THE US IN IRAQ: OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

By

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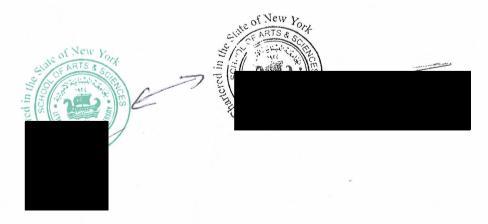
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Abstract

The world community has had ample time by now to acknowledge that the US-led invasion of Iraq carries significant implications for the international political scene, especially that of the Middle East. The US and its allies, in March of 2003 launched an ambitious war against the Baathist Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein, a declared claim of which was an attempt to transform Iraq from a dictatorship into a democracy. The plan, however, did not proceed as smoothly as they had expected it to. Instead, the US found itself entangled on Iraqi soil for a variety of reasons, unable to entirely fulfill its intended agenda. Nevertheless, a few achievements were recorded for the US administration, for which it should receive the due credit these feats deserve.

The purpose of this study is to emphasize the idea that although the United States is the unilateral superpower of the world, it nevertheless still confronts considerable limitations on the ability to impose its economic and political programs on other countries. Essential factors, mainly domestic factors and geopolitics for instance, should not be ignored; otherwise, even superpowers will undoubtedly suffer from a loss of credibility, accountability, status and other unfavorable consequences.

Thus, appropriating the Iraq war as a case-study, the fundamental aim of this thesis is to convey the idea that superpowers indubitably have limitations, no matter how powerful they appear or claim to be, and should therefore carefully weigh their political maneuvers and foreign policies. An in-depth scrutiny of the possible consequences of their invasion would have helped the United States to avoid the series of unfavorable events and miscalculations which occurred in Iraq.

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Finally, I cannot believe that I have just written my own acknowledgment. Thank you God!!!

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Bush administration has acquired a number of benefits as a result of its war on Iraq, the most important of which is access to Iraq's natural resources: oil and water which are both predicted to soon become scarce resources. Another immediate advantage of the war is the direct involvement of US troops in Iraq. This military presence has unquestionably made the US a regional power in the Middle East, capable of broadening its range of influence and affecting policies in neighboring states. The partial implementation of democracy in Iraq after a long-established dictatorship and the abolishment of Saddam's rule is another achievement for the Bush Administration in Iraq.

On the other hand, there are a large number of obstacles facing the achievements of the Bush administration in Iraq as a consequence of this invasion. These difficulties have raised numerous challenges for this administration. Syria and Iran are primarily the most troubling factors since they are not willing to participate in decreasing the tension that is occurring in Iraq due to the "unstable state" that this country has rapidly become.

The US authorities are unable to complete their mission in Iraq without the cooperation of these neighboring states, which, as this study claims, are helping to increase the destabilization in Iraq.

However, the increase of tension could pressure the US to deal with Iran and Syria; such an occurrence would most probably nullify the possibility of attacking Iran and augment the power of this country in the region.

The outbreak of a destructive civil war also threatens the notion of perpetual progress in Iraq for the Bush administration and offers fertile ground for the growth and spread of sectarianism to neighboring states, thus confronting the entire Middle Eastern area with the risk of disastrous consequences.

The US, as a super power, made a unilateral decision by rushing into war with Iraq without international and UN approval. This thesis is mainly concerned with demonstrating the limitations of super powers and how they are not always capable of imposing their own agendas on other nations due to many factors, one of which is geopolitics.

Here are a few examples of chastening defeats the US experienced in its attempts to execute some of its policies as a superpower. The USA was vehemently opposed to The Land Mines Treaty – it was viewed as being aimed at Israel – but was unsuccessful in preventing its formal submission and passage in the United Nations forum. The treaty signed by 100 countries in 1997 "banned the production, export, and deployment of anti-personnel landmines."[1] The USA had also stood in clear opposition to Russia's decision of war in Chechnya, but its stance had an insignificant impact on the actual outcome. Also, the US desperately wished to prevent the eruption of a civil war in Colombia but learned much to its chagrin that civil wars have a way of erupting with or without its formal permission. Finally, Saddam Hussein held on to power in Iraq for nearly a decade despite various US futile attempts to overthrow him.[2]

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[1] Schonberg, K. (2002). *The general's diplomacy: U.S. military influence in the treaty process, 1992-2000,* pp. 68-85. Retrieved June 25, 2008, from Columbia International Affairs Online database.
[2] Nye, J., Jr. (2002-2003). Limits of American power. *Political Science Quarterly, 117*(4), pp. 545-559. Retrieved April 24, 2008, from JSTOR database.

Taking Iraq as a case study for the limitation of US power as a unilateral hegemony, this thesis attempts to demonstrate that the US war on Iraq is in fact a quagmire for the US in spite of that nation's immense power. In the case of Iraq, Syria and Iran are undeniably major players due to their geographical position as neighbors of Iraq. The US is unable to extricate itself from the Iraqi dilemma without the active participation of these two states. The US would therefore find it more profitable to abandon its coercive policies towards those two countries, and negotiate instead in order to secure its interests in Iraq and the region.

In addition, this war has also created a conflict of interests between the US and its allies in the region such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is alarmed by a US-supported instillation of democracy in Iraq which has brought a Shiite majority to power. The Middle East region after the Iraq war is witnessing an emerging Shiite dominance led by Iran which poses a threat on the authoritarian Sunni rule of Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. Thus, in addition to the issue of preserving its benign image internationally, the US finds itself trapped in a cumbersome situation in the Iraqi battleground. Consequently, the following perplexing query shapes itself: can a super power such as the United States commit major regional, insensitive unilateral decisions and still succeed in attaining its self- interested, beneficial objectives?

1.1 Literature Review

Being the most notable and protracted recent military conflict, a number of analysts and experts from various fields have discussed and debated the United States-Iraqi situation

and envisaged several scenarios. James D. Fearon, for example, wrote an article in

Foreign Affairs magazine entitled Iraq's Civil War.[3] The article examines the possibility

of ending the conflict in Iraq by empowering this country with the aid it requires for its

existence after the withdrawal of US troops. Fearon stressed that the problem of

instability is related to the prevalent conflict between internal factors, i.e. religious and

ethnic divisions.

This thesis will justify his position concerning the war, but will also highlight the

significance of external essential ingredients he failed to mention. This includes the role

of neighboring states, mainly Iran and Syria, which cannot be ignored since they are key

players in the management of this war.

The article titled Time for Détente with Iran by the author Ray Takeyh discusses the

possibility of US-Iranian negotiations based on mutual compromises.[4] He argues that

given sufficient incentives, the Iranian regime would be willing to abandon its ties with

Hezbollah and Hamas to seek its own interests when a choice is offered. Such interests

would include a sound relationship with the US including diplomatic and economic ties,

sanctions gradually eradicated and prerogative rights reserved in the region. I concur that

the best way of dealing with the burgeoning Iranian power in the region should be

addressed by serious diplomatic negotiations in which the two parties bargain for and

exchange political favors. However, it is doubtful that Iran being an Islamic Republic,

representative of a Shiite perception of Islam, could truly alter its foreign policy as

radically as he is suggesting.

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[3] Fearon, J. (2007, March/April). Iraq's civil war. *Foreign Affairs*. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Columbia International Affairs Online database.
[4] Takeyh, R. (2007, March/April). Time for détente with Iran. *Foreign Affairs*. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Columbia International Affairs Online database.

A drastic shift is unlikely because this regime harbors a religious ideology which hinders it from totally adhering to US policies in the region, the two countries abiding by different sets of values. For instance, Iran would never acknowledge the existence of a strictly Jewish state of Israel, merely because this confession contradicts its holy Islamic tradition.

The Baker-Hamilton study group presented another route for dealing with Iran; their final report clearly encouraged the initiation of diplomatic negotiations with Syria in order to mitigate the crisis of Iraq.[5] This thesis agrees with the Iraq's Study Group position in regard to the Iraq war and argues that the recommendations presented by the Baker-Hamilton report are indicative of the importance of geopolitics, even in the case of a superpower. The negotiations with Syria, Iran, and other regional countries are unavoidable in order to enable the US to extricate itself from the Iraqi dilemma. The underlined idea throughout this thesis is that a superpower, no matter how powerful it is, should not act unilaterally to achieve its aims.

Lock K. Johson and Kiki Caruson have co-written an article titled The Seven Sins of American Foreign Policy in which they endeavor to prove that the September 11th attack on the United States transpired as a result of its own foreign policy. They have indicated seven reprehensible policies that functioned to the disadvantage of the USA as a superpower involved in world affairs; those include arrogance, isolationism, precipitate military action, presidential imperialism, unilateralism, ignorance and lack of empathy.[6] This research paper focuses primarily on the aspect of arrogance when discussing the US

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[5] Baker, J. & Hamilton, L. (2006). *The Iraq study group report*. New York: Vintage Books. p. 50

[6] Johnson, L. & Caruson, K. (2003). The seven sins of American foreign policy. *PS: Political Science and Politics, 36*(1), pp. 5-10. Retrieved April 24, 2008 from JSTOR database.

dilemma in Iraq and the limitations constraining such a superpower. Such arrogance has led the US to deemphasize the importance of calculating every possible outcome and scenario, prior and during Iraq's occupation.

