DOES THE UNITED STATES PRESENCE IN IRAQ INCREASE OR DECREASE VIOLENCE?

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By

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DOES THE UNITED STATES PRESENCE IN IRAQ INCREASE OR DECREASE VIOLENCE?

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ABSTRACT

Iraq’s history is extremely turbulent. Even in the 1900s, coups transpired frequently and were usually bloody. After many coups in the 1900s, Saddam assumed power in a dictatorial fashion and followed Iraqi culture norms by using extreme nepotism when selecting personnel for his regime. Political changes were also frequent in ancient Iraqi history, but terrorism and widespread violence were not significant problems in the 1900s. After the US invasion, Iraq ostensibly fell into a conflict trap, which Paul Collier, director of the Development Research Group at the World Bank, defines as being prone to civil war or conflict, after civil war. How did Iraq get into the violent predicament it is in, and more importantly, does the US presence add to or detract from Iraq’s ability to get out of the violent trap?

To answer the question above and gain an understanding of Iraq’s present situation, this paper explores the beginnings of Iraqis and their culture which transcend time and continue to affect contemporary events. The research for this thesis focused on Iraq’s deep rooted turbulent history, by showing the numerous times
governments changed hands by depicting life in Iraq under and after Saddam by offering analysis of actions that have transpired in Iraq since Saddam’s removal in 2003. Collier offers an analysis of civil wars, which is an asset to this evaluation of Iraq’s present situation.

Iraq’s volatile history and tribalistic culture reverberated through time and holds sway in contemporary events. The US ideology (democracy) was alien to Iraqis (tribalistic culture), which further exacerbated problems. Aside from tribalistic, sectarian, and religious difficulties that sparked extreme violence, Iraqis grew weary of their occupiers. While the US efforts were beneficial in some ways, US presence was found to exacerbate violence.

Despite the fact that Iraq has made significant strides politically, socially, and in regards to security, this paper concludes that the United States has more of a negative effect by continuing to occupy Iraq. This conclusion is based on trends throughout history and contemporary analysis of international efforts to shorten or stop civil wars. Even the latest draft agreement (Status of Forces Agreement) between the United States and Iraq calls for US troops to be out of Iraqi streets in towns and cities by the middle of 2009, and completely out of Iraq by January 1, 2012. The current US presence in Iraq does more harm than good. However, this thesis does not argue for an acute withdrawal. The exit strategy should be a meticulous, methodical, gradual procedure, contrary to the ostensible hasty actions that led to the initial invasion and the chaotic aftermath.
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CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

History of Iraq

There have been many variations on the idea that one should look to the past to understand the present in order to avoid repeating past mistakes. This first chapter will give the tools to better understand Iraq today—its land and its people. Certain social and cultural aspects were embedded in ancient times and can still be seen today. This chapter will cover ancient achievements, transition to larger societies, and the constant upheaval that ensued.

One can only understand the development of tribalism and Iraq’s turbulent government systems by briefly looking at the ancient history of Mesopotamia. Iraq is one of the oldest civilizations. Mesopotamia, meaning the land between the rivers in Greek, refers to the fertile land between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers in contemporary Syria and Iraq.¹ People have lived and thrived on this fertile plain with water, good soil, and an acceptable climate for agrarian activities for millennia. There seem to have been inhabitants in Mesopotamia since about 10,000 B.C.E. The

¹ Susan Pollock, Ancient Mesopotamia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.
ancestors of the inhabitants of present day Iraq lived in and around the mountains that separate present day Iraq and Turkey. The ancients of the Iraq area seemed to have been transient, lived in groups of about 50 people, and utilized lean-to shelters. Men hunted and women gathered needed items. William Polk thinks that hunger was their driving force and their biggest fear was famine. Life was not hard but inclement weather could change their situation, for example local animals could be forced to migrate elsewhere, or harsh weather conditions could kill off local vegetation that was needed. However, tribalism helped deter some negative life events.

Social groups of Mesopotamia, consisting of numerous families, banded together to form tribes. Tribalism helped the people of Mesopotamia survive. The ancient Bedouins of Iraq learned that the tribe that controls the resources of a particular area lives and those not in control perish. Bedouins did not share power or resources with different tribes. Tribal gain became part of the Bedouin culture. Bedouins would strive for personal gains as well as resources for cultural circles that emanated to larger circles, such as extended family, tribe, and sect.

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Beyond the structure and order of tribalism, the survival of Mesopotamians was at times helped by fortune. Ancient Iraqis also cached various kinds of seeds in pits or clay-lined baskets. With the actions of storing seeds, ancient Iraqis became the first farmers, arguably changing the world as humans knew it. There is no expert that knows exactly how ancient Iraqis began their agrarian accomplishments. However, the general consensus is that the agrarian initiative was probably accidental. A few popular theories are that someone, probably young children, may have accidentally dropped some seed, or that the cache of seed was rained on. The end result was that the seeds began sprouting and the humans started realizing what was happening and took advantage of it, turning what was most likely an accidental move into a purposeful, calculated action.4

This accidental situation became a directed effort as the ancients took sharp sticks and poked holes into the ground adjacent to a stream or in mud and inserted seed. Some of the efforts of planting seed produced rewarding results for the lucky, the smart, or both. The items that grew helped to ward off famine in hard times for those who planted. Famine must have been a salient thought in the back of every ancients’ mind as personal experience of hunger would be a large impetus to learn how to mitigate hunger or famine. Domestication is believed by paleobotanists to

have taken place within a few generations from this first farming endeavor. The advantages of this new experimental undertaking were obvious as the farming lifestyle spread to numerous encampments. Because of these experimental actions that spread widely, it is believed that farming began circa 6000 B.C.E. About this time, farming started to augment more of the food supply than anticipated due to a decrease in the once bountiful wild game.⁵

Management ensued on the Fertile Crescent⁶ when wild game became harder to find and kill. Humans loosely managed herds of foraging goats which positively increased resources for humans. We know that the ancients consumed many goats due to the fact that numerous goat bones are still present today in old sites. Managing goats was not difficult as goats are versatile, and self-sufficient. For the humans that put in the extra effort, many benefits were reaped. The goats were used for much more than meat alone. For example, their hides were used for clothing, bone for tools, sinew for bindings, their milk to drink, and dung for fuel.⁷ Managing and domesticating animals had many positive ramifications that lasted for millennia. Because of this, humans had relatively secure, predictable sources for a more balanced diet. Fewer people died of starvation thereby increasing the population. The

⁵ Ibid., 14-15.

⁶ An area of land that stretches from the Persian Gulf and then runs north and overlaps and parallels the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. At the mountains where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers originate, the Fertile Crescent runs west to the Mediterranean Sea and then south to the Sinai.

⁷ Iraqis still manage goats today—goats are seen grazing on garbage and dung is still used.
people of Mesopotamia began to live longer, and cultural practices, concerning men and women, were solidified. The young, the women, and the elderly managed the crops, and the men herded the animals away from the settlement for periods of time.⁸

As populations grew, the land was no longer able to sustain the increased number of people. The changing climate, as it became hotter and drier, caused the ancients to relocate. People followed the migrating animals to land where there was more water. Eventually humans moved on to the land between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. The climate changed again after hundreds of years with rainfall increasing in the area and the people thrived once again. The Ubaidians (called Ubaidians from the name of one of their settlements) settled in the mud adjacent to the rivers. They initiated the second great agricultural revolution by developing irrigation and invented the precursor to the plow, using it to dig shallow ditches to control the water. The Ubaidians prospered and began turning their extra energies to other ventures such as carpentry, metal working, potting, plowing, and masonry. Arguably the largest achievement of the Ubaidians was the invention of turning mud and straw into bricks. This was a great feat as Mesopotamia had no stone, timber or other material besides mud bricks of which to make permanent structures. With the development of bricks, permanent villages, towns and even cities appeared.⁹

⁸ Ibid., 15-16.
⁹ Ibid., 17-18.
Between 4700-3900 B.C.E. (the Hassunah and Halaf periods) pottery and metal working began. Circa 3900 B.C.E., during the Ubaid period, resources flourished leading to the construction of the first temples and complex structures. Circa 3600 B.C.E. (the Warka period) written characters appeared. This ability to record and augment records greatly advanced modern civilization and set the Sumerians up for success. Sumerians moved into the south of Mesopotamia circa 2900 B.C.E., while the Ubaidians tended their fields in the north. However, no one knows exactly where the Sumerians came from. The most notable aspect of the Sumerians, in regards to their origin, is that they spoke a language not related to Semitic or any other languages related to people in that area during that time. Many argue that history can be discussed with the start of the Sumerians.\textsuperscript{10} The Sumerian dynasty of Ur exported goods and knowledge to the rest of the world.\textsuperscript{11}

Advancements were made with the Sumerians, but up to this point no record exists of tribes vying for power and riches by conquering others. Evidence exists that the Sumerians, much like the Greeks later, lived on the edge of the Ubaidians and then took over their settlements. Ubaidian words were in the Sumerian language, which demonstrates the contact between these two groups. There is no record of a hostile takeover of the Ubaidians by the Sumerians, suggesting that perhaps peaceful

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 18.

assimilation occurred. Sumerians expanded on all previous developments and greatly expanded the population. Before the population growth, kin used to arbitrate social problems. This population growth resulted in the weakened role for kinship groups on addressing social conflict. In addition, intimate neighborhoods started to dissolve. The societies that survived mitigated the lack of conflict management with religion-based patriotism. The town formed a cult center and the town’s fortune was based on the will of the god. Some individuals stated they could communicate with the god and know what he or she wanted. The religious leaders asked for wealth for the god and managed it for him. Over time, the religious leaders became rich, then powerful and ultimately formed an autocratic government. This model has lasted through today in the region.12

Religious differences between urban centers often resulted in interurban warfare, which is another feature that reverberated down through Iraqi history. This violent environment enabled men who were better fighters to distinguish themselves from others. The Sumerians called these fighters *lugal*, which means “big man” or warrior. The *lugal* was usually a land owner with field hands who acted as his army. After a few battles the *lugal* earned respect and wealth and eventually made his position into an institution. The new name was *nam-lugal* and means “the quality of

being a great man,” which can be translated into kingship. This idea of the most powerful man assuming power was imprinted in the minds of Iraqis from here on out through time.\textsuperscript{13}

History changed when the \textit{nam-lugal} appeared. Until the Sumerian civilization, humans were merely trying to survive, but with the Sumerians came progress in many aspects of civilization. When surplus resources became available, they were used for protection. The city of Uruk erected a 23 foot high wall that was six miles long and encircled the city. Uruk eventually absorbed many of the surrounding cities. When the desire for labor became insatiable, slaves appeared who are thought to be prisoners of war.\textsuperscript{14} There were many rulers that presided over Mesopotamia. A cursory look will be given to the major periods and rulers due to space constraints, for a book could be dedicated to these periods alone. What are most valuable are the mind sets and customs which originated from antiquity and through the years that are still pervasive to this day in Iraq.

During the reign of the Akkadians circa 2340 B.C.E., the most important figure was Sargon I. The salient person from this era was Sargon I, for he founded a dynasty and unified Mesopotamia.\textsuperscript{15} Sargon I is sometimes considered to be the

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 21.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 21-24.

world’s first statesmen. He convinced many to give up their freedom to him by promising security and prosperity. He focused on a close body of followers, attacking all around him and assimilating conquered people. Sometimes these ostensibly assimilated people revolted and Sargon I violently suppressed them.\(^\text{16}\) Still, the Akkadians eventually fell to the Elamites around 2000 B.C.E.\(^\text{17}\)

The Elamites fell to the Assyrians circa 1830 B.C.E. The Assyrians fell to the Babylonians (Amorites) circa 1760 B.C.E. who reigned until 1595 B.C.E. The Babylonians did not reign long relative to other empires, but they are viewed as the “embodiment of the cultural history of Iraq, occupying the exalted position later Europeans accorded to the classical age of Greece.”\(^\text{18}\) Hammurabi ruled during the Babylonian empire, and he developed a code of law that gave contemporary law its foundation. The Elamites took over again in 1157 B.C.E and reigned until the Assyrians again took over in 827 B.C.E., ruling until circa 612 B.C.E.

The Neo-Babylonian Empire existed circa 792 -595 B.C.E., overlapping some of the Assyrian reign. Babylon regained some of its strength around 612 B.C.E, and it

\(^\text{16}\) Arabs believe that they have descended from the Akkadians, a Semitic, nomadic people. As one can see, Saddam Hussein, whether purposely or inadvertently, followed Sargon’s pattern. However, Saddam was not able to leave his offspring the reins to Iraq as Sargon I did. Sargon’s heirs started a tradition of claiming grandiose titles that has lasted throughout time. Even Saddam Hussein liked to be called “Hero President”.


