

Brownback Outlines "Diplomatic Surge" for Iraq

Says success in Iraq requires more than a military solution

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DES MOINES - U.S. Senator Sam Brownback, Republican candidate for president, outlined a "diplomatic surge" for Iraq that would aim for long-term stability by creating a soft partition for the three major ethnic groups in Iraq, with Baghdad serving as the seat of a united federal government.

"We should implement a diplomatic surge that promotes a federal Iraq where Sunnis, Shi'a and Kurds manage their own affairs within a unified state," said Brownback. "If we do not embrace the goal of federalism in Iraq, we will find ourselves held hostage to the endless debates between Iraqi political parties that have occurred over the last two years. The three-state political solution could create the equilibrium and stability that is necessary to ensure that we do not have to return to Iraq."

Brownback spoke at a forum jointly hosted by the U.S. Center for Citizen Diplomacy and the Greater Des Moines Committee on Foreign Relations. He painted a stark picture of failure in Iraq:

"Some people suggest that we withdraw our troops, but I would remind them of the consequences of failure. Iraq would become a safe haven for al Qaeda. It would become a failed state and risk regional war. It would descend into genocidal chaos."

Brownback continued, "The longer Iraq goes without political equilibrium, the bigger the risk of total breakdown. Ironically, an implosion in Iraq would probably end up creating three states."

Brownback said that history suggests that Iraq would be well-served by a federal system:

"The three-state political solution reflects the historical organization of the territory of Mesopotamia, acknowledges the demographic and cultural realities of modern day Iraq and would preserve the integrity and sovereignty of Iraq."

Brownback traveled to Iraq from January 9-10, 2007, and met with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Kurdish regional President Massoud Barzani, U.S. Generals Raymond Odierno and George Casey, Jr., and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad.

In November 1999, Brownback spoke to the National Assembly of the Iraqi National Congress, where he highlighted the need for a comprehensive policy to deal with Saddam Hussein and post-Saddam Iraq.

The full speech follows:

Some people suggest that we withdraw our troops, but I would remind them of the consequences of failure. Iraq would become a safe haven for al Qaeda. It would become a failed state and risk a regional war. It would descend into genocidal chaos. Instability, terror and genocide are not acceptable for Iraq or the United States.

If we fail in Iraq now, we will probably have to return in the near future to clean up an even bigger mess. There is simply no substitute for victory. We're in a tough spot, but we have to get this one right.

No one wants to lose. The American people want to succeed.

There is some good news. U.S. casualties are down this month. That is a remarkable development, given the amount of fighting our men and women have done since the surge has been in place. They are doing an extraordinary job.

But better news about casualties is only part of the story. We need more than a military solution to succeed in Iraq. Iraq needs to stabilize for the long term.

That means we need a diplomatic solution. The key is for the Sunnis, the Shi'a and the Kurds to reach some type of political equilibrium. That will allow the Iraqis to drive out the terrorists, build their country and survive in a very tough region of the world. And, of course, a diplomatic solution is the key to reducing threats to our forces, and bringing about stability that will allow us to bring our forces home.

A couple weeks ago, the administration released a progress report that showed the difference between military and political progress. In a few cases, we made progress on the military and security front. We have made little or no progress on the political front. Iraq has not passed laws related to oil resources, de-Baathification, provincial elections and other key areas.

These are, of course, issues crucial to the future of Iraq. In that sense, it is no surprise that Iraq's leaders are so deeply divided. As we have seen over the past year or two, those divisions will not just disappear. Every Iraqi politician knows what is at stake, and that makes compromise hard. Boycotts of parliament have become routine. When they make progress in one area, they lose progress in another.

We need to recognize that the political environment is very difficult in Iraq and focus our diplomatic efforts on keeping everyone at the bargaining table until agreements are reached in key areas.

If you think back to the mid-1990s, we faced a similar situation in the former Yugoslavia. When Tito left, the military apparatus that enforced the government's power disappeared. We saw sectarian groups that did not get along. They fought each other and then came to the bargaining table. We brought those groups together and kept them at the negotiating

table until they signed the Dayton accords.

Steady, intense diplomatic effort is necessary to bring about this kind of reconciliation in Iraq. In short, we need a diplomatic surge in Iraq. Normal diplomatic arrangements are not enough.

In Iraq, the divisions are so deep, the stakes so high, and the time so short, that we owe it to ourselves to send our best team of respected negotiators to Baghdad to bring all sides to the table and resolve the major issues facing Iraq today.

And it is important that a new diplomatic initiative focus on tomorrow as well as today. It is easy to fall into the trap of focusing only on the benchmarks that are so important for Iraq's immediate future. But we cannot lose sight of what it will take to stabilize Iraq over the long term.

Yes, Iraq needs to decide how to manage its oil and deal with former Baathists. The hatred between Iraqi groups is too deep for those measures to keep Iraq peaceful into the future. An enduring political solution in Iraq requires a fundamental approach to the way a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society manages its affairs.

To develop that kind of approach, I think we can take a page from our own history. We started out with thirteen different states. They disagreed about what kind of government to put in place. But they came together by moving power from the national government to the local level. This kind of a framework, a federal system, gave us our start as a country and it is still working today. It can be messy and complicated. But it is stable and durable--two things Iraq needs more than anything else.

Federalism is a particularly good plan for Iraq. To understand why, we should look back at the very beginning of Iraq. The collapse of the Ottoman empire created a power vacuum in the Middle East. When World War I ended, Allied powers, especially the British, decided to reorganize the region's political geography. In Mesopotamia, the British combined big parts of three old Ottoman provinces to form what we now call Iraq. Those three Ottoman provinces were based on the same three ethno-sectarian groups we find in Iraq today: Kurds, Sunnis and Shi'a.