CHAPTER 2

Opportunities of US in Iraq

There is no doubt that the occupation of Iraq yielded several benefits for the United States. First of all, Baghdad's capitulation to American troops within a few weeks' was a striking military victory. The presence of American soldiers inside Iraq rapidly transformed the US into a regional actor capable of directly influencing the Middle East region. The US forces had proved formidable by toppling their fierce enemy the Baath regime, and even capturing Saddam Hussein. It is also crucial to point out that the US was indeed perceived as being the godfather of democracy in Iraq in its attempts to execute such a governmental transition. Finally, Iraq's oil resources had undeniably generated lucrative revenues for the US.

2.1 Occupation of Iraq

On March 20, 2003, the United States and its allies officially began their military operations in Iraq without UN support. Initially, negligible military resistance was encountered from the Iraqi side. US troops successfully positioned themselves at the city of An Najaf, located merely 60 miles away from Baghdad just 4 days after the war began. Military operations began with spectacular momentum; it has been noted that during the first 3 days 2,500 missiles and bombs were dropped, and US troops relying immensely on air backing spread throughout Iraq in the northern, western and southern regions. Such close air support led to debilitating Iraq's air defenses rendering them ineffective as most

of them were destroyed.[7] The planning of the military aspect of the war has not been perfect, however, since "Iraq did have unexpected success in using combinations of regular and irregular forces like Saddam's Fedayeen to threaten U.S. and British forces."[8] In spite of uncalculated Iraqi fighting techniques, the US remained evidently victorious since a superpower such as the US manages to be victorious even though surprises from the enemy invariably emerge.

However, Iraq suffered inevitable occupation with US troops controlling its major cities. "Otherwise unopposed, US ground forces achieved the swiftest land advance in history [...] The official fall of Baghdad and ousting of the Hussein regime was taken to be 9 April, when a statue of the leader was symbolically torn down by a group of Iraqis with the assistance of US military equipment."[9]

2.2 Military Occupation

Soon after military operations were supposedly over, the Bush administration assigned the Pentagon the official responsibility for post-war management of affairs in Iraq, and in deference to this decision the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Affairs (ORHA) was established, run by the Under Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith. The ORHA was chiefly concerned with providing relief work, humanitarian aid, financing projects and managing the civil administration. Furthermore, the ORHA was mainly a short-term post-war authority engaged in outlining a primary plan for transfer of authority

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[7] Cordesman, A. H. (2003). *The Iraq war: Strategy, tactics and military lessons*. Washington D.C.: CSIS Press. p.62
[8] Cordesman, A. H. (2003). p.63
[9] Fawn, R. & Hinnebush, R. (Eds.). (2006). *The Iraq war: Causes and consequences*. Boulder: Lynn Rienner. p.8.

from that of US and allies' military to the Iraqis themselves. The plan consisted of three stages which would eventually lead to the development of a democratic government: the gradual replacement of a military administration by a civilian one, its eventual transformation into an entirely Iraqi authority, and the drafting of a constitution on which Iraq's democracy would be based.[10]

The role of the ORHA was then that of rapid postwar management of a country that had just witnessed the overthrow of a long-established dictatorship, which had suffered sanctions and had a population of over 25 million.[11] The conception was that "services would be quickly established; oil production would be increased; local elections would be soon held; and the occupying powers would then depart quickly."[12]

General Jay Garner was appointed Iraq's postwar administrator on the 21st of April, 2003; he was the head of the ORHA[13]. Garner focused on preparing for the establishment of an Interim Iraqi Authority (IIA) in order to relinquish authority to the Iraqi people. For this purpose, shortly after the military battle was won, a conference was held in Baghdad on April 28th, 2003 intended to summon together Iraqis from different communities, religions and ethnic groups, along with those in exile, in order to discuss the feasibility of forming an interim administration to exercise control over Iraq. 300 Iraqi leaders representing the entire nation participated in this conference and voted for the necessity of forming an Iraqi-led government. They agreed to schedule another conference within a month in order to discuss a transitional government assuming power "which meant a self-

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[10]Allawi, A. (2007). *The occupation of Iraq: Winning the war, losing the peace*. London: Yale University Press. p. 97.
[11] Allawi, A. (2007). p. 97.
[12] Allawi, A. (2007). p. 97.
[13] Allawi, A. (2007). p. 98.

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designated body, and not an American-appointed set of Iraqi "representatives" following

civil administration policy."[14]

General Garner, however, was accused of unsatisfactory management of Iraq's affairs by

Washington and was soon replaced on May 6, 2003 by another diplomat, Paul Bremer, an

expert on anti-terrorism. A few days later, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was

established. Its existence gained additional recognition by being authorized by the UN

1483 resolution.[15] Bremer, the CPA administrator, immediately engaged himself in the

Iraqi arena as soon as he became the Garner's successor. First, he dissolved the Iraqi

army and banned 50,000 Baath party members from public office, creating trends of

unemployment; and second, he focused on the privatization of Iraq's economy,

displaying parts of this sector on sale to western companies. His choice of policy has

been under criticisms from the Iraqi people; however, he insisted that economic reform

could not be postponed until the establishment of an Iraqi government.[16] It should be

noted though that dissolving the Iraqi army turned out to be an erroneous decision from

which negative consequences followed. The Iraqi army is a national institution, grouping

together Iraqi of different sects, religions into a common national theme. Such an

institution must have been preserved in order for the new Iraq to be somewhat sheltered

from sectarian division and pave the way for a united country. Furthermore, "Disbanding

the army and laying off workers in state-run factories are estimated to have affected

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[14] Israeli, R. (2004). *The Iraq war: Hidden agendas and Babylonian intrigue*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press. p. 195.
[15] Allawi, A. (2007). *The occupation of Iraq: Winning the war, losing the peace*. London: Yale University Press. p. 106.
[16] Fawn, R. & Hinnebush, R. (Eds.). (2006). *The Iraq war: Causes and consequences*. Boulder: Lynn Rienner. p.9.

six million Iraqis who depended on the incomes of those who were now unemployed."[17]

Those unemployed Iraqis turned to militias and other criminal organizations in order to

obtain a living.

2.3 Dismantling of the Baath Regime

Unlike his predecessor, General Garner, Bremer took a firm stand against the Baath party

determined to direct Iraq through a process of dismantling the former Baathist regime.

Apparently, Garner had been more lenient on de-Baathification; he had allowed senior

Baathists to maintain their positions of authority and even appointed some in such posts.

Dr Ali al-Janabi, a notorious Baathist for instance, was appointed by Garner as the

"acting chief of the Ministry of Health."[18] When Bremer headed the CPA however, a

stricter policy materialized; this was deemed necessary in the way of democratizing Iraq

and ridding it of the former dictatorship rule. In order to better illustrate this, on May 16,

2003, soon after taking office, Bremer issued his first Order as the CPA administrator

indicating a more decisive approach towards the de-Baathification policy than that

implemented by Garner. The implementation of the previous CPA decision to

disestablish the Baath party was the main directive of the Order. The four top members of

the party were removed from government positions and banned from work in the public

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[17]Davis, E. (2007). Rebuilding a non-sectarian Iraq. *Strategic Insights, 6,* (6). Retrieved June 25, 2008,
from Columbia International Affairs Online database.
[18] Allawi, A. (2007). *The occupation of Iraq: Winning the war, losing the peace.* London: Yale University
Press. p. 150.

sector. Approximately 30,000 Baathists were involved in the de-Baathification process (the assets of the Baath party were confiscated and administered by the CPA).[19]

It is important to mention however that most of the members of the Baath party joined the party as a means to survive the tyrannical rule of Saddam rather than out of ideological convictions of the party's principles. Prime Minister Ayad Allawi had opposed Bremer's strict de-Baathification procedures arguing that members of the Baath party only joined as a "vehicle to live, a means of obtaining and keeping their jobs and other state purks."[20] In fact, there were a large number of people who had only joined the party for personal reasons such as survival or monetary benefits; the Ba'athification process was conducted for mainly convenient or political reasons under the guidance of the CPA and politicians who had a strict de-Baathification agenda.[21] The choice of American policy, however, of de-ba'athification, followed by a democratization of Iraq was perhaps too simplistic to be practically achievable.

With the US and its allies now controlling Iraq, the determination to prosecute Saddam loyalists and Baath party members was apparent as the US now sought to capture the leaders of the former regime. In this context, Saddam's sons Uday and Kussay were both killed by US missiles in Mosul on July 22, 2003. Saddam's leading weapons' official, "Chemical Ali" was also captured on the 21st of August during that first year of the war.

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[19] Allawi, A. (2007). *The occupation of Iraq: Winning the war, losing the peace.* London: Yale University Press. p. 150.
[20] Allawi, A. (2007). p. 151.
[21] Allawi, A. (2007). p. 151.