\(^\text{18}\) Ibid., 28.
destroyed Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Nebuchadnezzar II restored Babylon and also encouraged science and literature. Under his reign astrology was invented, planets were postulated, Algebra and mathematical theorems were created, a day was defined as having 24 hours and an hour as having 60 minutes, and spheres were categorized as having 360 degrees. Nebuchadnezzar II destroyed Jerusalem circa 586 B.C.E. and brought back the Jews to Babylon. This enabled much of the Hebrew bible chapters to be written. Internal dissensions enabled the Persians and the Medes to take over in 539 B.C.E. They ruled until 330 B.C.E.\textsuperscript{19}

Alexander the Great conquered the incumbent rulers circa 331 B.C.E., heralding the Macedonian Era, which lasted until 129 B.C.E. Persians again took over Mesopotamia circa 129 B.C.E. through 234 C.E. who were ruled by the Parthian Kingdom. The Sassanid Dynasty took over from the Parthian Kingdom and ruled from 224 C.E.- 636 C.E. In the seventh century Mohammed, coming out of Mesopotamia, brought Islam to the world. From 638 C.E.-661 C.E. the most pertinent occurrence was the Muslim conquest. The religion of Islam would now be a part of virtually every ruling body of Mesopotamia. The remaining dynasties were the Umayyad dynasty from 680 C.E.-750 C.E., the Abbasid dynasty from 750 C.E.-1258 C.E., the Buwayhids from 945 C.E.-1055 C.E. (rendering the Abbasids powerless for a time during their rule), the Seljuk Turks from 1055 C.E.-1258 C.E., the Ilkhanids

from 1258 C.E.-1334 C.E., the Jalairid dynasty from 1334 C.E.-1410 C.E., the black sheep dynasty (Qara-Koyunlu) from 1410 C.E.-1467 C.E., the white sheep dynasty (Aq-Koyunlu) from 1467 C.E.-1509 C.E., the Safavid dynasty from 1509 C.E.-1534 C.E., the Turks of the Ottoman Empire from 1534 C.E.-1915 C.E., and the British occupation and mandate from 1914-1932. Bloodshed was the norm during the dynasties and transfers of power. In many of the dynasties mothers had their oldest son murdered so a younger son could rule, brothers killed brothers to usurp the throne, sons killed fathers to take the throne and other nefarious deeds to attain power through the years.\textsuperscript{20}

The last two major ruling bodies before Saddam assumed power was the British occupation and mandate from 1914-1932 and the monarchy from 1921-1958. The British declared war on the Ottoman Empire about four months after World War I started. The British invasion of the southern area of Iraq, Basra, was ostensibly to protect the oil field in southern Iran. The British needed this oil field as they had recently switched from steam and coal to oil for energy in the military. However, they then decided to take the entire area that was termed Mesopotamia. The British thought that it would be easy to topple the Turks, but the war was anything but easy. The Ottoman sultan called for a \textit{jihad} against the British, Russians, and French. In taking Iraq, the British lost tens of thousands of soldiers, about four years of time, and 750

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 15-30.
million pounds (about 18 billion pounds today, but this number was a huge portion of Britain’s gross national product). During this time Mesopotamia was carved up by the westerners and the country that became Iraq is 437,065 sq km, slightly larger in size than California. The numerous parallels between Britain conquering Iraq and the United States invading Iraq are eerie. The US estimate for the cost of the 2003 war was $30 to $40 billion. This estimate does not come close to the current $12 billion America spends each month on the Iraq war—a war that has lasted almost six years at the time of this writing.

In 1920 the League of Nations met at San Remo in Italy and decided that the Fertile Crescent would be divided into mandates. Syria was given to France; Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine were given to Britain. The rebellion of 1920 ensued after the San Remo conference. The Civil Commissioner Arnold Wilson attempted to treat Iraq as the British had done in India. The Iraqi delegates were not taken seriously when their concerns were mentioned. The Iraqi rebellion, from July to October


British 40 million pounds sterling and 450 human lives. This rebellion made it clear that Wilson’s plan of direct rule would not come to fruition. Instead, Sir Percy Cox, High Commissioner returned to Baghdad and set up an Iraqi interim government. Important to note is that Shiites were under-represented again. In 1921, Winston Churchill, then serving as the Colonial Secretary, decided that an Iraqi government would be created under British tutelage as long as it “be constitutional, representative, and democratic.”25 The British selected and backed Faisal, former king of Syria and dissident leader against the Ottomans, to become the new king of Iraq. Before Faisal took the throne he asked for a national referendum that yielded 96% favor that was erroneously conducted and reported by the British. Faisal took kingship of Iraq on August 23, 1921. Faisal executed a treaty with Britain defining roles for each country in 1922. The treaty stated that Britain would handle Iraq’s defense and internal security, and all other departments would be run by Iraqis, but the British retained veto power. Iraq was also responsible to pay half of the cost incurred for the British residency.

In the years from 1932-1958, Iraq saw major upheavals. Iraq formally gained independence in 1932 with the admittance to the League of Nations. However, the Iraqi government continued to be unstable and lack social and economic developments until circa 1950. Iraq brought in outside help in the form of an

independent development agency, and in about two years it saw a dramatic increase in oil revenue. In about ten years the oil revenues increased about nine times from 1950.\textsuperscript{26} In 1952 another uprising or \textit{intifada}, took place ostensibly because economic and social advancements were not taking place as some expected they should with the increased oil revenues. The arguably freest elections of Iraq took place in 1954 and resulted in quite varied representation in the government. Nuri al-Said, who held many government positions under the British mandate including prime minister, was asked to be president and he would take presidency only if he could disband the results of the 1954 election. The government acquiesced. The old regime did institute economic development and lay the ground work for Iraqi national identity. The regime’s largest weakness was not building political institutions to support the incumbent regime.\textsuperscript{27}

Coups were violent, usually bloody, and became frequent, sometimes as often as every three years. To offer an example, the military revolt of the Free Officers Movement in 1958 was engendered in 1952 when military officers saw the coup led by Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt and decided to start cells of dissention. Nasser served as an inspiration as he became the second president of Egypt in 1954 and furthered Arab nationalism and inspired pan-Arab revolutions in other countries. On

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 128-150.

July 14, 1958, Iraqi military officers Abd al-Karim Qasim and Abd al-Salam Arif led the coup against King Faisal II.\(^{28}\) Arif was to shore up Baghdad in the wake of a coup in Lebanon. Qasim was to remain at Jalaula and move towards Baghdad for support if resistance was encountered. Arif marched on Baghdad in the early morning hours of July 14, 1958, and took over a broadcasting station with which he used to personally announce the coup. Two sections of troops were then dispatched to Nuri al-Said’s house and the other section to the Rihab palace to deal with the prince and the king. The prince ordered the royal brigade not to resist. The prince, king and all family were marched to the courtyard about 8:00 AM and gunned down. Nuri evaded the coup until the following day when wearing an \textit{abaya} and was gunned down on the spot.\(^{29}\)

The next ten years saw two more regime changes precipitated by a military coup and one by an election. In 1959 the Ba’th botched an attempt to change the course of the government by attempting to assassinate Qasim, which was viewed as the only way to change the government since other attempts such as the Mosul rebellion failed. Saddam Hussein was selected and trained for this mission, and this mission became his initial claim to fame. Saddam escaped to Syria, but 78 others were caught and tried. Their adamant defense of their actions gave the Ba’th national

\(^{28}\) The 1958 coup was commemorated by dubbing a bridge in the heart of Baghdad the 14\(^{th}\) of July Bridge.

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 82-87.
attention. Qasim’s coup started to flutter out under an era of increasing Arab nationalism, which Arif supported. Another coup transpired, Arif took control and led from 1963-1966. Arif’s brother was elected and held power from 1966-1968. In 1968 another coup took place by the Ba’th, and the Ba’th took control. Ahmed Hasan al-Bakr became president and commander-in-chief of the Ba’th government, and Saddam was his dependable subordinate.\(^{30}\)

### Saddam’s Regime

Saddam rose through the ranks from 1959-1979 of the Arab Socialist Ba’th Party (Hizb al-Ba’th al-‘Arabi al-Ishtiraki), commonly referred to as the Ba’th. He was second in command in the Ba’th regime, primarily in charge of internal security matters. Saddam was ruthless, arguably due to his rough and destitute rearing. One example of his ruthlessness was when the Ba’th party had taken over the Arif regime. Arif was calmly informed by one of his generals, General Hardan al-Tikriti, that “you are no longer president.”\(^{31}\) A short time after the start of the coup, Colonel Nayif, who was troublesome to the new regime, was invited to meet President Bakr. Ten men held Nayif’s men off while Saddam commenced beating Nayif with a revolver. After

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 87-145.

a short exchange of words, Nayif was offered and accepted an ambassadorship in Morocco. Saddam drove Nayif to the airport, passing through security checkpoints while secretly holding Nayif at gunpoint. Years later Saddam had Nayif shot in London by his assassins.\(^{32}\)

Saddam had started to emerge as the Ba’th leader. Party decisions were put through Bakr and his deputy Saddam. Saddam prepared for his eventual dominance by putting his security men in all state workings, had the political power of the army neutralized, removed all civilians that could rival him, and dominated the president. On July 17, 1979, National Day, Saddam announced himself president of Iraq stating that Bakr resigned due to poor health, although Bakr was placed on house arrest. Five days later Saddam started to purge the government with terror, and he murdered many under the façade of treason. Saddam took part in the firing squad that killed many government members.\(^{33}\) Saddam had started killing all opposition that he sensed, even in the inner circle of his closest friends, and attempted to justify the latter by filming their confessions to a Syrian coup and widely distributed it after the executions.\(^{34}\) Another example of his brutality was when Muhie Abd al-Hussein

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\(^{32}\) Ibid., 278.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 284.

\(^{34}\) Marion, Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958 From Revolution to Dictatorship* (Great Britain: Short Run Press Ltd, 1998), 209.
Mashhadi, Secretary General of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), stood up and said it is inconceivable that Bakr should retire and give up duties in the party and leave the state to Saddam Hussein. He pushed for a vote to have a unanimous outcome. Saddam acted immediately, and he relieved Mashhadi of his responsibilities and forced him to confess to a treasonous plot. Saddam read the names off of a list, the people confessed and they walked out to be executed. This was how Saddam would rule for decades using terror.35

According to the *Report and Recommendations of an Amnesty International Mission to the Government of the Republic of Iraq* reported in January 22-28, 1983 said torture in Iraq was unlawful according to domestic and international law, although exiles said it was utilized before and after Amnesty International’s visit.36 The previous governments were and always held the propensity to be brutal, but Saddam’s regime took brutality to another level. Saddam would progress with his reign of terror, but he focused his attention on Iran first.

In 1980 Iran underwent a revolution which together with Saddam’s unchecked personal ambitions led to the Iran-Iraq war from 1980-1988. Iran was falling out of favor with the United States and the Soviet Union, and Saddam decided the time was


right to go to war with Iran. Many countries were afraid the revolutionary movement in Iran would spread, which fears were confirmed by the new Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini—a religious and political man who led the 1979 Iranian Revolution. He attempted to push the revolution to other Islamic countries, especially Iraq. The Iran-Iraq war lasted eight years, resulted in 400,000 casualties from Iraq (about one million casualties total), cost about 128 billion dollars, and ultimately ended by both countries returning to the pre-war status. Obviously pre-war status was not holistically resumed. Iraq’s financial surplus was drained, and it had accumulated significant debt that it would never recover from under Saddam. About half of the men in Iraq were in the military which reduced the available labor and resources of Iraq. About 250 Iraqis of Iranian decent were deported at the beginning of the war and had their property seized by the state of Iraq, men were paid to divorce their Iranian wives starting in 1982, and Iranian nationalism increased.37 As one can see, Saddam was not a nice guy.

According to Saddam’s Republic is the Republic of Horror, “The fascistic authority in Iraq exercised…all forms of oppression and terrorism against Iraqi families”.38 During the war Saddam augmented his tactics with blatant murder. One example of this is when Saddam graduated from acts of brutality to mass murder with


the murdering of numerous males in the Barzanee clan in the early 1980’s, according to the video *Saddam’s Road to Hell*.\(^3^9\) Saddam would soon do worse things to the Kurds in the North.