In other words, these groups have always dominated certain areas. Such history strongly suggests Iraq would be well-served by a federal system. Three states within a single country, with Baghdad a united federal capital, provides a formula for enduring political stability in Iraq. Such a political solution would reflect the historical organization of the territory of Mesopotamia, acknowledge the demographic and cultural realities of modern day Iraq and preserve the integrity and sovereignty of Iraq, as well as the nascent democracy that continues to develop and evolve.

The door is open to a federal political solution in Iraq. The Iraqi constitution permits the creation of federal regions. It also recognizes the Kurdish region, which is already in place in the Iraqi north. I visited this area in January and was impressed, as it is basically

stable and has a level of prosperity. The Kurdish regional government handles most of its own affairs, but it is still an important part of Iraq. We should strongly support the creation of Sunni and Shi'a regions to complete a federal system for Iraq.

I have not heard of a perfect political solution for Iraq, and there are some who object to federalism. I am still convinced that federalism is the most likely and acceptable way to reach a comprehensive and enduring political settlement among all of Iraq's key groups. I believe this plan stands up well to the concerns that have been raised.

First, some worry about the reactions of Iraq's neighbors. They worry that the Kurds might be emboldened to declare independence in such a system and force Turkey to invade. I believe, however, that a U.S. diplomatic surge in Baghdad can show our commitment to a Kurdish region that is a key part of Iraq. With that commitment, we can reassure our Turkish allies that we support Iraq's territorial integrity. But more important, a stable Kurdish area reinforces Turkey's own security, so Turkey should have an interest in making federalism work.

There are also concerns that Iran would undermine any Shi'a region that would be established. Iran, however, already exercises far too much influence in Iraq. Iraq is too weak to resist Iranian actions and we already have to deal with Iranian elements in Iraq. A federal Iraq would help strengthen the Iraqi state and give it the ability to oppose influence from Iran. If we are really concerned about Iranian influence, we need to strengthen Iraq's political structures, and I believe that means working toward federalism.

I also know of concerns that a Sunni region might become an al Qaeda safe haven. Current trends in Anbar province, however, show that local citizens have had their fill of al Qaeda. A strong regional government would be able to help Sunnis resist al Qaeda and keep the area clear of the terrorist threat.

The other major objection to federalism is that some groups want it and others do not. The Kurds strongly support federalism because they are making it work. Some of the Shi'a support federalism while others do not. Sunnis generally oppose federalism because they do not see its benefits. We need a diplomatic surge to explain federalism's benefits and prove our commitment to its success. We need to make sure Sunnis understand that federalism is the best way for them to keep their stake in Iraq. We need to remind the Shi'a that federalism is the best way for them to bring peace to a country where they already have a sizable majority.

Iraqis will not agree on federalism without strong and sustained support from the United States. But if we roll up our sleeves and make a Dayton-like effort, we can demonstrate that federalism provides bigger advantages for each Iraqi group than any other plan.

If we do not embrace the goal of federalism, we will end up being held hostage to the kind of endless debates between Iraqi political parties that have occurred over the last two years. And the longer Iraq goes without political equilibrium, the bigger the risk of a total breakdown. If Iraq implodes, we may see a genocide and a regional conflict. Ironically,

an implosion would probably end up creating three states. We should push for federalism now instead of waiting for a genocide to create it for us.

In fact, our policies should lay the groundwork for federalism, even as Iraqi leaders create new federal regions.

First, we should make the best of a difficult situation and work with, rather than against, population movements inside Iraq. Sunnis and Shi'a are moving out of mixed areas to places where their sect has a majority. While we cannot expect federal regions to be completely homogenous due to inter-marriage between members of different sects, we can recognize that, demographically, federal regions are getting more recognizable every day.

As families in mixed neighborhoods feel threatened and seek to relocate, we should provide protection. As people arrive in areas where their own sect forms a majority, we should provide economic support. There are large numbers of internally displaced people in Iraq. We should make it possible for them to resettle permanently in areas where their sect can ensure their safety. And we should make similar arrangements for those Iraqi refugees who wish to return to their home country even if they cannot return to the exact neighborhood or community they fled.

Second, we should ensure that the Kurdish region remains stable and economically growing. As I mentioned, our diplomatic surge will need a Turkish dimension to keep the peace along Iraq's northern border. We should also ensure the Kurdish region receives an equitable share of U.S. reconstruction and aid dollars, something that has not been the case so far in Iraq. In addition, we need to support a peaceful and fair resolution of the status of Kirkuk.

Third, we need to do more to discourage foreign interference in Iraq. We must make it clear to Iran that we will not allow the mullahs to make part of Iraq their own. We should make it clear to the Iranians that we intend to counter their moves inside Iraq and then join with the Iraqi Security Forces to keep that promise.

We need to send similar messages to Syria and Saudi Arabia. Iraq is presently weak, but it is a sovereign country. Instability in Iraq is not good for Syrian or Saudi Arabian security. When they give tacit permission for terrorists to enter Iraq through their territory, they are playing with fire. Such actions add to the conflict in Iraq and can only adversely affect their relationships with the United States.

All of these steps can be taken now. In fact, time is of the essence. We have to prepare for federalism now if it is to become a reality in time to make a difference. We have to get Iraq on the road to political equilibrium before Iraqi politics implodes. I believe that a diplomatic surge that promotes federalism provides a path to victory.

Some believe we should simply withdraw our troops and close the book on Iraq, but I believe we can make another choice. We should implement a diplomatic surge that

promotes a federal Iraq, where Sunnis, Shi'a and Kurds manage their own affairs within a unified state. This political solution can bring equilibrium to Iraq and lead to the stability necessary to ensure that we do not have to return to Iraq. That's the kind of ending we all want in Iraq. And if we're honest with ourselves, it's the only ending we can accept.

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