2.4 Reinforcement of US objectives: Saddam's capture

Saddam himself capitulated to US troops on December, 13th, 2003. He was discovered hiding in a hole near Tikrit, his birthplace. As this was a chief US achievement, Bremer exaltedly announced the capture of the former Iraqi dictator at in a press conference.[22] The apprehension of Saddam was "the result of a remarkable detective work by a special US military intelligence team that had been assigned to track him."[23] He was discovered hiding in a six-foot deep hole in one of Daur village's farms. The world witnessed his pallid appearance and disheveled beard as a doctor conducted medical checkups such as searching for vermin in his hair. Saddam then proceeded to meet with four of the Governing Council that was established under Bremer in July of 2003: Chalabi, Pachachi, Rubai'e and Abd el-Mahdi.

During the meeting, which the CPA allowed in part in order to confirm Saddam's identity, the Iraqi tyrant displayed no signs of regret when accused of committing murderous crimes such as that of Al Sadr and Hakim families, and also did not reveal any remorse regarding his invasion of Kuwait. He furthermore insisted on being perceived as the President of Iraq.[24] Subsequently, Saddam was subject to Iraqi Justice and was tried for his crimes against the Iraqi people, eventually resulting in a death sentence that was executed in December 2006.

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[22] Allawi, A. (2007). *The occupation of Iraq: Winning the war, losing the peace*. London: Yale University Press. p. 241
[23] Allawi, A. (2007). p. 242
[24] Allawi, A. (2007). p. 242

2.5 The instillation of democracy

Paul Bremer, the newly appointed authority figure in Iraq as of May 2003, had continued his predecessor's efforts of maneuvering towards the emergence of an Iraqi political system. In July 2003, the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) was created, a political entity within which Iraq's diverse groups were supposedly represented. UN resolution 1551 adopted on 18 October, 2003, acknowledged the IGC as legitimate and therefore, conceded the change in Iraq's regime.[25] Bremer and the IGC had agreed on forming an unelected interim government in June 2004 that would be responsible for drafting a constitution and preparing the country for elections.

This agreement was known as the November 15 Agreement, and had included important measures in order to politically transform Iraq into a self-ruling democratic country by which the status of Coalition forces in Iraq was discussed between the CPA and the Governing Council. It also outlined the selection process of a Transitional National Assembly (TNA) that would be responsible for nominating an interim government by June 2004, and scheduling a specific timetable for formulating Iraq's constitution. In addition, a new set of elections were planned to be held in December of 2005.[26]

As a result, on 28 May, 2003 the IGC unanimously chose Iyad Allawi, the secular Shiite former exile, to be prime minister of the interim government.[27] "Subsequently, the Allawi government also received international legitimacy on 8 June, 2004, when the Security

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[25] Fawn, R. & Hinnebush, R. (Eds.). (2006). *The Iraq war: Causes and consequences.* Boulder: Lynn Rienner. p. 11

[26] Allawi, A. (2007). *The occupation of Iraq: Winning the war, losing the peace.* London: Yale University Press. p. 214

[27] Fawn, R. & Hinnebush, R. (Eds.). (2006). p. 10

Council voted to transfer sovereignty from the Coalition Provisional Authority."[28] In 2004, an interim government whose prime minister was selected to be Ayad Allawi, appropriated the task of preparing for the January 2005 constitutional assembly elections.[29]

The road to holding such elections necessitates the presence of a transitional constitution incorporating the main principles of the Iraqi state upon which different sects and political group concur. Although it would only function for a limited period of time, it would nevertheless pave the way for the future constitution to be drafted once the elected government was well-established in place after the elections to be held on January of 2005. The Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) was ascribed the task of drafting the transitional constitution; it later became known as the Transition Administrative Law (TAL). Deadlines, time schedules and procedural issues were to be included in the TAL along with issues pertaining to the agreement of US and allies troops' status.

The process of writing the TAL did not proceed smoothly; disagreements often occurred on the wording and context of items to be listed and heated meetings were often held to reconcile those issues. Meanwhile the preset deadline of signing the draft by all sides on the 28th February 2004 was steadily approaching. The CPA was thus highly concerned, questioning the probability of meeting this deadline. Strangely enough, no serious Shiite participation could be noted throughout the process of drafting the transitional constitution. It was not until early February 2004 that the Shiites decided to scrutinize the TAL after having formed a committee of their own.

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[28] Fawn, R. & Hinnebush, R. (Eds.). (2006). *The Iraq war: Causes and consequences*. Boulder: Lynn Rienner. p. 11
[29] Allawi, A. (2007). *The occupation of Iraq: Winning the war, losing the peace*. London: Yale University Press. p. 284

Even after the final draft was eventually presented to the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) for approval and last-minute proof-reading, the Shiite leader, Sistani, yet another time surprisingly announced having reservations concerning the TAL and would not sign the document.[30] "Finally, a hasty agreement was patched up between the Shi'a caucus and the Najaf hierarchy; the TAL was duly signed.

In an awkward reversal of position, even though the Shi'a leaders on the Governing Council had signed the document – they held a press conference the very next day to declare they had serious reservations about the TAL, especially article 61 (c);[31] the latter permitted the Kurds to reject any form of constitution if two-thirds of the population of the three provinces within the Kurdistan Regional Government (dominated by Kurds) wished it. The Kurds therefore effectively had a veto power on any future constitution that was not to their liking."[32]

For the first time in decades, Iraqi people were provided with the opportunity to express their opinion in the process of voting in democratic elections, the issue which was undoubtedly unimaginable had Iraq stayed under the rule of dictatorships. Having introduced the fundamental element of democracy into Iraq's history will be a distinguished achievement of the US to which Iraqi people will unquestionably remain appreciative. However, these elections came a little too late, almost eighteen months after the overthrow of Saddam. "Delays in handing over sovereignty fueled the insurgency and embittered Iraqis."[33]

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[30] Allawi, A. (2007). *The occupation of Iraq: Winning the war, losing the peace*. London: Yale University Press. p. 221.
[31] Allawi, A. (2007). p. 223.
[32] Allawi, A. (2007). p. 223.
[33] Phillips, L. D. (2005). *Losing Iraq*. USA: West View. p. 223

Nevertheless, the 2005 elections were a success given that almost 60% of Iraqis cast their votes, thus giving birth to a parliament consisting of 275 deputies representing the entire nation.[34] The distribution of seats among political parties varied; it was clearly evident though that the major winners in this election were the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) which consisted of the main Shiite leaders in Iraq, and the Kurdistan Alliance. The UIA had managed to attain a striking number of 148 seats, i.e. over 50% of the parliament, while the Kurdistan Alliance gained 75 seats. Other parties such as Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's Iraqiyyah obtained 40 seats. It was evident then that the UIA enjoyed the largest share of power among other parties to support and perhaps impose a new Iraqi prime minister. Therefore, a transitional national government led by Prime Minister Ibrahim Al Jaafari supported by the UIA shortly emerged.

Since the Shiites were a majority in Iraq, and have been long oppressed by the rule of the Sunni authoritarian Saddam Hussein, one of the preset agendas of this government was aiming for better representation of the Shiite community in Iraq in rectification of the previous inconvenience that this sect had endured under the former Baathist regime. It remained that this government was a transitional one, designed to transform Iraq from one phase to another, in the course of which a new constitution was to be outlined. Jalal Talabani, head of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) party, was then appointed president.[35]

In addition, the January 2005 elections were boycotted by some of the Sunni parties. The Sunnis, after having politically dominated Iraq for centuries, were alarmed at the possibility of their losing this special prerogative that they had long enjoyed in favor of

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[34] Allawi, A. (2007). *The occupation of Iraq: Winning the war, losing the peace.* London: Yale University Press. p. 396
[35] Allawi, A. (2007). p. 396.

other sects, mainly that of the Shiite majority. Hence, the decision of not participating in the 2005 elections was one that Sunni leaders soon regretted after solely managing to obtain 17 out of 275 lawmakers in the transitional National Assembly which was supposed to draft Iraq's constitution.[36]

The process of drafting Iraq's constitution did not proceed smoothly; Sunnis who did not gain a sufficient number of seats as a result of boycotting the January 2005 elections were not active participants in the process. Disagreements between internal Iraqi parties and sects arose afterwards but eventually a constitution was framed thus permitting parliamentary elections to occur on December 15th, 2005, in which the Sunnis eagerly participated and were better represented. "The elections took place in a relatively safe environment, with minimal terrorist disruptions. A turnout of nearly 80 per cent of voters was recorded, an astonishing figure by any reckoning."[37]

Nuri al-Maliki was selected to be prime minister and promptly started to form his national unity government. By the end of this transfer of power process and the collapse of the former regime, the US had accomplished an important achievement in the Iraqi political arena, transforming Iraq from a dictatorship into a democracy, admittedly through a lengthy procedure. In other words, the US was able to replace the hostile regime of Saddam with a preferable authority more predisposed to cooperate with the US, thereby ensuring US interests in Iraq and the region through facilitating its access to oil, and allowing its military existence in the Middle East.

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[36] Heazle, M. & Islam, I. (2006). *Beyond the Iraq war: The promises, pitfalls, and perils of external interventionism*. Cheltenham: Edward Edgar. p. 85.
[37] Allawi, A. (2007). *The occupation of Iraq: Winning the war, losing the peace*. London: Yale University Press. p. 441.