The Kurds in the North controlled everything outside of major cities. The Iraqis attacked in a brutal fashion, one not seen since the days of the Mongol invasions, with murder, rape, and plundering. The Iranians saw an opportunity when the Kurds reacted to the brutal attacks, and they moved in and allied with the Kurds. Saddam decided he needed to quell this rising issue in the North, and so he planned operation Anfal\(^4^0\) to deal with it. The Iraq army distributed leaflets with a written warning that chemical weapons would be used. Thousands were killed, and over a million internally displaced persons resulted from the use of the chemical weapons. The emigration, deficit in the treasury, and other negative factors did not personally affect Saddam. Saddam’s primary goal throughout his tenure was to stay in power. Nothing else mattered as much as staying in power, and it was rightly on his mind since the many changes in government, and coups that he took part in and that took place in his lifetime alone.\(^4^1\) On the other hand, the nation— and ultimately

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\(^{4^0}\) From Quaranic verse VIII that talked of the punishment of burning for the wicked.

Saddam—suffered because of crucial issues he ignored while attempting to stay in power.

Saddam celebrated after the Iran-Iraq war, even though his country was in debt, and he started to sense possible resistance from the military. At the end of the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam had the “Hands of Victory” monument built at the entrance of a parade ground in Baghdad to commemorate the claimed victory. Two hands sculpted to be Saddam’s hands rose out of the ground through two piles of Iranian helmets taken from the front lines. The hands hold Arab swords that weigh 24 tons, and they are made from the metal of rifles carried by fallen Iraqis.42 Iraq was not destitute, but it needed to watch what it spent, and still the monument was built. The cost of the monument would not lead to the eventual downfall, but behaviors like the non-pertinent acquisition of the “Hands of Victory” contributed to the decrease in quality of life and burgeoning debt. Iraq had borrowed billions of dollars, took actions that decreased gross domestic product, and suffered revenue losses due to over production of oil. After the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam wanted to quell any threats to the regime that might surface. Even though Saddam could not afford to do this, he reverted back to his behavior of the 1970s and early 1980s, focusing on his largest threat: the military. Saddam had to trust the military officers more in the Iran-Iraq war than ever before and they performed competently. With a large, confident military,

and a volatile history filled with coups, Saddam started to see the military as a threat to his longevity.43

Saddam broke the cohesion of the military officers, using various nefarious methods to take them out of power. In two attempted coups in 1988 and 1989, he took advantage and purged anyone he deemed as a threat. Saddam even started to distrust family members within his regime and began replacing his inner circle with close family members he trusted personally. Hence, the government started to become a family business. Saddam kept a large military and expanded security services and police. Some experts say he could have managed and broken close to even with his annual budget if he reduced the military and not increased police and security services. Other experts say Saddam would have needed $10 billion more a year to break even.44 As one can see, Iraq was a failing state if it was not already a failed state.45 Regardless, Saddam needed a quick economic fix and Kuwait would be the answer to his financial woes. Adding to Saddam’s problem was the oil pricing crisis. In January of 1990 oil was selling for $21 a barrel, but by the summer the price had

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45 A failed state is generally defined as a government that is so weak that it has little control over much of its territory and/or can no longer provide regulatory services to the people.
fallen to $11 a barrel due to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) overproduction, mainly from Kuwait and the UAE.\textsuperscript{46}

The final impetus to the war followed a meeting of OPEC ministers on July 10\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th}, 1990, where the ministers attempted to hold the line of production. Three days later Kuwait stated that it would reconsider production rates in October. On July 15, 1990, Iraq sent a letter to the Arab League stating its position against Kuwait. On July 16, 1990, troops secretly advanced toward Kuwait and on July 21\textsuperscript{st} the deployments were made public. Saddam miscalculated his actions as surrounding countries, some initially sympathetic, understood the negative impact of possible Iraqi hegemony. The United Nations (UN) passed United Nation Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 660, which condemned the Iraqi invasion. A short time later UNSCR 661 passed, placing a total economic embargo on Iraq, including transfer of funds except for necessities of life, food and medicine.\textsuperscript{47} In essence, the world disagreed with Iraq and took actions against it.

Saddam touched two things the powers of the world would not tolerate: oil and money. Whether right or wrong, morally or ethically, Saddam’s invasion of Kuwait, an American congressman said, might have been overlooked if Kuwait

\textsuperscript{46} Phebe Marr, \textit{The Modern History of Iraq}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), 221.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 229-231.
produced bananas rather than oil.\footnote{William R. Polk, \textit{Understanding Iraq: The Whole Sweep of Iraqi History, From Genghis Khan’s Mongols to the Ottoman Turks to the British Mandate to the American Occupation} (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005), 147.} Saddam plundered about $2 billion from the Kuwaiti central bank, but he did not realize that not all of Kuwait’s cash was in vaults but in the international financial system. The rest of the world froze those assets. Dr. Evgeni Primakov, a member of Mikhail Gorbachev’s Security Council, flew to Baghdad and got Saddam to agree to withdraw from Kuwait on two conditions: American troop withdrawal and an international conference to convene over problems in the Middle-East. Primakov then flew to Washington, D.C. to talk to President George H. Bush about the conditions. Primakov was prepared to stay in Washington, D.C. as long as it took. President Bush asked for time and a short while later a White House aid came to tell Primakov to pack his bags. Apparently the United States had already decided on war.\footnote{Ibid., 147-148.}

Despite ostensible diplomatic efforts from US Secretary of State James Baker and UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar, Saddam held firm. Perhaps Saddam did not want to lose face to the world or he thought his army would lead a successful coup against him, but his actions would be for the worst. On January 17, 1991, the United States commenced the war. However, there was no contest. Saddam’s army had outdated equipment, and Iraqi targets were destroyed by air
Iraqi forces started to withdraw on February 15, 1991, but US forces were sent in and about 30,000 Iraqi soldiers were killed—the “road of death” massacre—although the Republican Guard escaped. Saddam capitulated on February 27 and the United States ceased fire. Bush was criticized for stopping short of Baghdad, but he replied that if the invasion had taken place, the United States could still be an occupying power. Rather, UNSCR 687, known as the sanctions regime, was passed on April 3, 1991. When the Iraqis did not comply with inspectors they were bombed. The sanctions on virtually everything but certain foods and medical supplies were some of the most draconian measures utilized on a defeated entity according to critics. In 1994, Iraq hit bottom from the sanctions. Iraq arguably became a failed state in 1994 if it had not already done so. Hospitals were out of medicine, clean drinking water was hard to find or unavailable, and malnutrition was seen almost everywhere. Between 1996 and 2002, Saddam helped the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) fight other Kurdish groups and watched the United States continually try to have him removed. When this did not work, an accusation of Iraq possessing Weapons of Mass

\[50\] Ibid., 151.
Destruction (WMD) was made, contrary to the findings of the CIA, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). In 2003, this claim of WMD was the reason for going to war and removing Saddam Hussein.\(^5\)

For millennia, the area of Iraq has been fought over, conquered, overthrown, and subject to unrest. This continually worsened under Saddam’s regime. With the shift from exporting grain in the early 20\(^{th}\) century to the discovery and exportation of oil which expanded exponentially in the 20\(^{th}\) century, Saddam had the opportunity to modernize considerably. Instead, Saddam’s brutal, masochistic regime arguably caused the most damage and regression to almost every aspect of Iraqi society. This would make reconstruction exponentially more difficult for all involved. The following quote succinctly summarizes this chapter well so far, “Mesopotamia has always been in upheaval, down to present day.”\(^5\)

**The Invasion**

Before President George W. Bush became president, powerful voices started urging regime change. On January 26, 1998, a group of Americans wrote a letter to then President Bill Clinton advocating a strategy that would remove Saddam Hussein

\(^5\) Ibid., 152-168.

from power. The letter also noted that the United States could no longer rely on other coalition powers of the Gulf War to uphold the sanctions that were placed on Iraq, and expressed concern about the proliferation of nuclear weapons in Iraq. The letter stated that Iraq posed a threat to world security in the 21st century. The letter stated that as diplomacy clearly continues to fail, military action should be taken. The signatories to the letter who became senior advisors in the administration of George W. Bush were US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld; US Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz; US Trade Representative, Robert Zoellick; Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage; Under Secretary of State, John Bolton; Under Secretary of State, Paula Dobriansky; Assistant Secretary of Defense, Peter Rodman; senior NSC official Elliot Adams; Senior NSC official Zalmay Khalizad; and senior Bush advisor Richard Perle. Even without the impetus or possible excuse of September 11, 2001, George W. Bush may have still invaded Iraq. According to Geoff Simons, author of *Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam*, “Through 2002 it was obvious that the United States was planning a final military onslaught on Iraq and that world opinion, the authority of the United Nations and international law would be ignored.”53 A remapping of the Middle-East region and creation of a pro-American regime in Iraq through war was

also advocated by the Hudson Institute, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Jewish Institute for National Security (JINSA).\footnote{Naseer Aruri, “America’s War Against Iraq, 1900-2002,” in \textit{Iraq: Its people, History and Politics}, ed. Shams C. Inati (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2003), 283.}

In both President Bush’s State of the Union Address of 2002 and the National Security Strategy of the United States from the White House of the same year, rogue states, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and terrorism were viewed as an aggregate threat to the American peoples’ security.\footnote{Toby Dodge, \textit{Iraq’s Future: The Aftermath of Regime Change} (New York, NY Routledge, 2005), 6.} All elements of diplomatic, financial, and military means were to be employed, although some would argue that this was not sufficiently done.\footnote{Ibid., 6.} Later that same year the United States showed concern about Saddam possessing WMD and his flippant cooperation with weapons inspectors. The first stated reason from the United States about its invasion of the sovereign nation of Iraq was because Saddam ostensibly possessed and would not give up WMD. Saddam deployed chemical weapons (CW) on the Iranians and Kurds in the North near the end of the Iran-Iraq war. The United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) subsequently destroyed large amounts of chemical biological (CB) weapons in Iraq since 1991. Later UN inspectors reported no concrete evidence that Iraq had WMD prior to the 2003 invasion. However, it was still
reasonable to believe that Iraq may have been a harbinger of CB weapons as the Iraqi government did not provide adequate evidence supporting its statement that it destroyed its CB weapons arsenal. They also could not account for CB weapons that were known to be possessed by Iraq. Finally, the Iraqi obstructions of the UN weapons inspectors also made it reasonable to believe Saddam may have been hiding something.\(^5\) One only has to look back to recent history to understand Saddam’s devious behavior. UNSCOM uncovered and properly destroyed an undeclared network of 40 nuclear research facilities, three surreptitious uranium enrichment facilities and a laboratory-scale plutonium separation program between 1991-1994, despite Iraq’s statement of possessing no nuclear weapons facilities or unsafeguarded material.\(^6\) Whether or not Saddam actually possessed WMD, perhaps he wanted his country and the rest of the world to think he had these weapons to maintain security and power at home and to protect Iraq—and himself—from enemies abroad. There are many possible explanations of Saddam’s situation, but his previous hiding of nuclear capabilities and his noncompliance with UN inspectors ultimately led to military action. Saddam could have avoided a war on the pretense of WMD, although


war may still have come anyway. However, according to George W. Bush, “he is a problem. And we’re going to deal with him.”

The attack commenced March 20, 2003, using air power to “shock and awe” and prepare the battlefield. About 10,000 Iraqi civilians and tens of thousands of Iraqi soldiers were killed in a few weeks juxtaposed with 128 American and 31 British soldiers killed, mostly from friendly fire. The US use of air power to prepare the battlefield was the difference between the number of casualties. Cluster munitions were used, which exponentially increased destruction at bomb deployment and later from unexploded ordinance (UXO), when humans or animals would come upon them. Small pockets of resistance pervaded, mainly in Basra, Mosul, and Baghdad, but they were dealt with promptly. Some Iraqis even tried to fight tanks with their rifles and through suicide attempts. Regardless, the Iraqis were outnumbered and overpowered, and the war was over quickly. On April 16, 2003, President Bush said Iraq was liberated. The war was officially over May 1, 2003. The chaos and resistance that ensued were unexpected, although it had been predicted in some quarters.

