who have expressed doubts about the recent escalation in Iraq have been ousted by the administration. Nonetheless, they share similar goals with the administration and their doubts reflect not principled or moral opposition to militarism but rather their pragmatic assessment that "victory" is not attainable.

⁴⁶ "US Troops in Iraq: 72% Say End War in 2006," 28 Feb. 2006 [online]. Accessed 16 Dec. 2006 from <http://www.zogby.com/search/ReadNews.dbm?ID=1075>.

⁴⁷ "An Appeal for Redress from the War in Iraq" [online]. Accessed 4 May 2007 from <http://www.appealforredress.org/>.

⁴⁸ Juhasz, "Spoils of War"; on the cuts in veterans benefits by Republican members of Congress, see David Smith, "Veterans Benefits Cut," *YES!* (summer 2003) [online]; Accessed 26 Apr. 2007 from <http://www.yesmagazine.org/article.asp?ID=613>.

⁴⁹ David R. Francis, "US Bases in Iraq: Sticky Politics, Hard Math," *Christian Science Monitor*, 30 Sept. 2004 [online]. Accessed 3 May 2007 from http://www.agrnews.org/?section=archives&cat_id=63&article_id=1677&rowx=0. For the "production sharing agreements," see note 25 above.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Ahmed Amr, "Choosing the Last Man to Die," *Dissident Voice*, 20 Sept. 2004 [online]. Accessed 18 Apr. 2007 from <http://www.dissidentvoice.org/Sept04/Amr0920.htm>. Of course, we might point out that many women soldiers have also fought and died in Iraq.

⁵¹ "How to Get Out of Iraq." See note 17 above.

⁵² Chomsky, "Iraq, Iran, and China: A New Global Alliance?"

⁵³ "What Comes After Withdrawal: Moving Beyond Anti-War Politics," *Counterpunch*, 27 Apr. 2007 [online]. Accessed 28 Apr. 2007 from <http://www.counterpunch.org/bennis04272007.html>.