2.6 Oil resource

Another paramount benefit in this war was the control over the oil resource. Soon after the war had started, US troops were assigned the mission of securing Iraq's most important oil fields. Dominating Iraq's oil is also of crucial importance to the US with respect to the geography of Iraq which not only possesses the world's second largest oil reserves, but also shares borders with three out of five countries classified as the largest oil producers in the world.[38] Therefore, the United States, having only 3% of the world's oil reserves[39], is predominantly interested in the Gulf region as a whole due to the ample oil reserves and other natural resources it contains. "US oil deposits are increasingly depleted, and many other non-OPEC fields are beginning to run dry. The bulk of the future supplies will have to come from the Gulf region."[40]

By 2020, studies display that the US level of dependence on oil imports will be as high as 62%. Since the Middle East region is known to possess 65.3% of the world's oil reserves, in addition to enjoying the advantage of its oil being the lowest in production costs in the world, the US risks being dependent on this region's supply of oil in the future.[41] Iraq, in particular, is known to possess the world's second largest oil reserves: besides having the second largest oil reserves, Iraq has unexplored terrains containing a significant amount of oil and natural gas. With the exception of Kirkuk and Rumeila, experts agree that the vast majority of Iraq's oil fields have not been developed properly,

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[38] Fawn, R. & Hinnebush, R. (Eds.). (2006). *The Iraq war: Causes and consequences.* Boulder: Lynn Rienner. p. 29.

[39] Rogers, P. (2006). *A war too far: Iraq, Iran and the new American century.* London: Pluto Press. p. 163.

[40] Simons, G. (2003). *Future Iraq US policy in reshaping the Midle East.* London: Saqi. p. 250.

[41] Douglas, S. (2007). *The limits of American power: Prosecuting a Middle East peace.* USA: Edward Elgar. p. 11

and the country thus has the potential of becoming another Saudi Arabia in terms of oil production.[42]

In order to ensure US interests regarding oil, the US desires a compliant Iraqi regime. The nature of Iraqi oil is also of extreme significance in relation to the US, for Iraq possesses high-quality oil that is comparatively inexpensive and easily extractable. In addition, as mentioned earlier, it has the world's second largest oil reserves, consisting of approximately 112 billion barrels. In arguing for the importance of oil with respect to the US, it is important to mention the simplicity of extracting and exporting Iraqi oil to different locations, such as through shipping it across the Mediterranean Sea. It is undisputable that the US main economic achievement in Iraq is oil; however, Iraq is also rich in natural gas reserves which are abundantly prevalent in the country.[43]

As the world proceeds into an era in which oil reserves are considerably diminishing and its production has become insufficient due to the incredible increase of demand, the United States, abiding by Carter's canon, is adopting a policy of exercising every possible measure to protect its oil interests in the region. Such control over Iraqi oil offers the United States special prerogatives and rewarding benefits internationally. In further illustration for instance, "it is the economies of Europe and East Asia that are dependent on access to oil from the Middle East."[44] Therefore, securing Iraqi oil strengthens the US hegemony over the world's nations and allows the US to become a competing economic

[42] Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and research. (2005). *Gulf oil in the aftermath of the Iraq war: Strategies and policies.* Abu Dhabi: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research. p. 97
[43] Walker, M. (Ed.). (2004). *The Iraq war as witnessed by the correspondents and photographers of the United press international.* Washington: Brassey's. p. 35
[44] Hadar, L. (2005). *Sandstorm policy failure in the Middle East.* Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 154

and political power among a large number of world nations such as China, Japan, and India direly in need of the Middle Eastern natural resources.[45]

In addition, the direct American control over Iraqi oil would also terminate the policy pursued by some oil rich Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia of blackmailing the US through controlling oil prices, and thus using their precious commodity as a powerful negotiating weapon.

The American access to Iraqi oil is perceived as especially threatening to the future of OPEC with the possibility of the US privatizing this Iraqi oil sector in favor of American companies; this would enable them to manipulate oil prices and even feasibly decrease them to as low as $22 to $28 a barrel or even further to $15 to $18 in the future, highly competing with other companies in the market.[46] However, recent skyrocketing oil prices indicate that US monopoly over this sector is not perfect; US is constantly pressuring KSA to increase its production of oil now that the oil barrel has reached an unprecedented price of almost $140. KSA, on the other hand, has not been very responsive to US demands in this regard, an indication that US major ally in the Gulf is not so reliable, rendering the control over Iraqi oil even more salient.

The US plan of invading Iraq had precisely focused on the "quick takeover of the countries oil fields." Indeed, the first areas seized by the invading troops in southern Iraq were named Forward Operating Base Exon and Forward Operation Base Shell.

As early as the first few days of the war, fear of the former Iraqi regime sabotaging Iraq's rich oil wells was legitimate; hence, the US and its allies while advancing on land, along with other air operations occurring simultaneously, were especially concerned with

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[45]Arnove, A. (2006). *Iraq: The logic of withdrawal.* New York: New Press. p. 8
[46] Israeli, R. (2004). *The Iraq war: Hidden agendas and Babylonian intrigue.* Brighton: Sussex Academic Press. p. 142

securing the oil fields. During the first week, "ground maneuver forces attacked to seize the key Rumaylah oil fields, simultaneously began an unprecedented combined arms penetration deep into Iraq."[47] This has ensured the safety of Rumaylah's oil wells from intended sabotage by the Iraqi regime. Consequently, only nine out of almost 500 wells were damaged by Saddam's regime before the US and its allies' troops were able to capture and exert control over them.[48]

Iraqis were also quick to note that in the chaos following the invasion, U.S. troops secured the interior and oil ministries, but stood by while museums, weapons caches, and even sites with nuclear-related materials were looted.[49] The CPA had hired almost 14,000 security guards in order to patrol the Iraqi oil facilities.[50] It is also important to mention that Iraq's constitution which was drafted by the Transitional National Assembly (TNA) did not specify "who had control over all undiscovered and unexploited oil fields."[51]

2.7 Military Presence in the region

Another successful feature of the war is the direct, explicit presence of US troops in Iraq. This presence has unquestionably made the US a regional power in the Middle East, able to influence and affect neighboring states. 145,000 US troops first invaded Iraq when the war was launched in 2003[52]; the Bush administration however, sent additional troops there after the military operations were completed throughout the post-war management

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[47] Cordesman, A. H. (2003). *The Iraq war: Strategy, tactics and military lessons.* Washington D.C.: CSIS Press. p. 71
[48] Cordesman, A. (2003). p. 62
[49] Arnove, A. (2006). *Iraq: The logic of withdrawal.* New York: New Press. p. 8
[50] Allawi, A. (2007). *The occupation of Iraq: Winning the war, losing the peace.* London: Yale University Press. p. 256
[51] Allawi, A. (2007). p. 414
[52] Carlisle, R. (2005). *The Iraq war: Facts on file.* New York: Publishing house. p. 73

phase clearly establishing a strong military base in Iraq. The military presence in Iraq had chiefly served the purpose of ensuring US interests in that country and in the region, the most important of which being the securing of oil fields in Iraq.

In addition, such a presence had restructured the region geopolitically, allowing the US to become a strong regional player able to influence neighboring states straightaway, especially with its military bases located within relatively short distances of the Middle East and the Gulf as a whole. This military presence is a US achievement in the region; it has the capacity of being used as a powerful weapon against the neighboring states such as Syria and Iran. "Although the future was unclear, it seemed certain that in May, 2003, the balance of military power in the region had shifted."[53]

Arabs especially Gulf States, have been substantially affected by the policy of the Bush Administration in its war on Iraq. These states are markedly sensitive concerning the impact of the war in the region, since any consequences will definitely affect them one way or another.

Historically, the Gulf region witnessed three major influential powers: Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran. Due to the immediate military presence of US troops in Iraq, some would argue that this old triangular theory has become a quadratic one since "the indefinite US presence in the Gulf has created an entirely new environment where previous security structures and approaches have become obsolete. The first impression suggests a quadratic system now."[54] While others believe that it is still triangular with the US substituting Iraq's role: With uncertainty over the issue of Iraq's integrity (will complete

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[53] Carlisle, R. (2005). *The Iraq war: Facts on file.* New York: Publishing house. p. 134
[54] Furtig, H. (2007). Conflict and cooperation in the Persian Gulf: The interregional order and US policy. *The Middle East Journal, 61*(4), pp. 627-641. Retrieved November 8, 2007, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

sovereignty ever be regained?) thanks to the American occupation of that country, a new "artificial" triangle consisting of Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United States has been created.[55] In fact, some argue that the artificial triangle is actually a bilateral power structure with US on one side and Iran on another, considering that KSA is much dependent on its American ally.

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[55] Furtig, H. (2007). Conflict and cooperation in the Persian Gulf: The interregional order and US policy. *The Middle East Journal, 61*(4), pp. 627-641. Retrieved November 8, 2007, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

CHAPTER 3

The Current Situation

Contrary to US expectations, the invasion of Iraq did not progress as smoothly as the superpower had hoped it would. US troops were confronted with a national resistance against their presence; they were viewed by a number of Iraqis as being occupiers rather than liberators. Furthermore, this volatile and shaky situation produced violent results within the country. Iraqi citizens quite legitimately felt disoriented concerning their future prospects and the manner in which they should respond to their foreign invaders.