Summary

Evidence suggests that the first humans walked in Africa or Mesopotamia. The area near the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers is known as the cradle of civilization. It produced advancements such as written language and the wheel. Later, because of developments such as farming and the plow, the population started to grow, resulting in degradation of intimate neighborhoods and kinship. The population increased to a point that it was hard or impossible to know everyone in the neighborhood as well as one’s immediate neighbors. Kinship bonds weakened in the same way when families continued to grow and branch out, and kinship bonds were no longer able to manage social conflict. Religion based patriotism was used to keep social order but tribalism and differences between urban gods counterbalanced some of the social conflict management. Tribalism played a key role in social conflict because the ancient Bedouins of Iraq knew that the tribe that controls the resources of a particular area lives and those not in control perish. Bedouins did not share power or resources with different tribes and tribal gain became part of the Bedouin culture. The effects of a tribal culture became the impetus for many bloody attacks against others. The Iraqi history outlined in this chapter is meant to demonstrate that violence was the norm to achieve what one wanted. War and turbulence in the Middle East became common, which was exacerbated by frequent changes in rulers. Many social and cultural aspects that were engendered in ancient times still persist today in Middle Eastern
culture. This will be discussed further in later chapters. The most important social and cultural aspects are clan and tribal bonds, and loyalty as defined by Iraqi culture as opposed to American culture. The governmental system in Iraq was usually monarchic, dictatorial, or autocratic, and Iraqis have not had the experience of governing themselves. This was due to the strongest tribe ruling, lack of sharing power, and personal or tribal gain. Bloodshed was constant and coups happened frequently, even in the 20th century. Conqueror after conqueror and coup after coup ultimately led to Saddam Hussein’s regime. Saddam had the tools to do great things with Iraq but instead chose to rule sadistically. Entering war with Iran early in his rule caused serious fiscal and social problems. His decisions ultimately led to Iraq becoming a failed state. The violent slippery slope stemming from Iraqi culture, specifically tribalism, led to tyrannical rule. A contemporary example would be Iraq invading Kuwait in 1990, to acquire and hoard resources. There was a disconnection between the young United States and the deep rooted culture of Iraq. This difference in culture and disconnection with Iraq led to the eventual invasions by the United States.
CHAPTER 2

IRAQ AS A FAILED STATE

In chapter one we saw that Iraq was a failed state. This chapter will move beyond the period as a failed state before and under Saddam, which was described in chapter one, and focus on the post-invasion. To do this some history of post-invasion Iraq must be shown to paint an accurate picture of the reality on the ground.

Whether by ignorance or negligence of the magnitude of effort that would be needed after the initial hostilities in Iraq, the United States did a great disservice to the formation of the Iraqi government post-Saddam. Part of this is due to the US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, limiting troop numbers for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Rumsfeld stressed a desire to his subordinates to keep the numbers of soldiers low, relying heavily on technical advantages such as precision bombing.1 This sufficed for the warring part of the invasion and ousting the regime, but did not adequately address the needs of the reconstruction efforts.

After the invasion a study was published on the numbers of US soldiers used for the invasion of Iraq and its aftermath. During his rule, Saddam had used 43 personnel per 1000 citizens, police, soldiers and others, to keep the population of Iraq

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under control. The study states that the United States should have used no less than 20 personnel per 1000 to stabilize Iraq after the invasion. This translates to 400,000 to 500,000 US soldiers on the ground after the invasion. In actuality, the United States utilized only 116,000 in the heart of the invasion. Adding service and support troops the number was 310,000. ² Even with a surge of 21,500 additional troops in 2006-2007, the surge level still never came close to what the study found America should have used. ³ This led to the inability of the United States to establish law and order within the first six to twelve weeks after the toppling of Saddam’s regime. This is a common theme between transitioning administrations or governments. Stability is a key factor to achieve credibility and legitimacy for the occupiers. ⁴ Anthony H. Cordesman notes that manpower should have been dominant, not technological advancements like unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). Civil-military operations, low-intensity combat, security, economic aid, and information campaigns require boots on the ground. Cordesman also argues that more soldiers alone would not have fixed the problem, as skilled-manpower is required with linguists, troops with expertise in the


Iraq area, specialists in civic relations and nation building, and more troops trained in guerrilla warfare.\(^5\)

Aside from an inadequate number of soldiers, much else did not go as planned for the United States. One assumption at the beginning of the air war was that a coup would overthrow Saddam, leaving much of the governance structure and infrastructure in place.\(^6\) Obviously this coup never materialized. It appears as if President Bush and his cabinet were following President Woodrow Wilson’s example of which Harold Lasswell wrote, “Wilson’s speeches were one, long instigation to revolt.”\(^7\) President Bush emulated Woodrow Wilson when he stated, “Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them.” in an “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People”.\(^8\) A coup may have helped the aftermath of the hostilities, if the structures had been left in place, but the planners should have had other options, not putting too much weight on a coup taking place. It appears the United States did rely on the materialization of the coup or did not accurately anticipate what would happen. With the US actions of disbanding


\(^6\) Ibid., 10.


the Iraqi army and numerous other civil structures, there was no political or civil structure left. Some of this came from the fear that the former Ba’thist regime members would influence the new government in a different direction than the democratic path the United States had planned for Iraq. Regardless, after the initial invasion, American troops and allies were the only executors of anything that resembled civil structure. Virtually nothing else functioned. For instance, there were no more police for an Iraq lady to turn to when she was assaulted, or to deal with thieves. Iraq was almost like the lawless American West in the 1800s, except most Iraqis stayed indoors and laid low after the invasion. Some, however, did not. In fact, there were many people on the streets but usually involved in crime. Phebe Marr paints a post-invasion picture vividly.

The fall of Saddam Hussein and his security apparatus was followed by widespread looting and rampaging. The damage was considerable. Priceless treasures from the National Museum, including world-famous antiquities, were stolen, and much of the National Library was burned and destroyed. In addition, substantial portions of Iraq’s infrastructure—hospitals, schools, the electricity grid, oil facilities—were badly damaged, creating a major problem for reconstruction.9

As one can see, the damage left after the invasion was significant, and problems for reconstruction were exacerbated.

Retired US General Jay Garner was appointed to become the governor of Iraq after the fall of Saddam. Garner announced that he intended to hold the post of Iraqi governor for no more than 90 days. Ostensibly Garner was not performing as superiors wished, and he was replaced after only three weeks by L. Paul Bremer III. Bremer quickly disbanded what was left of the Iraqi Army. This action left about 500,000 people unemployed—they were told to go to their homes. Garner had planned to keep the army together and use them for paid labor, as labor battalions. Many critics argued that the disbanding of the army and other civil structures under US leadership created more of a problem for the United States and the infant Iraqi government by putting many people out of work. Additionally, many of the soldiers took their arms and munitions with them. Procurement of simple food and potable water soon became a concern for many Iraqis. Inflation made the Iraqi Dinar (ID) worthless. To go “shopping” started to mean looting. Saddam had previously made this problem worse when he amnestied many thousands of prisoners in 2002. Most were political prisoners but thousands were violent criminals that had committed murder, rape, etc. This amnesty contributed to the criminal problems (theft, robbery, murder, etc.) after the invasion. The United States exacerbated the negative situation


by not restoring order fast enough and possibly enabling the remounting of the former Ba’thist and insurgents. Clearly, US priorities were oilfields, since they were quickly secured. There were no US forces to mitigate the mass looting of museums, empty palaces, hospitals, and schools. Lawlessness abounded.

The downward spiral started with the rampant looting and lack of security. At first the demonstrations by Iraqis regarding the unavailability of food for Iraqis were peaceful until the US Army open-fired on a crowd of civilians. Iraqi insurgents soon followed. From there, the attacks on the coalition forces only got worse and more Iraqis as well as outsiders helped augment the insurgent numbers. The United States did a poor job planning for the post-invasion period, and as a result it was executed poorly. Planning was focused on winning the war and securing the oilfields. The United States did neither comprehend the holistic situation nor care about the fact that looting and lawlessness decreased the Iraqi opinion of Americans.\textsuperscript{12} After a brief period of euphoria following the invasion, life descended to a worse situation than pre-invasion. After the fall of Saddam, it was said that inhabitants of the al-Dura section of Baghdad came out to meet the American soldiers with open arms, tried to kiss them on the cheek and offer them soda. A few of the happy civilians however warned that some, who were still loyal to Saddam, lurked about.

If one uses past performance as an indicator of future potential, Washington engaged in near futile efforts. Military intervention into failed states has had a low level of success. The UN’s Transitional Authority in Cambodia in 1992-1993 did not render meaningful change. Efforts in Somalia resulted in a disgraceful exit of US troops and the collapse of the UN mission. Intervention in Haiti did nothing to change politics, as violence there abounded later in 2004. It is too early to draw definitive conclusions regarding Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Kosovo.\(^{13}\) Above all is the unsuccessful British example in Iraq marked by an Iraqi insurgency resulting in their ignominious exit. The US government ignored these lessons. The United States was remiss for executing wishful thinking, such as hoping for a coup to remove Saddam prior to the invasion, and even ignoring historical precedents. Hope should not be a course of action. US Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld’s reduction in the numbers of troops and reliance on technological advancements was acceptable for war activities but not the civil operations conducted post invasion.

However, one must also explore the possibility that there were ulterior motives for the war. For example, many contracts were disbursed to American companies post-invasion with Halliburton the most famous. Apparently, Washington and London did not seem to care that many of the post-war activities were in violation of international laws. Lord Goldsmith, British Attorney General, notified British Prime

Minister Tony Blair that anything done beyond essential maintenance of security needed authorization from the UN. If UN authorization was not attained, as when controlling the supply and sale of oil, forming an interim Iraqi administration and brokering reconstruction contracts, the actions would be illegal. Not only was the war illegal, but also many of the post-war actions, according to the Hague Regulations of 1907 and the Geneva Conventions of 1949. Washington later moved to get the UN to underwrite British and American actions. UNSCR 1483 and 1500 helped legitimize the situation. UNSCR 1483 made America and Britain the “authority” in Iraq and allowed the “authority” to disburse funds derived from oil. They needed to secure approval from the Iraqi Interim Administration, which was emplaced by the United States and Britain. However, things did not improve overnight in Iraq even with oil funds dispersed for the development of Iraq.14

Some of the first post-war missions for US Army units in Baghdad were to secure banks, gas stations, and propane stations (a large number of Iraqis used propane in their homes), to patrol their designated areas, and to help re-establish police stations. Post-invasion Iraq would have been a horrible place to live in as a civilian, due to a lack of security and services. Later missions would include village assessments of rural areas and platoon-level elements would coordinate with local Iraqis to acquire funds for needed contracts. One example of these missions was

analysis of the village assessment data that reflected a lack of potable water in villages. A shortage of water for rural Iraqis, especially in an extremely hot, dry place, where summer temperatures could crest 130 degrees Fahrenheit, could have turned into a life-threatening situation. The analysis from the village assessment data resulted in a US soldier coordinating with the head of the water sanitation system in a particular area to enable funding for repair of two water sanitation and pumping stations.

With the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom I (OIF I), US blunders contributed greatly to compounding future problems in executing the political reconstruction of Iraq. As one can see, the United States did not set the conditions for the infantile democratic Iraqi government to succeed. America showed lack of preparation when virtually no occupation authority could speak or understand Arabic, dissimilar to WWII when many were trained in native languages, which decreased misunderstanding and resentment.\textsuperscript{15} In fact, only one of the senior officials was proficient in Arabic, the general language of Iraq.\textsuperscript{16} The United States has spent trillions of dollars in an effort that was originally poorly planned, and has compounded and lengthened the time needed for reconstruction in Iraq.


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 173.
What Has Happened Since 2003?

Iraq was a failing state under Saddam, but Iraq plummeted to a failed state following the invasion and post-war insurgency. Iraq has changed exponentially from the extreme nadir of the time period directly following the invasion, to now having services and advancing the infrastructure. There was also a period that security for the citizens plummeted and violence ran amuck, but security since improved and more than half of the 18 provinces in Iraq are now under Iraqi control. But how did Iraq get from a failed state with no functioning civil services to where it is now?

The United States invaded Iraq in March of 2003, and on May 1, 2003, the war was declared over by President Bush. The United States occupied and ran the country. There was order only if the military acted. As a result of the war, there was no functioning civil structure e.g. police stations, and courts of law. One of the first units to hold elections was the 1st battalion, 187th Infantry Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, commanded by General David Petraeus. This took place in the North Western area of Iraq, in and around Tal Afar. The battalion built ballot boxes, voting booths, provided all of the ballots and other election materials, and proctored the local elections.
Near this time, in the end of May, 2003, the UN passed UNSCR 1483, which was an important document that paved the way for the Iraqi reconstruction. The highlighted points included:

- Lifted the economic sanctions burden on Iraqi people
- Encouraged the international community to help the Iraqi people build a better future
- Established the position of a UN Special Representative in Iraq
- Time frame for concluding the Oil-for-Food program (OFF) over a six-month period
- Supported Iraqis in planning their own political and economic future
- Reaffirmed the Coalition’s commitment to work with the UN and an Iraqi Interim Administration to transition authority to an internationally-recognized government

There was violence in terms of the insurgencies, but it was not near the level that it would rise to in subsequent years. This lower level of violence enabled the US military to move from combat operations to civil-military operations, thus helping in the reconstruction of Iraq. The US military conducted many village assessments, addressed immediate needs as best they could, and tried to provide security.