3.1 Resistance

Several US blunders in Iraq have largely contributed to its perception as an occupying power rather than a liberating one, thus instigating resistance against the US military presence in Iraq in an attempt to force it into an early withdrawal. Facing any kind of opposition was downplayed before launching the war; the reality, however, is that American troops in Iraq were not as welcome as Bush had hoped. "But the media and the White House badly misread Iraqis' real feelings. Certainly, many were happy to see a hated dictator gone, but this did not make them pro-occupation. Iraqis were perfectly capable of hating Saddam Hussein and hating George Bush at the same time, and with equal fervor, as the slogans from anti-occupation demonstrations soon revealed."[56]

These anti-occupation movements sometimes unified both Sunni and Shiite Iraqis against the US, indicating that the US' withdrawal is a national, sectarian undivided desire of the

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[56] Arnove, A. (2006). *Iraq: The logic of withdrawal.* New York: New Press. p. 56

Iraqi people, since no impressive future vision was outlined. Of chief problematic nature are the Fedayeen Saddam group who were especially disturbing for US troops as they were already well-organized from the early days of Saddam and had piles of arms; they traveled under civilian disguise expertly employing the guerilla tactic of surprise against their foes. They are almost impossible to detect by American troops because they easily become a part of the general population as it were attired in civilian habiliment.[57]

The Sunnis particularly adopted a tenacious anti-US stance as they felt that the US had favored the Shiite and Kurdish sects over them and had stripped them of the power and privileges that they had enjoyed under the former regime.[58] On March 31, 2004, four American contractors employed by a company called Blackwater Security Consulting were brutally murdered in Fallujah, mainly a Sunni area: their bodies were burned, dragged through the streets and two of the corpses were suspended from a bridge over the Euphrates river.[59]

Wamidh Nazami of Baghdad University is convinced that Iraq is not divided into Sunni and Shia camps, or other religious or ethnic groups, but between "the pro-occupation camp and the anti-occupation camp."[60] During April of 2004, 134 US soldiers were killed; it was one of the most deadly months for US troops in Iraq. Later that year, Shiite leader Moqtada al-Sadr also called for the declaration of jihad against occupiers' troops.[61] Such high casualty rates insinuates that US troops killed in Iraq are indeed numerous;

[57] Israeli, R. (2004). *The Iraq war: Hidden agendas and Babylonian intrigue*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press. p. 190
[58] Heazle, M. & Islam, I. (2006). *Beyond the Iraq war: The promises, pitfalls, and perils of external interventionism*. Cheltenham: Edward Edgar. p. 73
[59] Phillips, L. D. (2005). *Losing Iraq*. USA: West View. p. 195
[60] Arnove, A. (2006). *Iraq: The logic of withdrawal*. New York: New Press. p. 60
[61] Phillips, L. D. (2005). p. 199

according to media news the number of US fatalities is as high as 4,000 since the occupation of Iraq in 2003.

The military wing of the Shiite Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) party, the Badr Organization was another armed militia targeting American troops.[62] An additional Sunni military organization named the Army of Muhammad was established; it consists of fighters following an Islamic ideology conveying the message that it is the duty of Iraqis to fight the US and allies' troops. These warriors refer to themselves as *mujahideen*.[63] Another Sunni political organization called the Association of Muslim Scholars (AMS) was founded immediately after the military battle was won, in resistance to the occupation. The AMS developed the theme of resistance, *fiqh al muqawama* as a religious duty of every believer. "The AMS was careful, however, to reject random acts of violence against innocents within its exposition on the legal doctrine of resistance. It insisted that legitimate resistance could only target the occupier and his allies."[64] Furthermore, it had refused to participate in any political process as long as any occupying authority is in power; hence, it perceived the CPA and the Governing Council as illegitimate.[65]

In August 2004, the American army suffered an average of 87 attacks per day. By 7 December 2004, the war casualties since its initiation reached 1000 American soldiers.[66] It is important to note that there is no friendly occupation, therefore, the key misconception made earlier was the expectation of the US being perceived as a savior of

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[62] Heazle, M. & Islam, I. (2006). *Beyond the Iraq war: The promises, pitfalls, and perils of external interventionism*. Cheltenham: Edward Edgar. p. 78

[63] Allawi, A. (2007). *The occupation of Iraq: Winning the war, losing the peace*. London: Yale University Press. p. 182

[64] Allawi, A. (2007). p. 183

[65] Allawi, A. (2007). p. 183

[66] Fawn, R. & Hinnebush, R. (Eds.). (2006). *The Iraq war: Causes and consequences*. Boulder: Lynn Rienner. p. 14

Iraq; the Iraqi reaction proved to be entirely different: "There was also a strong belief that the Iraqis would immediately welcome the United States as liberators, though this was based less on empirical evidence than on an assumption of how the Iraqis *should* feel."[67] It is yet important to focus on the structure and nature of the Iraqi resistance. With its variety of movements, the overall military resistance against the US consists primarily of pressure on the Bush administration to withdraw its troops from Iraq since they are perceived as occupiers.

These resistance movements are not manipulated or led by a single leader as they include various parties integrated within. "As in Vietnam, the US occupation forces in Iraq are facing sustained resistance by at least 200,000 full-and part-time patriotic guerilla fighters who enjoy widespread support within the Iraqi population."[68] Iraqi citizens of different locations (rural or urban), different age groups (adolescents, adults and elderly men) and a variety of occupations (students, intellectuals, farmers, former soldiers in the Iraqi army and Islamic fundamentalists) are contained within these broad range movements.

The American army is having a formidably perplexing time dealing with the Iraqi resistance, in particular because the latter adopts an unconventional way of battling. These fighting techniques can be labeled as "guerilla wars." "Guerilla wars typically begin when a smaller army is confronted by a larger one, forcing it to resort to the advantages it has: its ability to hide amid the population, its knowledge of the local

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[67] Fawn, R. & Hinnebush, R. (Eds.). (2006). *The Iraq war: Causes and consequences.* Boulder: Lynn Rienner. p. 33
[68] Lorimer, D. (2005, June 22). United States: Six out of ten voters want Iraq withdrawal. *Green Left Weekly.* Retrieved January 15, 2008, from World Socialist Website database.

terrain, its ability to mount quick and surprising attacks and then melt away before the larger army is capable of retaliating."[69]

Such techniques are exhaustive in the manner that they inflict numerous casualties (deaths or injuries) among American soldiers, besides the economical losses that the US army sustains through the destruction of military equipment. Urban combats drastically reduced America's advantage: one-on-one fighting resulted in an increase of overall American losses as compared to dropping bombs from a jet fighter.[70] In the cities, the vulnerability of American soldiers, no matter how well equipped, is being proved on a daily basis in Baghdad, Falluja, and Najaf. Hence, this can also be a contributing factor adding to the time pressure that the Bush Administration is being subjected to in the matter of withdrawing from Iraq. Fixed departure dates is a continuous demand that the US is requested to promise in order to mitigate the public protests.

3.2 Violence in Iraq

Sunni insurgents committed many acts of violence against the Kurds and the Shiites whom they had considered being collaborators, including the car-bombing of a police station in Baghdad on 9 October, 2003, and attacks on a Shiite mosque located in Baghdad on Devember 3, 2004. Such violence threatened the outbreak of a destructive, sectarian civil war.[71] On March 2nd, 2004 the shrines of Karbala and Kadhimain had witnessed bombings, while Shiites were commemorating 'Ashoura, the martyrdom of

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[69] Arnove, A. (2006). *Iraq: The logic of withdrawal.* New York: New Press. p. 61
[70] Pelletiere, S. (2004). *America's oil wars.* Westport CT: Praeger. p. 145
[71] Fawn, R. & Hinnebush, R. (Eds.). (2006). *The Iraq war: Causes and consequences.* Boulder: Lynn Rienner. p. 13

Imam Hussein. Almost 270 deaths were counted and 570 injured. A month earlier,

another attack on the Irbil offices of the Kurdish parties resulted in 109 deaths and 247

injured people. Both violent attacks were blamed on the Al-Qaeda Sunni fundamentalist

terrorist group, led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.[72]

The purpose of such attacks was to provoke the Shiite into fighting the Sunni sect in Iraq

thereby instigating the Arab Sunni Iraqis into joining the insurgency and increasing

assistance and backing to the insurgents. The American superpower would be unable to

deal with the resulting bedlam and feel pressured into an eventual withdrawal from the

country. An outright civil war would then ensue in which the guerilla Sunnis would be

joined by the Islamic world's Sunni majority; together they would remove the Shi'a from

power.[73] Furthermore, appropriation of Sunni mosques located in Shiite areas such as

Karbala and Hilla further escalated the sectarian division.[74] "It was only a matter of time

before the Shi'a militias would spring into action as defenders of Shi'a lives and

property. [...] Sectarian violence would now be added to the war of resistance against the

occupiers."[75] It should be also noted that US had a role to play in increasing sectarian

conflict in Iraq although inadvertently. The CPA's erroneous decisions led to an

unfavorable augmentation in the recruits of insurgencies, thereby further increasing

sectarian violence. Such decisions include "the disbanding of the 385,000 man conscript

army, the laying off of 500,000 workers in public sector factories, the termination of

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[72] Allawi, A. (2007). *The occupation of Iraq: Winning the war, losing the peace.* London: Yale University Press. p. 233
[73] Allawi, A. (2007). p. 234
[74] Allawi, A. (2007). p. 245
[75] Allawi, A. (2007). p. 248

agricultural subsidies, and the formation of Iraq's first post-Ba'athist government according to ethnic quotas."[76]

Moreover, the sects themselves are not united. Among the Shiites, there are several subdivisions of political parties and militias, the most distinctive of which are Muqtada Al-sadr movement and the Dawa party of Prime Minister Maliki. Likewise, the Sunnis also suffer from factions among their classes. "But the center of today's insurgency, based on the Sunni triangle, has over 60 separate groups."[77] This complex current situation of instability in Iraq and the ongoing civil war, along with the occurring chaos, is threatening the maintenance of US achievements that had been attained after the war. The US therefore, in view of such insecure and riotous circumstances in the country, risks the total or partial loss of its accomplishments in Iraq.

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[76] Davis, E. (2007). Rebuilding a non-sectarian Iraq. *Strategic Insights, 6,* (6). Retrieved June 25, 2008, from Columbia International Affairs Online database.
[77] Heazle, M., & Islam, I. (2006). *Beyond the Iraq war: the promises, pitfalls, and perils of external interventionism.* Cheltenham: Edward Edgar. p. 97

CHAPTER 4

Limitations of American power in Iraq

The aforementioned violence and resistance against US troops in Iraq which had inevitably led to a struggle among Iraqis themselves besides the one involving the foreign invaders, had yielded a highly complex situation which made it hard for the US to achieve its intended objectives; it thus confronted a predicament where there were numerous obstacles to overcome. Another factor that had exacerbated the situation according to the US was that the Iraqi society was divided among itself. The US was accused of miscalculating the reaction of the Iraqi people towards the occupation. Historically, the Iraqi society consisting of Sunnis, Shiites, Kurds and other sects had for a lengthy period of time encompassed sectarian tensions

Thus, the Iraqi people did not view the US plan of instilling democracy as a national achievement; they perceived it instead as a way of preserving each sect's benefits. This situation has led to an increase in the number of terrorist groups and other militias.

It is therefore evident that the US has suffered severe limitations in the way in which it has been unable to enforce its preconceived agenda over the Iraqi people; the US scheme did not coincide with the wishes and demands of the Iraqis themselves; this turned out to be a grave miscalculation on the part of the Bush administration.

4.1 The internal complexity of Iraq

America's foreign policy after the September 11th events has essentially consisted of ambitious, unrealistic objectives. The United States is unsurpassed in terms of its might and influence on the rest of the world. It has the most powerful army, the largest economy, the most sophisticated technology, and a highly influential culture on a vulnerable world.[78] Being the superpower that it is, the United States has adopted a foreign policy consisting of a worldwide promotion of democracy, a global fight against terrorism and a preservation of US national security and international interests.

. In order to scrutinize the limitations of American power in Iraq, despite the fact that it is the world's superpower, one need consider the Bush Administration's reasons for starting the war. Having listed its objectives, it is easier to then perceive how the United States is not always capable of having its own way even though it is the world's most powerful nation.

In March 2003, Bush had called for the invasion of Iraq; he deliberately named the military mission "Operation Iraqi Freedom," claiming at unifying, democratizing Iraq and defeating international terrorism. Even without international support of the invasion, the US and its allies could still start a war in an attempt to create a stable, independent united country with a constitutional government that respected ethnic differences, religious and women's rights, and could repel foreign insurgents from adjacent countries, and which would enjoy an independent, free-market economy.[79] However, has the US truly realized

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[78] Hamilton, L. (2007). The art of the possible. *The National Interest, 92*, pp. 8-12. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

[79] Choharis, P. C. (2006). Forget failure, let's avoid catastrophe. *The National Interest 86*, pp. 16-20. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

its objectives? Can Iraq currently be considered a democracy? The analysis of the course of the Iraqi war proves that there is a huge gap of difference between declared and real objectives behind American foreign policy.

One criticism of the Bush policy is that it assumed Iraqis would welcome regime change and also help the US and its allies in the promotion of democracy. The US president believed that a desire for democracy was of intrinsic value to Iraqis, one that its citizens would seek to secure, and in his own words had declared that: "In less than three years, Iraq had gone from dictatorship to liberation, to sovereignty, to a constitution, to national elections."[80] Instead, the country drowned in severe sectarian conflict that further resulted in an initiation of Iraq's civil war, thus hindering the process of promoting democracy, among the internal disagreements.

Iraq is populated by a diversity of ethnic and cultural groups such as Sunnis, Shiites, Kurds, Christians, and secularists. President Bush has addressed the Iraqi people in their entirety on several occasions as if there were common threads and themes uniting them on topics such as the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the establishment of a democracy, and the subsequent fair, representative distribution of power among sects. However, according to Kenneth S. Zagacki, a foreign policy expert, the Iraqis are evidently divided among themselves: "they put their religious or ethnic identification either first, [as in] "I'm a Kurd and an Iraqi," "I'm a Sunni and an Iraqi," or they just say "I'm a Kurd." This country was never together on its own accord. It was put together by Ottomans, then by the British, and then held together by the brutality of Saddam Hussein."[81]

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[80] Zagacki, K. (2007). Constitutive rhetoric reconsidered: Constitutive paradoxes in G.W. Bush's Iraq war speeches. *Western Journal of Communication, 71*(4), pp. 272-294. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[81] Zagacki, K. (2007).

Therefore, democracy as a US achievement in Iraq is not entirely sheltered from the

ongoing conflict; many obstacles still lie in the way of protecting it from possible risks

and rendering it a permanent system of rule. The process of implementing democracy in

Iraq, since the start of the war, did not progress as smoothly as the Bush Administration

has hoped it would. Lack of security, national reconciliation and stability are all elements

that grievously damage the attempt of democratizing Iraq. According to Galbraith, the

majority of Iraqis did not accept the notion a multi-ethnic, liberal democracy. The Kurds

wanted their own state, the Shia desired a theocracy, and the Sunnis were basically afraid

of becoming the political and religious underdogs in Iraq.[82] The ongoing civil war, thus,

thwarts the development of Iraq into a sovereign, independent, free country. "Democracy

involves much more than elections. It is about the distribution of power and systems of

governance that enable representative rule."[83]

The US has undertaken the mission of rebuilding a nation into a democracy from

centuries of authoritarian rule. Given the monumental difficulty of this task, it is obvious

that the US had not fully studied the feasibility of Iraq's transformation. US as a

superpower is certainly capable of changing almost any political regime. Yet the

challenge lies in the instillation of a favorable regime as a successor of its antagonistic

predecessor. The key misconception here lies in realizing the difference between regime

change and regime replacement, the issue which must be taken into consideration when

calculating the consequence of possible political turn of events. The miscalculation of the

enormous task of reshaping and transforming such a nation, especially amidst the

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[82] Wirtz, J. (2007). The end of Iraq: How American incompetence created a war without end. *Political Science Quarterly, 121*(4), pp. 710-713. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[83] Phillips, L. D. (2005). *Losing Iraq*. USA: West View. p. 222

continuing tumult and disorder, has positioned the US under pressure of accountability and responsibility in maintaining Iraq's recently acquired status of democracy. Furthermore, "democracy can only thrive in a stable and secure environment."[84] Needless to say, Iraq, therefore, being an insecure, instable state with an unpredictable future, and currently confronted with innumerable dilemmas, is hardly suitable to be characterized as a democracy.

The US should realize the importance of laying the groundwork in order to fulfill its various aims and purposes. This can only be done if security and national reconciliation are steadfast in Iraq. Moreover, it is also arguable that democracy can be imposed at gunpoint; the nature of democracy necessitates that the people themselves take responsibility for freeing their own land and struggling for their own rights. This important outlook was conveniently provided less weight or thought than it should have. In addition, the US did not release the candidate lists of the January 2005 vote until the last minute; this led most Iraqis to accuse it of hindering the elections and seeking prolonged occupation of Iraq,[85] thereby increasing the belief in the notion that "where democracy appears to fit in well with US security and economic interests, the United States promotes democracy. Where democracy clashes with other significant interests, it is downplayed or even ignored."[86] One should also take into consideration that democracy might not be the ideal form of rule with respect to the Iraqi situation. Super powers should focus on situational approaches when dealing with particular nations rather than promoting unanimous concepts to apply homogeneously to the world states.