Reconstruction efforts continued in many aspects, especially political, and in mid-July, Iraq’s Governing Council was formed, which included 25 members that tried to

represent Iraq’s diversity. By mid-September, city councils were formed in every major Iraqi city, and 85% of Iraqi towns possessed councils. Advisory councils were formed for all Baghdad neighborhoods along with improving Baghdad’s poorest neighborhoods. There were at least eleven government ministry buildings that had been tended to or equipped, and many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) were funded to render local services and to reconstitute civil society.\(^{18}\) Reconstruction efforts continued on many fronts. On November 21, 2003, administrative authority for the Oil-for-Food program (OFF) shifted to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). The six-month weaning period was an attempt to ensure that civilian needs would still be met. On December 15, 2003, the following month, Iraqi health care was restored to pre-war levels.\(^{19}\)

In early 2004, about one year after the invasion, many reconstruction efforts were going well according to an aggregate view of Iraq. The five categories highlighted were education, freedom and democracy, security, infrastructure, and quality of life. On the education front, over 180,000 desks, 61,000 chalk boards, 808,000 primary student kits, and 81,000 teacher kits were distributed to move education forward. Over eight million textbooks were distributed, and 35,000 people


were trained in the field of education. Teacher salary was also raised to 16 times that of the pre-war era. In total, 2,300 schools were renovated with 4,500 new schools planned to be built over the next four years.20

According to the Bureau of Public Affairs, freedom and democracy in Iraq was set to achieve sovereignty again on June 30, 2004. Provincial councils in many local governing sectors were revived and were more representative of ethnic groups and women. The Iraqi justice system started functioning again and most importantly, Iraqis signed the interim Iraqi constitution, which grants rights for all Iraqis. Under this unprecedented Iraqi constitution, discrimination based on gender, nationality, religion or origin became prohibited. Other key rights that the new Iraqi constitution granted were the right to assemble peaceably, be treated equally under the law, and freedom of religion and expression. Numerous media sources such as print, radio, and television started flourishing.21

In regards to infrastructure and security, improvements were made despite other negative conditions. A complicating factor was the importation of weapons, supplies, and terrorists through Syria, which had a direct negative affect on US and coalition forces. Action needed to be taken to cease this enemy supply operation and trafficking. On May 11th of 2004, President Bush signed an Executive Order


21 Ibid.
imposing sanctions on Syria for the Syrian government’s support of terrorist groups, its military presence in Lebanon, its pursuit of WMD, and its efforts to sabotage US and international efforts for the reconstruction of Iraq.\textsuperscript{22} As of 2004, there were more Iraqis protecting other Iraqis than coalition forces, and 46 of the 55 most wanted members of the Saddam Hussein regime were killed or captured.\textsuperscript{23}

Infrastructure had also been improved. For example, the flow of electricity returned to pre-war levels from the fall of 2003. Baghdad used to have power the majority of the day, and other parts of Iraq would go a few hours a day on electricity or a few days without electricity. Now, power was more fairly distributed over Iraq. The budget for healthcare in 2004 was over 79 times that of the budget from Saddam Hussein’s regime in 2002. Other markers of improvement were oil output at 2.5 million barrels per day (BPD), small businesses thrived, and the new Iraqi Dinar rose 25\%.\textsuperscript{24}

2004 was a year of overall improvement for Iraq, despite an increasing level of violence. On June 28, 2004, Iraq achieved sovereignty when its first Prime Minister,


\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
Iyad Allawi took over from Paul Bremer.\textsuperscript{25} The year 2005 would prove to be a better year in many ways, but above all political achievements was the milestone of the election held on January 30, 2005. This election reflected the will of the Iraqi people and their desire to have a representative government committed to democracy and the well being of the Iraqi people. Roughly one-third of Iraqis out of a total of 23.6 million\textsuperscript{26} to 27.1 million\textsuperscript{27} people, voted for this freely elected government; specifically the election resulted in an elected 275-member Transitional National Authority (TNA), provincial councils for all of Iraq’s provinces, and a Kurdish regional government.\textsuperscript{28} This election was planned and executed by Iraqis with the UN Electoral Assistance Division advising the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) and with some NGO technical support and assistance.\textsuperscript{29}

The election showed the Iraqis’ will to exercise their democratic right, even at the possible cost of violence; the people of Iraq chose a democratically elected

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\item \textsuperscript{27} Toby Dodge, \textit{Iraq’s Future: The Aftermath of Regime Change} (New York, NY Routledge, 2005), 8.
\item \textsuperscript{28} U.S. Department of State, “Milestones in Iraq’s Political Development,” http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/66532.htm (accessed October 16, 2008).
\item \textsuperscript{29} U.S. Department of State, “The January 30\textsuperscript{th} Iraqi Elections,” http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/rls/41199.htm (accessed October 16, 2008).
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government, something that had not happened for at least thirty years. The democratic will of the people was reflected by the fact that 265,000 Iraqis utilized the Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) program.

Enough Iraqis showed their desire for a democratically elected government by voting, although, many Iraqis may not have wanted this participatory system. In April of 2005, the cabinet came together, forming a very diverse administration. However, the Sunni Arabs were underrepresented because the majority ultimately decided not to participate.

According to the National Strategy for Victory, the rejectionists were mainly comprised of Sunni Arabs that still clung to the Iraq of Saddam Hussein, in which they were the elite. Many rejectionists disagreed with the new Iraqi constitution and avoided the democratic process, but some realized that being absent in the democratic process hurt them. The effects of the Sunni political abstinence were mitigated in June 2005, when the incumbents recognized the importance of conference from all


Iraq’s major groups. As a result the incumbents extended a formal invitation to non-elected Sunni Arabs to join in the constitutional debates.\(^{34}\)

The democratic participation rose as the election process continued in Iraq. In mid-October, 2005, a national referendum on the permanent constitution was held in which 70% of Iraq’s eligible voters, 9.8 million, voted on the constitution, and in mid-December 78% of voters, 12.2 million, participated in the election for the Council of Representatives by casting their ballot.\(^{35}\) Soon after, on May 20, 2006, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki selected and attained approval for a 39-member cabinet.\(^{36}\) Less than 25% of the Iraqi population failed to cast their vote. This is arguably better participation than the United States of America during presidential elections and especially local elections; America has historically had 55% participation for presidential elections during 1960-2004, with local elections typically having even less.\(^{37}\) Iraqi voters are more disadvantaged than the typical American voters because they are more limited in transportation but above all the ambient and specific threat of violence from extremists. American voters may have some issues with voting, but

\(^{34}\) U.S. Department of State, “Milestones in Iraq’s Political Development,”

\(^{35}\) Ibid.

\(^{36}\) Congressional Research Service, summary of Iraq: United Nations and Humanitarian Aid Organizations, by Tom Coipuram, Jr., RL31766,

they are not as significant as the Iraqi voter’s plight. The juxtaposition of American and Iraqi voting participation shows that Iraqis vehemently want a democratic system in which they could have a say, and they wanted the system to work.\(^{38}\) A quintessential example of Iraqis wanting democracy in the National Democratic Institute *Iraqis Discuss Their Country’s Future: Post-War Perspectives from the Iraqi Street* was a Kurdish man from Kirkuk who said, “First we want democracy, and then we can be Muslims within the rules set by democracy. If you start with Islam first, then that means there is no democracy. So it must be democracy first, and then Islam.”\(^{39}\)

In June 2006, the Iraqi government, possibly feeling pressure from the United States, articulated eighteen commitments to the U.S. These eighteen commitments were then termed “benchmarks” for progress. The benchmarks in the table below are found in the *Testimony Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, Securing, Stabilizing, and Rebuilding Iraq, Iraqi Government Has Not Met Most Legislative, Security, and Economic Benchmarks* from the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO). The text of the benchmark table reads:\(^{40}\)

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\(^{40}\) Government Accountability Office, Testimony Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, *Securing, Stabilizing, and Rebuilding Iraq: Iraqi Government Has Not Met Most*
Table 1.
GAO Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark</th>
<th>GAO assessment</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Forming a Constitutional Review Committee and completing the</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>Committee formed but amendments not approved by the Iraqi legislature and no referendum scheduled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constitutional review.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Enacting and implementing legislation on de-Ba'athification.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>Laws drafted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Enacting and implementing legislation to ensure the equitable</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>3 of 4 components drafted; none being considered by parliament.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distribution of hydrocarbon resources of the people of Iraq without</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regard to the sect or ethnicity of recipients, and enacting and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implementing legislation to ensure that the energy resources of Iraq</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>benefit Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, Kurds, and other Iraqi citizens in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an equitable manner.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Enacting and implementing legislation on procedures to form</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>Law enacted; implementation scheduled for 2008.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>semi-autonomous regions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Enacting and implementing legislation establishing an Independent</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>Commission law enacted and implemented; however, supporting laws not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Electoral Commission, provincial elections law, provincial</td>
<td></td>
<td>enacted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>council authorities, and a date for provincial elections.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Enacting and implementing legislation establishing a strong militia</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>No law drafted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disarmament program to ensure that such security forces are</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accountable only to the central government and loyal to the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution of Iraq.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Establishing supporting political, media, economic, and services</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>Committees established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>committees in support of the Baghdad security plan.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Providing three trained and ready brigades to support Baghdad</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>Forces provided; some of limited effectiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Providing Iraqi commanders with all authorities to execute this</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>Political intervention continues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plan and to make tactical and operational decisions, in consultation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with U.S. commanders, without political intervention, to include the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authority to pursue all extremists, including Sunni insurgents and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiite militias.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Ensuring that Iraqi security forces are providing even-handed</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>Iraqi security forces engaged in sectarian-based abuses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enforcement of the law.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Ensuring that, according to President Bush, Prime Minister Maliki</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>Militia infiltration of some security forces enables some safe havens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>said “the Baghdad security plan will not provide a safe haven for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>any outlaws, regardless of [their] sectarian or political affiliation.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Reducing the level of sectarian violence in Iraq and eliminating</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>Militias control some local security; unclear whether sectarian violence has decreased.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>militia control of local security.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Establishing all of the planned joint security stations in</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>32 of 34 stations established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neighborhoods across Baghdad.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Increasing the number of Iraqi security forces units capable of</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>Number of independent units declined between March and July 2007.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operating independently.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Ensuring that the rights of minority political parties in the Iraqi</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>Legislators’ rights protected; minority citizens’ rights unprotected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legislature are protected.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Allocating and spending $10 billion in Iraqi revenues for</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>Funds allocated but unlikely to be fully spent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reconstruction projects, including delivery of essential services,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on an equitable basis.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Ensuring that Iraq’s political authorities are not</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>Unsubstantiated accusations continue to be made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>undermining or making false accusations against members of the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi security forces.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table above is an independent, objective assessment of the benchmarks from the GAO. This information was downplayed by the US government. The table illustrates the lack of benchmarks that have been met. The only benchmarks fully met are #8 (“Establishing supporting political, media, economic, and services committees in support of the Baghdad security plan.”), #14 (“Establishing all of the planned joint security stations in neighborhoods across Baghdad.”), and #16 (“Ensuring that the rights of minority political parties in Iraqi legislature are protected.”). The partially met benchmarks are #4 (“Enacting and implementing legislation on procedures to form semi-autonomous regions.”), #9 (“Providing three trained and ready brigades to support Baghdad operations.”), #12 (“Ensuring that, according to President Bush, Prime Minister Maliki said ‘the Baghdad security plan will not provide a safe haven for any outlaws, regardless of [their] sectarian or political affiliation.’”), and #17 (Allocating and spending 10 billion in Iraqi revenues for reconstruction projects, including delivery of essential services, on an equitable basis.”). The remaining benchmarks were not met.41

In the article “GAO: Iraq Has Met Few Benchmarks”, McMichael reports that when the GAO report was submitted, the incumbent administration downplayed the findings. The Administration’s last quarterly review, based on a different set of standards than the GAO’s evaluation, said that Iraq was making “satisfactory

41 Ibid., 6.
progress” toward meeting eight benchmarks. The Pentagon also downplayed the findings of the GAO report in a statement by Defense Department spokesman Geoff Morrell. In turn, he also downplayed another report by retired Marine Corps General James Jones, who did not give the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) a good evaluation. Morrell also commented that the GAO report did not account for the ostensible recent decrease in violence.42

The GAO report focused on data for the period through July 31, 2007, by David M. Walker, Comptroller General of the United States.43 In September General Petraeus presented a report on the status of Iraq, specifically concentrating on the effects of the “surge” in 2007. In this report, General Petraeus claimed that violence was down, especially within the last month, August—but this would not be visible because the GAO report did not cover that month.44 This is in stark contrast to the GAO report, which said “It is unclear whether sectarian violence in Iraq has decreased.”45 He also stated, “Overall, key legislation has not been passed, violence


43 Ibid.


remains high and it is unclear whether the Iraqi government will spend ten billion [of its own money] in reconstruction funds.” When Walker was asked by congress to give a succinct status on the Iraqi government’s performance he stated, “I think you’d have to say…the government is dysfunctional.” One can see from the conflicting accounts that they were not in accord.

Walker’s office was concerned that the incumbent administration would obscure the truth by putting pressure on media and official reports. A draft copy of the GAO report was leaked at the end of August to the Washington Post, reportedly to avoid any pressure from the administration to change the findings. In the draft, only two of the benchmarks were partially met, unlike the four in the final version. When Morrell was confronted with this, he stated that policy officials “made some factual corrections” and “offered some suggestions on a few of the actual grades.” Walker said he did upgrade two of the benchmarks, but not because of pressure from the incumbent administration, rather because he became privy to more information from the Pentagon and other classified information.

Many departments and branches of the US government seem to disagree on both simple and complicated issues concerning the state of Iraq, e.g. General Petraeus (Department of Defense, DoD) and Mr. Walker (the Comptroller General of the


47 Ibid.
Mr. Walker’s statements and findings are significant because he is an independent, non-partisan, objective investigator and researcher who has given arguably one of the most unbiased reports on Iraq. It stands to reason that what Mr. Walker said may carry more weight and be closer to the truth than reports and comments from General Petraeus who would not want to report that the situation is not going well. A poor performance in Iraq would reflect badly on Petraeus and any possible future endeavors he may have. Another example of the contrast between the administration and an independent organization is the optimistic statement from the Office of the Press Secretary, stating that the Iraqi government has set aside ten billion dollars for reconstruction, but about half-a-year later Walker states that it is unclear whether or not Iraq will spend the ten billion dollars. The administration downplayed Walker’s article very quickly, along with other articles that do not portray the situation optimistically.

It appears that when the administration did not hear what they wanted from the findings by the GAO, an ostensibly independent, objective organization, they pushed it to the side and put out other articles such as the Four Years Later article which paints a more positive picture of the situation in Iraq. For example, the article highlights how Iraq earmarked ten billion dollars for reconstruction and capital
investment. It appears as if the incumbent administration was engaging in
propaganda and attempting to control public opinion.

Most observers would agree that some progress (e.g. civil services) has been
made since the toppling of Saddam Hussein. For example, in 2007, nine of ten Iraqi
Army divisions lead security in their assigned areas. Most recently, 11 out of 18
provinces have assumed full autonomy in regards to provincial security for their
provinces. The most recent (at the time of this writing in Fall 2008) was al-Anbar in
September 2008, which is significant because the insurgency was believed to be
stronger in al-Anbar than any other province, and now al-Anbar is relatively peaceful
and under Iraqi control.

Violence Considerations

Looking strictly at the political situation in Iraq, one might determine that it
has been improved. However, this is not a realistic view, as political actions do not
take place in a vacuum but rather in the real world where other factors influence them.

48 Office of the Press Secretary, “Four Years Later: New Strategy Requires Patience and

49 Ibid.

The *National Security Strategy for Victory of 2005* states, “Progress along one of the political, security, and economic tracks reinforces progress along the other tracks.”51 This supports the notion that the political situation of Iraq is directly tied to other factors, both positively and negatively. Chief among these factors is security.

Security is paramount to reconstruction. Succinctly stated, if one does not have security, one has nothing. If an Iraqi spends the majority of his time afraid for his life, trying to find food, or any other basic security measure, how much can be expected of an individual to prosper? Arguably the number one challenge to security is the insurgency groups. According to a Congressional Research Service (CRS) report dated September 6, 2007, the estimates for insurgents in Iraq range from 25,000 by US estimates to Iraqi estimates of 40,000, with approximately 150,000 helping the insurgents. The number of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQ-I) range from 1,300-3,500, and more than 150 Iranian Qods forces are also operating in Iraq. Many of the insurgents fight against a perceived US rule in Iraq, democracy, and Shiite political dominance. Some want to put the Ba’th party back in power, while others want more Sunni

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representation in the government. Others are foreign and domestic al-Qaeda fighters that prefer radical Islam.\(^{52}\)

During the post-invasion months of 2003, when many missions were securing Iraqis and rebuilding infrastructure, resistance started to surface. In the beginning it was “the mad mortar man” lobbing mortars, or a handful of people lobbing grenades. But in a few months near the end of 2003, this activity increased to basic improvised explosive devices (IED), ambushes with rocket propelled grenades (RPG), suicide bombers, car bombs, vehicles borne IEDs (VBIED), throwing grenades off of bridges into HMMWV’s, and more powerful and various forms of IEDs. Later the deadly explosively formed projectile (EFP) would come into play. The US military was not always the recipient of these insurgent attacks. The UN headquarters in Baghdad was bombed on August 19, 2003, possibly in retribution for the UN apparently underwriting what some viewed as the imperialistic takeover of Iraq by America and Britain.\(^{53}\) Southern Iraqis were happy to be rid of Saddam and the discrimination that he brought, but they would quickly add that the lack of basic necessities and poor to no security had a negative impact on how they perceived the United States. Worse yet, the United States was not satisfactorily disseminating information to the people


about the progress that had been made such as rebuilding schools and repairing public utilities. This perceived secret behavior soured Iraqi attitudes against the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) even more.\(^5\)\(^4\)

There are many possibilities for the increased violence in Iraq, but one apparent source of frustration was the slowness in restoring the infrastructure during the latter portion of 2003. The Iraqis had higher expectations and were getting annoyed that places like Tal Afar were not yet like New York.\(^5\)\(^5\) Aside from juxtaposition with New York, many areas of Iraq still needed the fundamental necessities for basic standards of living found in first, second, and possibly even other third world countries. Rural parts of Iraq were living almost exactly as they had in biblical times. For the most part, an ancient Iraqi may feel at home in many parts of contemporary Iraq. Most rural Iraqis had seen vehicles and sporadically, under Saddam, they may have received a water truck to augment their well. Regardless, Iraqis were not happy and they blamed the United States and the coalition that occupied Iraq for their years of embargos under Saddam and the post-invasion quagmire.

This anger was carried out in attacks against coalition forces (mainly the United States) in many of the various forms mentioned such as IEDs. In the


\(^{55}\) From a conversation the author had with Iraqis in 2003.
beginning, coalition forces attributed the violence to remnants of the Ba’thist Regime. During the immediate months that followed the invasion, the insurgency used this critical time to organize and prepare. Later, the US government blamed much of the insurgency on outside forces, especially those connected with Iran. Iran has admitted to providing help to insurgents in Iraq when in 2007 it made a promise to quit supporting extremists in Iraq.\textsuperscript{56} While some outside forces may have immigrated to Iraq to fight the coalition and some may have supplied the insurgency, the situation points to Iraqis making up the majority of the insurgency. Non-Iraqi insurgents would need help at the least for lodging, sustenance, and mobility.

The five different elements that make up an insurgency, according to Field Manual 3-24 from the US Army, are as follows: (1) leaders, who may be in position by strength of character, clan, or religious authority but usually utilize force of personality to lead; (2) combatants, who provide security and carry out the fighting; (3) political cadre, lower level leaders who form the heart of the insurgency and execute on guidance given by leaders; (4) auxiliaries, who do not participate in combat exercises but sympathize and provide support; (5) mass base, followers from the general population.\textsuperscript{57} Iraqis appear to have taken part in all of the elements.


Insurgents did not just move into a foreign land unnoticed and start fighting. Iraqis rose up in defiance against coalition authorities and even made unlikely alliances to defeat it.

Insurgent attacks had a significant negative impact on the reconstruction of Iraq, especially politically. Aside from the insurgency, there is also sectarian violence, criminal activity and arguably a civil war. On average, attacks in mid 2007 numbered around 120 per day, which was about the level of mid-2006. This number decreased from 200 per day in early 2007, ostensibly because of the troop surge. About 15-20 attacks per day were labeled as sectarian murders, which was down from 33 per day pre-surge. Debate existed and still exists over what incidents are counted as “sectarian” violence; for example the Department of Defense (DoD) did not count Shiite-Shiite violence. There were also sectarian murders in mid-2007 outside of Baghdad, in Mosul, Kirkuk, Kut, and other cities.58 In an article that he published in February of 2007, Lt. Col. (P) Trebilcock said “There is bipartisan and military recognition that the security atmosphere in Iraq is degrading.”59 It is amazing what has been accomplished politically in Iraq with all the combined security threats.


Fortunately the security situation continued to get better and 2008 shows drastic improvement. One example of this is in the number of IEDs used in Iraq, which experts have said kill and injure soldiers the most. There were 2,273 IEDs in August of 2006, but that number has steadily decreased over the past two years to 555 IEDs in August of 2008, greatly reducing the number of casualties.\(^6\) Obviously there are still gains to be made, as most Iraqis do not want 555 IEDs detonated in their country. Some experts have postulated reasons for the significant decrease in violence over the past two years including troop surge, new intelligence tools and new tactics. Many experts have warned that simply increasing the troop numbers will not fix the situation. This follows one of the paradoxes of counterinsurgency (COIN):

“Sometimes, the more force is used, the less effective it is.”\(^6\) One of the more recent postulations is called the “awakening.” Until recently, Sunnis may have been largely to blame for the insurgency. The security gains appeared to be made when the Sunnis stopped their uneasy alliance with other groups, such as AQ-I, with whom they tried to derail Shiite political dominance. Ali Gharib credits the Sunni “awakening councils” or, \textit{sahwa} in Arabic, for the decreased violence. The “awakening” refers to former insurgents who stopped their uneasy alliance with AQ-I and are now working

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with the US to stabilize Sunni areas. Anbar province took a huge step in this direction this year.

Summary

The invasion utilized a small number of soldiers and relied on technological advancements. While this worked for conventional operations, this action impeded post-war operations as the force was simply too thin. What force was left first secured oil fields, and then forces were sent to maintain security. Leaders gave troops an impossible task as the troop-to-task ratio was nowhere close to what was needed. Iraq fell into a lawless state with vandalism and looting. Security was not present in any aspect, as food and clean potable water were hard or impossible to come by. Stores no longer operated, and the ID was worthless. Chaos ensued in many areas.

The chaos was exacerbated when Bremer disbanded the Iraqi army and simply told them to go home, which they did—with their weapons. When the soldiers got home they added to the problem of unemployment, looting, and overall desperation. Some Iraqis protested and were later fired upon by US forces. This seemed to be the impetus to push the Iraqis into an insurgency. Over time the insurgency grew,

advanced, peaked in 2006, began declining in 2007 and as of this writing (Fall 2008)—remains at a low point.

The US forces attempted to provide some security, enable some construction, and have tried to troubleshoot what they could. Iraq has made positive advancements such as regaining its sovereignty, holding elections, and drafting a constitution. These advancements have been significant compared to the threats from insurgents. However, progress has been slow as evidenced by the pace in accomplishing the benchmarks Iraqis set for themselves. Regardless, Iraqis have taken control of more than half of the provinces from the United States, and they feel that it is time for the United States to have no role at all in Iraq. This Iraqi position can be seen from the discussions over the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), in which Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki wants troops out of Iraq by 2011.63

Violence has also ebbed to a nadir in the Fall of 2008. It is difficult to simply credit the American military surge for the reduction in violence. Even the American military counterinsurgency manual states, “Sometimes, the more force is used, the less effective it is.”64 While the surge could have possibly helped, Iraqis appear to


have grown weary of violence in their country. This was seen by the Sunnis breaking away from al-Qaeda and paying the *sahwa* members.
CHAPTER 3

IRAQ AS A CONFLICT TRAP

This chapter will focus on what Paul Collier’s book, *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy*, has termed the “conflict trap,” which succinctly stated is a condition of being prone to civil war or conflict after civil war. Collier headed the World Bank’s effort to investigate civil war. Civil war tends to amplify the global poverty problem which the World Bank opposes. The two main reasons Collier wrote this book were to alert the world to the negative ramifications of civil war on development and the preventive qualities development can have on conflict.¹ The chapter will present key factors and concerns relating to conflict traps and then relate those to the specific case of Iraq. However, many argue that Iraq is not in a civil war.

A pedestrian definition of civil war, from Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, is “a war between opposing groups of the same country.”² The lay public would generally accept the Merriam-Webster’s definition of civil war, but scholars who specialize in civil conflict say two main criteria must be met to define a conflict


² Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, s.v. “Civil War.”
as a civil war. The first is “warring groups must be from the same country and fighting for control of the political center, control over a separatist state or to force a major change in policy. The second says that at least 1,000 people must have been killed, with at least 100 from each side.”3 There is no consensus on the question of whether Iraq is in a civil war. This may be because the US government did not want to acknowledge that the situation deteriorated to a civil war on their watch. Some experts could possibly be making Iraq civil war claims, pro or con, to get recognition. The issue comes down to semantics. It has been widely publicized that there was sectarian violence, a Sunni led insurgency, and Shiite on Shiite violence. Depending on what civil war definition one uses, one will obtain different answers. According to Edward Wong of the New York Times, some scholars do agree that Iraq entered a civil war.4 Collier notes in his book two factors that make countries a high risk for civil war. The first is the conflict trap, and the second is marginalized developing countries, which are “those low-income countries that have to date failed to sustain the policies, governance, and institutions that might give them a chance of achieving reasonable growth and diversifying out of dependence on primary commodities.”5 As the second


4 Ibid.

chapter demonstrated, Iraq fits the definition of a marginalized society, which, according to Collier, would make it prone to civil war.