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[84] Phillips, L. D. (2005). *Losing Iraq*. USA: West View. p. 222
[85] Arnove, A. (2006). *Iraq: The logic of withdrawal*. New York: New Press. p. 71
[86] Chomsky, N. (2006). Failed states: The abuse of power and the assault on democracy. New York: Metropolitan Books. p. 149

As one American citizen pertinently noted: "We must stay in Iraq, it is said again and again, so that we can bring stability and democracy to that country. Isn't it clear that after years of wars and occupation we have brought only chaos and violence and death to that country, not any recognizable democracy? Can democracy be nurtured by destroying cities, by bombing, by driving people from their homes?"[87] The augmenting concern and perplexity is unfaltering concerning the future of Iraq amidst the ongoing chaos and obvious civil war, even if the US is successful in shaping a better nation based on the precious principles that Bush wishes to instill in the form of any future Iraqi constitution, government and authority. "While the United States has proving that it is willing to give control to the Iraqis, the current fear is what type of nation they will inherit if the country collapses into sectarian conflict."[88]

Besides attempting to democratize Iraq, another claim that the US has proposed in its war is the unification of Iraq. In reality, Iraq is undergoing a sectarian conflict, one that is Sunni-Shiite in essence, and that has been classified as a sectarian civil war by many observers. The capitulation of the Ba'athist regime has resulted in the Kurds, Sunnis, and Shiites of Iraq to seek their own interests first. It is questionable that U.S. forces are capable of unifying the country; the bloody ethnic struggle and political repression make it currently seem like an unworkable task or solution.[89] In addition, Iraq's government seems unable, even powerless, to stop the sectarian violence, control the insurgency and militias, and protect its borders. "The central government's inability to stop the incessant

[87] Sheehan, C. (2006). *Dear president Bush.* San Francisco: City Lights. p. xii

[88] Farber, D. (Ed.). (2007). What they think of US: International perceptions of the United States since 9/11. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. p. 23

[89] Wirtz, J. (2007). The end of Iraq: How American incompetence created a war without end. *Political Science Quarterly, 121*(4), pp. 710-713. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

violence, to provide many basic services, to act independently of the American and other coalition forces and to rebuild the economy has created doubts about its abilities to govern."[90]

The essence of the dilemma is the absence of a unified Iraqi national identity; this manifests itself in the fiery disagreements among different political parties and sects over the future of Iraq. For instance, Sunni and secular parties, along with Moqtada Al Sadr Shiite party oppose federalism in Iraq while the powerful Shiite Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) led by Abdul Aziz al-Hakim supports it. Fear of Shiite control over the oil-rich southern region of Iraq and the consequent deprivation of the rest of the country of region's oil revenues engulfs many parties, particularly the Sunnis.[91] Former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi "wants to return to power, overthrow Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, unite Sunnis and Shi'ites under his secular rule, and bring back divisions of the Iraqi army dissolved by then U.S. administrator Paul Bremer."[92] In addition, the previously mentioned Sunni boycott of the January 2005 elections and their consequent lack of participation in the drafting of the constitution and the Shiite reservation particularly over the controversial article 61 (c) of the constitution, which provides the Kurds with veto privileges are all examples of how the sectarian conflict is exacerbating and is being reflected on the Iraqi arena due to the inefficiency of Iraq's system of rule. The Kurds seek autonomy and control over the oil rich city of Kirkuk, founding their own independent state.[93] It is taken for granted that none of the three

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[90]Choharis, P. C. (2006). Forget failure, let's avoid catastrophe. *The National Interest 86*, pp. 16-20. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[91] Choharis, P. C. (2006).
[92] Engel, R. (2007) Misperception of the war in Iraq: An NBC news correspondent, with long time experience in Iraq, describes many other visions of the war now being fought. *Nieman Reports, 61*(2), pp. 14-16 Retrieved January 15, 2008 from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[93] Engel, R. (2007).

largest ethnic/religious —Arab Shiites, Arab Sunnis and Kurds—will allow itself to be dominated by the others. A red line is thickly drawn at the point where their core interests are jeopardized.[94]

Hence, different perspectives over how to deal with the current Iraqi situation are manifested; those disagreements however are hampering the arrival at a national reconciliation process, by which Iraqis agree among themselves on the destiny of their country. Until such a settlement is reached, acts of violence that further widen the gap between sects and hinder national reconciliation are recurring; an example of which is the bombing of the Askari mosque in Samarra, a Shiite mosque with special religious symbolism.[95] Furthermore, areas of mixed Sunni-Shiite populations such as Baquba, the capital of the Diyala province, have become battlegrounds in the sectarian civil war.[96]

4.2 Opposition against the US

With an ongoing chaotic situation in Iraq, this nation has rapidly developed into a highly favorable venue for terrorism. It was therefore necessary for the US to provide shelter to its allies in the region from the plausible spread of terrorism and take appropriate measures within Iraq to abolish this phenomenon. Since September 11th, the US strategy in the Middle East has shifted, adopting a preventive foreign policy rather than a defensive one. The US has deemed it appropriate to be proactive in dealing with this

[94] Zagacki, K. (2007). Constitutive rhetoric reconsidered: Constitutive paradoxes in G.W. Bush's Iraq war speeches. *Western Journal of Communication, 71*(4), pp. 272-294. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[95] Garfield, A. (2007). The U.S. counter-propaganda failure in Iraq. *Middle East Quarterly 14*(4), pp. 23-33. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[96] Patten, D. (2007). Is Iraq in a civil war? *Middle East Quarterly, 14*(3), pp. 27-33. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

escalating threat of international terrorism; Washington claims that American national security is the principle reason for its decision to invade Afghanistan and begin a war with Iraq.

The fight against terrorism, however, is still perpetuated and has become more intense. The US is realizing that Al-Qaeda is increasingly forceful and tenacious, having experienced grave terrorist activities against its troops in Iraq and against other regional states allied with it. The daily news routinely reports that terrorist groups are alarmingly increasing in number, forming other smaller terrorist networks and executing various 'security-shaking' acts. Some even speak of terrorism's growing reach to European states and other nations. "Iraq is, of course, another critical battlefield in the fight against al Qaeda. But it is time to recognize that engagement there is more of a trap than an opportunity for the United States."[97]

In Iraq, terrorists have a deliberate strategy to weaken American might and prolong its entrapment there to allow for more attacks against US targets. It is more than a coincidence that insurgents execute the majority of their attacks at a time when there are breaking events, prominent visits, or external political timetables. For instance, attacks on American soldiers were stepped up during the months of the US 2004 and 2006 elections but were reduced during those same months in 2005 when elections were not occurring.[98] The inability of the US to deliver credible progress in Iraq has provided a suitable environment for Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups to thrive, fighting American soldiers, along with US interests in Iraq, and the region. "It did not help U.S. interests that the

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[97] Riedel, B. (2007, May/June). Al Qaeda strikes back. *Foreign Affairs*. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Columbia International Affairs Online database.

[98] Garfield, A. (2007). The U.S. counter-propaganda failure in Iraq. *Middle East Quarterly 14*(4), pp. 23-33. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

number of al-Qaeda militants in Iraq had increased since the invasion and that Anbar province had developed into an al-Qaeda mini-state."[99] In addition, terrorist groups, undeniably present in Iraq, are actively committing acts of violence and impeding any national reconciliation attempts, further escalating the internal conflicts and prolonging the civil war. In June 25, 2007, for instance, the lobby of Mansour Hotel was bombed by a terrorist, where Sunni and Shiite tribal leaders were holding a meeting to discuss national reconciliation.[100] Therefore, the hasty rush of US into the war on Iraq under the banner of fighting terrorism was another miscalculation that the Bush Administration should have prepared for in case the war did not progress as desired. Yet, presumably, it cannot withdraw while the country is in such a divided state, confronting a dire civil war. Besides terrorist organizations, several internal Iraqi parties oppose the continuous American presence in Iraq. Moqtada Al Sadr, head of the Mehdi army Shiite militia, urged Sunnis and Shiites to unite against US occupation of Iraq. In addition, the Association of Muslim Scholars (Ulemas) also leads a Sunni opposition movement to US troops' presence in Iraq, and encourages Iraqis to form a front against US occupation. Furthermore, religious figures have also been a part of the anti-occupation trend. "One sheikh in Najaf preached: "We will all stand now in the face of our enemies who seek to divide us.... The same old conspiracy, divide and conquer.""[101]

As a result, the US is essentially severely restricted in Iraq, facing military insurgency, terrorist attacks, political opposition, and even suffers from internal Iraqi disagreements

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[99] Taras, R. (2006). The (IL) Logic of intervention in Iraq: Sectarianism, civil war, and the U.S. game plan. *International Journal on World Peace, 23*(4), pp. 33-61. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[100] Garfield, A. (2007). The U.S. counter-propaganda failure in Iraq. *Middle East Quarterly 14*(4), pp. 23-33. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[101] Taras, R. (2006).

which hamper the achievement of any progress in Iraq. This proves that the US, although

a lone superpower in this world, is unable to achieve its foreign policy objectives and is

by no means guaranteed success with every policy it adopts. In fact, proof of the

limitation of US power appears everywhere, most evidently in Iraq. The fact that the

United States is a superpower ironically hampers it from exercising its full influence on

political situations. It has involved itself in so many issues in different parts of the globe

that it is incapable of focusing its full attention on any particular one of them. Its

strenuous efforts in a certain area almost inevitably guarantee failure elsewhere.[102]

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[102] Walt, S. (1999). Musclebound: The limits of U.S. power. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 55*(2), pp. 44-45. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

CHAPTER 5

Regional Actors: Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia

The instability in Iraq has made the country vulnerable to foreign interference. It is essential to stress the paramount importance of geopolitics in the region; Iraq's neighboring states are distinctly affected by what is occurring in the area. The impact of the unfolding situation in Iraq has a direct bearing on the current policies Iraq's adjacent states are pursuing, and understandably they are reacting in various ways to protect and preserve their regional interests. The influential players involved in Iraqi affairs include Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia. These counties are profoundly affected by the US policies being pursued in the region and are reacting accordingly.