Collier postulates that once a country enters into civil war that country is in danger of entering into a cycle that is at risk of reverting to conflict in the future. He argues that conflict weakens economies and engenders other issues, such as atrocities, that tend to be committed in civil war. Collier succinctly states that civil war is, “development in reverse.” Civil war creates towering leaders who invest in tools and tactics useful for violence. The tools and techniques for war can be difficult to repurpose for peace-time use. As Collier says, “asking a rebel leader to accept peace may be a little like asking a champion swimmer to empty the pool.” The populace usually suffers while leaders that further violence can prosper from war. This ultimately can lead to an extension of the conflict.

There are many important factors that extend conflict according to Collier’s book. Conflicts can start to become more commercial than political. The civil war is in perpetual movement when the initial political necessities and reasons for conflict extended.

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6 Another expert, Christopher Cramer, claims in his book Violence in Developing Countries: War, Memory, Progress, that civil war is beneficial and moves the country forward. Cramer’s book was previously published under the title Civil War is not a Stupid Thing.


8 Ibid., 82.

9 Ibid., 4.
are replaced with the desire for an increase and sustainment in revenue. To illustrate this, blood diamonds in Sierra Leone perpetuated their civil war (1991-2002) for financial reasons. Another factor shown to extend the length of a conflict is when a country has polarized incomes—where there is an extreme gap between the rich and destitute and the poor outnumber the elite. Wars are lengthy if there are polarized incomes and a low average income. This suggests that it simply may be cheaper to sustain rebellion in a country with destitute people. Two or three different ethnic groups existing in the same country is another factor for the extension of conflicts. Diplomatic, intelligence, military, and economic (DIME) means that are usually used to shorten wars have proven unsuccessful in these situations.\textsuperscript{10} Collier even states that, “once a rebellion has started, there appears to be something of a trap: powerful forces keep a conflict going, while the international community appears almost impotent to stop it. Unfortunately this continues even once a peace accord has been reached.”\textsuperscript{11}

Arguably the most defining and pivotal factor in the Iraqi conflict is the Sunni and Shiite split that happened shortly after the death of Muhammad. Shiites (the minority group in Islam but the majority in Iraq) argued that the faith leader should be in Muhammad’s blood line. Sunnis argued that the leader did not have to be a

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 80-82.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 83.
descendant of Muhammad and chose Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr was a good friend of
Muhammad but was not related by blood. This difference in opinion still reverberates
today.\textsuperscript{12} The lengths of wars are important, but arguably more important is the
likelihood that a country may stay in this cycle of conflict.

Officially ending a conflict is of limited value if the country is prone to revert
to war before the last guerrilla has given up his weapon. Collier notes that, “the
typical country reaching the end of a civil war faces around a 44 percent risk of
returning to conflict within five years.”\textsuperscript{13} This is a sobering number. Low income
countries are particularly prone to conflict, which only furthers their financial
problems and leads to further conflict. Instead of investing in infrastructure, financial
resources are poured into military expenditures, limiting the means to enjoy peace and
prosperity.

Conflict triggers diasporas and emigration, which can lead to local and global
spillover effects of disease and logistical problems. Often times there is a herd effect,
which exacerbates the emigration numbers. Emigrants may choose not to return to
their country, which in turn, further injures the country’s economy. Mass emigration
means a much lower pool of workers and consumers. Emigrants may also contribute

\textsuperscript{12} Dan Murphy, “Islam’s Sunni-Shiite Split,” The Christian Science Monitor,

\textsuperscript{13} Paul Collier et al., \textit{Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy}
to the perpetuation of violence by funding extremist organizations in their particular country.\textsuperscript{14}

Another factor of repeat conflict concerns military lobbyists. The military does not want to see their funding cut and advocates keeping it high, which prevents funds from being put to socially beneficial uses. Many experts have also pointed to the correlation between larger military expenditures and a larger likelihood of war.\textsuperscript{15} Sadly, according to Collier, “on average, countries emerge from conflict with poor policies across the board: macroeconomic, structural, and social.”\textsuperscript{16} Finally, Collier argues that atrocity is an impetus for more conflict. Roughly half of the reasons to start another civil war are grievances that arose during the last civil war.\textsuperscript{17}

Iraq has not become a commercial machine for the insurgents, unlike blood diamonds from Sierra Leone and drug money in Columbia. The Iraqi conflict apparently has stayed on a political, religious, and sectarian track. Iraq does have oil reserves, but the insurgents do not have sway over them. Funding apparently comes from other countries and from emigrants. There is no internal commodity funding the insurgency and perpetuating the conflict.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 85. \\
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 87. \\
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 83-88.
\end{flushright}
Polarized income has arguably played a role in Iraq, as marginalized countries are prone to cyclical civil wars. Iraq has many destitute people that could be utilized for the insurgency, but more salient for Iraq is the shift in power away from the Sunnis, not just the disparity in earnings among the populace. The struggle between the Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis exacerbates the war. DIME has also been shown to have limited to no positive effect on shortening the war. Rather, many argue that the military side of DIME has made things worse. The Counterinsurgency manual 3-24 states that using too much force can be counterproductive.\footnote{U.S. Army, \textit{Counterinsurgency}, eds., David H. Petraeus and James F. Amos, FM 3-24, 2006, 1-27.} Iraq thus has many characteristics that traditionally lengthen a war, and make it prone to reversion to conflict after a war has ended.

Iraq is required to spend money on counterinsurgency, money that could be used to develop the state in more productive ways. The United States helps greatly to share this burden by spending $12 billion a month providing US forces to assist the counterinsurgency and not charging Iraq for this cost, as Britain did in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century.\footnote{Associated Press, “Studies: Iraq War Will Cost $12 Billion a Month: Economists Estimate a Much Higher Burn Rate than Government Estimates,” \textit{MSNBC}, \url{http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/23551693/} (accessed October 22, 2008).} However, Iraq and its economy will be hurt by the possible mass emigration. The Congressional Research Service estimates that 2 million Iraqis have
fled from the invasion as of September 2007, and it is estimated that as much as 25 percent of the middle class may emigrate as a result of the war.

Lastly, an important factor to consider is what happened in the conflict that provides the seeds for its continuation. The Iraq conflict has been prolonged because much of the sectarian violence feeds on itself—a self-perpetuating cycle of retaliation. One example of this is when the Iraq Health Ministry was attacked on November 23, 2006. The Health Minister Ali al-Shammari was a member of the movement led by Shiite Muqtada al-Sadr (a religious and political leader and militia commander), and the ministry was thought to be a Sadrist stronghold. The insurgents were believed to be Sunnis retaliating for attacks on Sunni Arabs.

Iraq falls into Collier’s model for lengthening wars as a country with polarized income and three different ethnicities. Equally important is that Iraq is still underdeveloped, is possibly hurt by diasporas, military spending versus developmental spending, and atrocities at varying levels that transpired since 2003—all giving impetus for reemergence of conflict. But how does talk of civil war and


factors connected to it, according to Collier, have anything to do with Iraq when the US government says Iraq is not in a civil war?

Even if one cannot accept the scholarly civil war definition, Iraq has the telltale signs that it has slipped into a civil war. Kenneth Katzman quoted a passage out of the January 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) that said, “the term ‘civil war’ does not adequately capture the complexity of the conflict in Iraq, [but] the term ‘civil war’ accurately describes key elements of the Iraqi conflict.”23 Iyad Allawi, Iraq’s former interim Prime Minister, said in July of 2005 that, “the policy should be of building national unity in Iraq. Without this we will most certainly slip into a civil war. We are practically in stage one of a civil war as we speak.”24 Three years later, in July of 2008, Allawi stated there was a civil war when he “blasted the so-called surge, saying that it failed in its primary objective, namely, to end the Iraqi civil war and foster political reconciliation.”25

James D. Fearon, a professor at Stanford University, said, “the White House still avoids the label, but by any reasonable historical standard, the Iraqi civil war has

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Fearon also states much more fighting is needed before a possible reconciliation, that the United States can try to balance Iraqi factions from a distance, but there is little that can be done by the United States to prevent any more bloodshed or stop the war. Following Fearon’s line of thought, the Iraqi civil war needs to be resolved by Iraqis. Christopher Cramer’s salient point in his book, *Violence in Developing Countries*, is that there is no set formula for reconstruction, but that a strong government must exist in all cases. However, BBC News reported that, according to the January 2007 NIE, “violence between Sunnis and Shiites is being driven by increasing polarization within Iraqi society, compounded by a weak government and security force.” According to Collier, Cramer, and Fearon, DIME has no positive effect and Iraq could be caught in a lengthy cycle of conflict. Fearon said they need to fight it out, Cramer said they need a strong government to come out of the conflict, and the BBC News reported in 2007 that the Iraqi government and its security forces were in fact weak. Another indication of a weak government and security forces is the failure to achieve the benchmarks Iraq first communicated to the

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27 Ibid.


United States in 2006. The quintessential remark for the weakness of the Iraqi government would have to be the answer David M. Walker, Comptroller of the United States, gave to Congress when he was asked for a succinct status report on the Iraqi government. He said, “you’d have to say…the government is dysfunctional.”30 Other experts, such as William S. Lind in 2004, have stated that Iraq was in a civil war.31 Despite the continuing debate, a strong argument can be made that Iraq is and continues to be in a state of civil war.

At the very least, Iraq is currently a failing state as defined by Joseph L. Soeters. He described a ‘failing state’ as “a state with an inadequately functioning monopoly of violence.”32 This is directly in line with the previous definition of a “failed state” as described in the second chapter,33 but it is more specific as it focuses on violence. The government of Iraq clearly fits this definition. It does not have a monopoly on violence but rather has descended into the terrorism, violence, and civil war described above. A modern civilized country possesses a high level of control over violence and has a stable governmental system. As decivilization (a drop in


33 A failed state is generally defined as a government that is so weak that it has little control over much of its territory and/or can no longer provide regulatory services to the people.
violence control) occurs, homicide increases and violence heightens and becomes more common. Further decivilization results in an unstable governmental system and a less civilized society. Ultimately, the failed state’s decivilization bottoms out with terrorism, ethnic violence, and civil war.  

Summary

There is no doubt that Iraq could have a much better state of affairs. The violence is more prevalent than should be accepted anywhere. Millions of people have left the country because of escalating violence and economic disparity. Iraq has slipped into a ‘conflict trap’ that may return Iraq to a state of conflict after peace is achieved. Some experts, like Cramer, argue that conflict, and especially civil war is good. Collier disagrees and states civil war is the reverse of development. Iraq’s civil war does not just affect it but has a spill over affect regionally and globally. Syria has recently criticized the US attacks for causing terrorists to flee into Syria for respite. Other countries are affected by accepting diasporas of the 2 million Iraqis

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34 Ibid., 49.


that have fled from the invasion through September 2007. It is difficult to determine the full extent of the impact on the United States, which will feel the effect for years in the wounded and killed soldiers alone. About 655,000 Iraqis have been killed since the invasion. It would be hard for one to argue that this civil war is a positive thing when properly weighing the few items mentioned here. The United States has been unable to stop the conflict for years, and in 2005 and 2006, casualties spiked significantly. The United States attempts to keep the situation in check, but measures such as DIME have not enabled the establishment of the rule of law under a strong, centralized Iraqi government. Iraq is working to depolarize ethnically, financially, and religiously. These factors are at the heart of the conflict and significantly lengthen it.

Many scholars and professionals, including former Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, stated that Iraq fell into a civil war, even though the American incumbent administration refuses to admit this. There are many justifications for the White House to refrain from calling it a civil war, ostensibly trying to ward off any second and third order political effects that the White House may endure from an Iraqi civil war. Iraq appears to be in an infinite loop of futility. Cramer argues that there is no set reconstruction formula, but that a strong state is necessary. The January 2007 NIE


stated that Iraq’s government and security forces are weak. David Walker conveyed it more bluntly when he stated that Iraq’s government is dysfunctional. There have been Iraqi improvements every year since 2003, but Iraq is still a failing state as it cannot quell the violence.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

There are two main aspects of Iraq that transcend time and affect contemporary affairs: Iraq’s culture and its turbulent political history. Tribalism is a significant part of Iraq’s culture. It has existed since antiquity and still affects Iraq today. Reverberations from ancient Iraq have echoed down through history. In The Modern Seven Pillars of Iraq, Trebilcock, an Army officer that had daily contact with Iraqis when coordinating reconstruction of the Iraq legal system in Operation Iraqi Freedom I, lays out important aspects of Iraqi culture. The six most relevant are: 1) The Iraqi social structure is tribal wherein a sheikh wields power over his tribe. The concept of a centralized civil government is only a few decades old. Sharing of power is extrinsic to Iraqi culture. 2) Using one’s position to gain wealth for oneself and for the extended family and so forth is a fundamental feature of Iraqi culture. A contemporary example of this is when Saddam filled his government with his own family members. 3) When Iraqis fight for something, they value it; if they do not value it, they will not fight for it. 4) Iraqis learned that the tribe that controls the resources of a particular area lives and those not in control perish. Iraqis typically did not share power or resources with different tribes. 5) Violence is the norm to achieve
what one wants. 6) Actions for personal or tribal gain are the norm, not selfless
service.¹

An important point to keep in mind is that Western and Middle Eastern values
differ fundamentally. Many “Western” values translate into Middle Eastern culture
but are defined differently. Values such as loyalty, duty, and honor apply first at the
family and tribal level, rather than duty and honor toward society as in the West.

The second main aspect that transcends time for Iraqis is governmental
turbulence. The first chapter showed that governmental turbulence has deep roots
throughout Iraqi history, demonstrated by the extreme number of times political
authority has changed hands. Iraqis may have had a few hundred years under one type
of rule, but they have never truly governed themselves. Gilles Munier succinctly
summarizes Iraq’s governmental situation and acknowledges its history when he
stated, “Mesopotamia has always been in upheaval, down to present day.”² Iraq has
been under monarchial, authoritarian, autocratic, or dictatorial rule virtually all of its
existence. Lack of a historical precedence in self-ruling is a salient point that must not
be ignored. Therefore, the prospect of establishing Iraqi self-rule, is a daunting task.

¹ Craig T. Trebilcock, “The Modern Seven Pillars of Iraq,” Association of the United States
Trebilcock’s enumerated points are summarized in this thesis.

² Gilles Munier, Iraq: An Illustrated History and Guide (Northampton: Interlink Publishing
Group, Inc., 2004), back cover.
Certain factors, however, in Iraq’s current situation are not temporally transcendent, but are unique to the current social and political conflicts. Many of the unique problematic issues stem from the US invasion in 2003. The deficiencies in the US post-war plan created an ideal atmosphere to breed the insurgency, and subsequent US actions and presence exacerbated the violence.

Two main events from US actions caused the insurgency to grow. One was the lack of US troops post-invasion to assist security in terms of food, water, and physical force. When Saddam was in power, he would augment the food and water supply of the Iraqis. The lack of security led to demonstrations and riots, which resulted in the US forces firing weapons into crowds, engendering and strengthening the insurgency. The second issue was subsequent US actions that angered or upset Iraqis and fueled the insurgency. The United States applied more force in the subsequent years to quell the escalating violent situation, but the violence continued to rise. Two examples of US actions in the following years that arguably strengthened the insurgency were: prevalent raids into Iraqis’ houses in the middle of the night. Worse yet was the taking of a family member in a raid and the Iraqi family not knowing why or when they might see that family member again. An isolated example was the cordoning off a village and allowing one entry and exit point. Actions like these only distanced Iraqis from US soldiers. Iraqis grew weary of occupation and became more likely to assist the insurgency in some way as a result. Trebilcock, well-versed from his experiences with the US army on the ground in Iraq, responded negatively to the increased use of
military force from the United States and its kinetic operations up to 2007. Trebilcock argued that “the answer to the riddle begins with a political change of course from Washington, D.C., not a military buildup in Iraq.”

Despite the flourishing insurgency in 2003 and subsequent years, there is currently less violence in Iraq. Arguably, one of the largest reasons that Iraq has the lowest level of violence since the start of the war is due to self-determination or specifically the “awakening” (sahwa). This refers to former Sunni insurgents who stopped their uneasy alliance with AQ-I, an alliance they got into in order to derail Shiite political dominance. The former Sunni insurgents are now working with the United States to stabilize Sunni areas. Ali Gharib credits these Sunni “awakening councils” for much of the decreased violence. For example, Anbar province was an AQ-I stronghold in 2006 and was also the most violent province in Iraq—AQ-I threatened virtually every major town. The Iraqi people reclaimed Anbar and ousted AQ-I on September 1, 2008. This was marked by the official transfer of authority from the United States to Iraqi control. No matter how much the United States


wanted Anbar to be free of violence, it was the Iraqis who ultimately had to make the effort to expel AQ-I.

Iraq’s sovereignty was reinstated in 2004 and Iraq has continued to grow stronger since then, especially with the awakening. One example was in October 2008 when two more provinces were transferred to Iraqi control: Babil and Wasit. As a show of confidence and of the acceptable security situation in Wasit, American and Iraqi generals walked on a tour and ate a meal in local restaurants. Major General Abd al Hanen, provincial director of police and one of the generals leading the tour stated, “It was an honor to go downtown without weapons or body armor and with Iraqi security.”6 American and Iraqi generals were able to walk without body armor and weapons in the downtown Iraqi market because of the strides Iraq has made in subduing the social and political conflict. Iraq is on its way to becoming a stable state, because Iraqis started turning their country around with the awakening, signaled by the split from AQ-I, and political, social, and security gains. Although Iraq is experiencing its lowest level of violence since the start of the war, it nonetheless is still a technically failing state because it does not have a monopoly on violence yet.

Considering Collier’s analysis and US actions in the Iraqi war, positive gains in Iraq are due more to Iraqi actions than to US efforts. The third chapter discussed

Collier’s work and its application to Iraq. He argued that once a conflict is started there is an ostensible trap; powerful forces perpetuate the conflict and the international community appears unable to stop it. It also indicates that many efforts from the international community to shorten the civil war by utilizing various levels of DIME would not be successful. Rather, only self-determination from within Iraq can enable the country to break out of its conflict trap.

The US representatives have done many beneficial things in Iraq, some of which will be discussed in the following paragraphs, but the Iraqi people still want the US occupiers out of their country. This is easily seen with the difficulty in negotiating a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) for 2009. Iraqis want jurisdiction over US troops and contractors, they want US forces out of the cities in the following years, and they want US personnel out of Iraq by the end of 2011. Additional evidence that Iraq wants a foreseeable end to US occupation comes from Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr, who stated on November 14, 2008, that attacks would resume on US forces if a US-Iraqi security pact infringed on Iraq’s sovereignty. Al-Sadr said, “I repeat my call on the occupier to get out from the land of our beloved Iraq, without retaining bases, or signing agreements…If they do stay, I urge the honorable resistance fighters…to


direct their weapons exclusively against the occupier.”9 Finally, the grand Ayatollah al-Sistani, an Iranian-born cleric who holds sway with Iraq’s majority Shiites, reportedly would intervene if he thought the SOFA would breach Iraq’s sovereignty. Some reporters say that if Sistani publicly opposes the final draft of the SOFA, the agreement would have virtually no chance of being approved by the Iraqi government.10

One final aspect of difficulty with US forces occupying Iraq was evidenced with the US Special Forces raid into Syria at the end of October 2008. Iraqi authorities denounced the raid into Syria, saying “it does not want its territory to be used as a launch-pad for US attacks on its neighbors.”11 Syria’s Foreign Ministry issued a statement that said Syria “calls on the Iraqi government to shoulder its responsibilities and launch an immediate investigation into this serious violation and prevent the use of Iraqi territory for aggression against Syria.”12 According to the Arab league, the raid was a “violation which does nothing to help stability in the

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10 Ibid.


region and can only lead to new tensions.”13 Actions like the cross-border raid make for a negative US presence and cause unnecessary difficulties for Iraq. The US raid into Syria showed contempt for Iraqi sovereignty, for what good is sovereignty if Iraq does not have the power or knowledge to say no?

The US presence in Iraq is not completely without positive effects. Despite some initial negative ramifications caused by US forces, they did take strides to provide security and to return services as best they could. Even in the midst of kinetic operations, US forces addressed what they could, such as restoring the water supply, working with police to rebuild their force, providing training for security forces, and providing security for banks, propane stations, and gas stations. The second chapter showed the positive effects of increased efforts by US personnel to improve the situation in Iraq in the years following the invasion. In addition to ongoing efforts, the US military began to change their tactics from kinetic operations to more diplomatic efforts in 2007. The General Petraeus plan emphasized “negotiating with elements of the insurgency that are judged to be potentially willing to reconcile.”14 However, while the US presence helped with Iraq’s reconstruction of infrastructure and with security, it also provided impetus for ongoing attacks by insurgents seeking to oust the


occupying force. Therefore, the positive effects of US occupation, both militarily and diplomatically, can be described as partial at best.

The second and largest argument that the United States has helped Iraq suppress its violence is the “surge.” In January of 2007, President George W. Bush announced that he was adding 30,000 US troops to Iraq to help provide security.\textsuperscript{15} Since the surge, the numbers of IEDs has decreased from 2,273 in August of 2006, to 555 in August of 2008. This greatly reduced the number of casualties because IEDs are the quintessential mode of arrack, affecting the most number of people.\textsuperscript{16} In fact, a news article from CNN dated Monday June 23, 2008, stated, “all major indicators of violence in Iraq have dropped by between 40 and 80 percent since February 2007, when President Bush committed an additional 30,000 troops to the war there….”\textsuperscript{17} Sally Buzbee, chief of Middle East new for the associated Press, credited the surge for some progress when she stated, “violence in Iraq has fallen to its lowest level in four years. The change has been driven by the 2007 buildup of American forces, the Sunni


tribal revolt against al-Qaida in Iraq and crackdowns against Shiite militias and Sunni extremists.”

However, troop numbers were not solely responsible. In March 2008, Iraqi and US forces fought against Muqtada al-Sadr’s militia forces in Basra, which significantly helped reduce violence after the battle. The article also credits the Sons of Iraq (SOI) for the major decrease in violence. SOI groups are “made up of an estimated 90,000 Iraqis, often former insurgents, paid by U.S. commanders to help protect neighborhoods and provide intelligence on extremists.” Another large reason for the downturn in violence was when the Shiites won the Sunni-Shiite sectarian battle. Shiites now control three quarters of Baghdad. The Sunnis had too many enemies; they fought not only Shiites but also the AQ-I, who killed Sunnis that took minor government jobs. While Buzbee credits the US surge for helping decrease violence, Iraqis were more influential in abating violence considering the actions of Iraqis in the “awakening,” the Shiites winning the Sunni-Shiite sectarian battle for

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20 Ibid.

Baghdad, and the Iraqis’ regain of provincial control. Iraqis started becoming more autonomous.

Summary

Juxtaposing the positive effects America had in improving the violent situation in Iraq, with the negative factors the United States contributed and the factors external to US efforts leads to the conclusion that Collier’s model is validated by the Iraq situation. Overall, American presence adds to the violence in Iraq.

However, with the recently improved security situation, America may be able to help reduce violence if they leave Iraq in a methodical, calculated, organized fashion. Critical pieces in this finding are that the Iraqis are now equipped and trained, that they have assumed control of all but a few of the provinces, and that they are working to gain control in the remaining provinces. The US government should slowly redeploy troops out of the most peaceful provinces first, then continue over the next few years until all troops are redeployed. In that time, if Iraq continues on the current track, it should be able to take control over the remaining five provinces. Once all the provinces are turned over to Iraqis, then there is no need for US forces to stay in Iraq.

This conclusion does not suggest that America is completely ineffective in its attempts to reduce the violence in Iraq. It is also not arguing that an increase in
violence will not happen if the US forces withdraw from Iraq, especially if it is a hasty withdrawal. Rather, when all things are considered, Collier’s model prevails, indicating that Iraq needs self-determination and their own timeline. America needs to assist with Iraqis to achieve their goals, so they will be more autonomous, which benefits both countries. Iraq has been asserting its independence, although America, in the short term, needs to assist Iraq, especially with logistics.

Collier’s model and analysis concur with the futility of the US efforts through DIME to shorten the Iraq conflict. He also states that most civil wars last about seven years. 22 Just as the conflict needs time, one cannot artificially hasten the process, both of civil war and troop withdrawal. If his model continues to hold true, the Iraqi conflict has nearly run its course. Still, seven years is an artificial construction for the conflict life span. As Trebilcock states, “Iraqis do not share Western concepts on the use, passage or value of time. They sincerely believe that if a matter is truly important, Allah will control the outcome, and personal efforts of individuals are merely tangential to that outcome.” 23 Iraqis will fix their situation on their own timeline—*inshallah.*


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