5.1 US-Iranian relationship

5.1.1 Background

US-Iranian relationships previous to the 1979 Islamic revolution were cordial and friendly as the US had a close alliance with the Iranian shah who was in power at the time. The shah had been installed in 1953 through US and British assistance, and was one of the major US allies in the region, thereby further enabling US hegemony over the Middle East. Iran was both a politically intimate ally and also an important purchaser of US military weapons, thus economically benefiting Washington with a significant

amount of cash flow. Not only that, but the Iranian shah had notably initiated a nuclear program with US consent.[103]

However, after 1979, those relations were subject to tension as Iranian foreign policy drastically shifted. From being a reliable western ally, Iran adopted a radically different foreign policy assuming an anti-American stance, and reshaped its global and regional alliances accordingly. The Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein not yet viewed antagonistically, the US and Iraq united against a common enemy: Iran's recently formed zealous theocratic regime. Consequently, the US and allies in the region openly supported Iraq in its declaration of war and subsequent invasion of Iran in February, 1980.[104]

The Iranians viewed the invasion of their country as having been planned by Washington and executed by their puppet, Saddam Hussein. The increasing support provided by the US and its regional allies during the war reinforced the perception that America was pulling the strings in the Iran-Iraq war.[105]

Even after the Iran-Iraq war ended in August 1988, the US-Iranian relationship was still precarious as the US adopted a hostile policy in dealing with Iran's new Islamic regime: it imposed economic sanctions, prevented it from acquiring nuclear technology, and accused it of harboring terrorism in an effort to topple Arab regimes allied with the US. The sanctions and pressure resulted in the Tehran's government further solidifying its anti-American position, especially with the established conviction that the US was seeking regime change in Iran.

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[103] Barsamian, D. (2007). *Targeting Iran*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books. p. 18
[104] Taremi, K. (2005). Iranian foreign policy towards occupied Iraq, 2003-05. *Middle East Policy, 12*(4), pp. 28-48. Retrieved January 25, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[105] Taremi, K. (2005).

After Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the alliance between the US and Iraq disrupted and their relationship duly deteriorated. The US had even succeeded in imposing UN sanctions on Iraq and had employed force to compel Saddam to abide by them.[106] However, Saddam's "hostility towards the United States did not drive Iran to embrace Iraq, chiefly because the deep psychological wounds left by the war had not yet healed."[107] Although the deterioration of US-Iraq relationship did not lead to an Iraqi-Iranian alliance, Iran's position towards the US decision to go to war with Saddam's regime was one of opposition. Prior to the war on Iraq, President Bush in his State of the Union address in 2002 had classified Iran as belonging to an "axis of evil." This categorization had surprised the Iranians since they were cooperating with the US in overthrowing the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan; it was perceived as an insult which further embittering the Iranian regime. Furthermore, such a move played a crucial part in Iranian internal politics by weakening the public's support for the reformers who sought moderation with the US; it also increased the chances of Ahmedinejad winning the presidential elections and thus his later seizure of power.[108]

In addition, Iran was alarmed at the establishment of a pro-American regime in Iraq similar to the one in Afghanistan contributing to US interests in the region and to the build up of "unfriendly" authority governments within close proximity of Tehran, especially with a US-allied Turkey in the north and Arab Gulf states in the south. Iran

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[106] Taremi, K. (2005). Iranian foreign policy towards occupied Iraq, 2003-05. *Middle East Policy, 12*(4), pp. 28-48. Retrieved January 25, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[107] Taremi, K. (2005).
[108] Barsamian, D. (2007). *Targeting Iran*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books. p. 19

was then troubled at the turn of events leading to the US surrounding its eastern and

western borders.[109]

Highly concerned that it would be next in line in America's agenda of regime change in

the Middle East, Iranian leaders were willing to hold talks with the United States over

such matters as its harboring of terrorism and its nuclear program in progress.[110] The

Iranians were also concerned that Iraq could reinvade their country acting under US

orders. Additionally, as Hashemi Rafsanjani, the powerful head of the Expediency

Council indicated, Iraq could pull out of OPEC "Iraq could also pull out of OPEC and

influence the price of oil with its huge oil reserves; this would be in accordance with the

interests of the United States. Mr. Rafsanjani also thought that a pro-American regime in

Iraq, allied with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), would affect the regional balance

of power against Iran's interests.[111]

Apparently, Iran had fully realized the extent to which a successful US invasion of Iraq

would secure significant American achievements and consequently serve to further

intensify American hegemony as a superpower, especially in the Middle East. This

Iranian fear resulted in a proposal from Khatami in May 2003 to the US administration

through the Swiss embassy, soon after the invasion of Iraq in March. This all-inclusive

proposal indicated that Tehran was willing to negotiate over all the heated issues with

Washington such as its nuclear program, support for Hamas, Hezbollah and other terrorist

groups, its position towards Israel and the fate of Al-Qaeda members imprisoned in Iran.

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[109] Taremi, K. (2005). Iranian foreign policy towards occupied Iraq, 2003-05. *Middle East Policy, 12*(4), pp. 28-48. Retrieved January 25, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[110] Bahgat, G. (2007). Iran and the United States: The emerging security paradigm in the Middle East. *Parameters, 37*(2), pp. 5-19. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[111] Taremi, K. (2005).

The Bush Administration, however, not only refused to reply but even scolded the Swiss ambassador for communicating the proposal. Such behavior was interpreted as yet another insult to the Iranian regime, further increasing the political strain between the two countries.[112] This political move is one that Washington probably regrets after such tragic turn of events in Iraq.

5.1.2 Iranian intervention in Iraq

In order to hinder US plans after the superpower's occupation of Iraq, Iran defiantly engaged itself as a covert player in Iraq's internal affairs. As early as the 1980s and 1990s, the Islamic Republic had already developed close ties with several Iraqi Islamic movements such as the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) along with its militia known as the Badr Corps, the Islamic Dawa Party (IDP). The former two were forced into exile by Saddam Hussein in Iran where they received military and financial help. The SCIRI's Badr militia even sided with Iran during the Iran-Iraq war.[113] Interestingly, significant figures of the Dawa party were on the FBI's wanted list for attempting to bomb the US embassy in Kuwait until the Bush Administration removed their terrorist labels and recognized them instead as symbols of Iraq's newly instilled democracy.[114]

In addition to the Dawa Party and the SCIRI, the Sadr movement is also a pro-Iranian party led by Moqtada Al Sadr with an armed militia by the name of Jesh Al Mahdi meaning Al Mahdi army. It is worth mentioning, however, that initially Moqtada Al Sadr

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[112] Barsamian, D. (2007). *Targeting Iran*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books. p. 19-20
[113] Barsamian, D. (2007). p. 40
[114] Barsamian, D. (2007). p. 105

was not aligned with the Islamic Republic. "Nonetheless, given his emerging power-base, strident opposition to the American occupation, and his well-organized militia group, Tehran has found it advantageous to at least maintain some links with Sadr."[115] Furthermore, Iran had also developed sympathetic relations with the Kurds throughout the period extending from 1991 to 2003 through enabling the northern Iraqi region to experience independence of the Saddam-dominated Iraq by permitting extensive cross-border links.[116] Also, Iran had provided refuge to the Kurds escaping Saddam's aggression, especially Jalal Talbani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Moreover, Iran had sympathized with Iraq's Kurds and Shiites during Saddam's rule in which the former two sects suffered Sunni dictatorship for decades.

The Sunni-Shiite division within Iraq is also evident upon each sect's perception of the Iran-Iraq war. The Sunnis tend to view this war as one between the Arabs and the Persians, while their national partners the Shiites regard it as an extension of Saddam's aggression towards their Iranian co-religionists.[117] The paradox is that both Iran and the US were supporting the same pro-Iranian groups to seize power. Most southern areas of Iraq and nearly half of Baghdad is populated with Shiites; therefore, a striking incident that had occurred in 2003 reveals the significance of Iraqi Shiites' close identification of Iran. Back then, a Shiite revolt in the Green Zone was serious enough for Bremer to

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[115] Takeyh, R. (2008). Iran's new Iraq effect of the United States' invasion of Iraq on the Persian Gulf. *Middle East Journal, 62*(1), pp. 13-31. Retrieved March 7, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[116] Rogers, P. (2005). *Iraq and the war on terror: Twelve months of insurgency, 2004/2005.* London: I.B.Tauris. p. 105
[117] Takeyh, R. (2008).

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contemplate the option of food rationing among US officials since the American army was in need of supplies which required passing through Shiite controlled areas.[118]

Soon after the fall of Baghdad, it was apparent that Iran's strategy in Iraq chiefly consisted of creating obstacles for the US post-war agenda, constantly maneuvering events in awkward directions for the US and its allies' prolonged presence in Iraq. In the first place, after the overthrow of Saddam, Iran demanded US withdrawal from Iraq, leaving it to the United Nations to hold early elections that would allow the emergence of an Iraqi government representative of the citizens' own free choice. Accordingly, Iran condemned the foundation of the initial ORHA and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and the consequent appointment of an American interim administrator such as Garner as ways to tighten its grasp on Iraq rather than liberate the country.[119] Interestingly, Iran sought to facilitate elections believing that the Shiite majority would inevitably attain power and closely identify itself with the Islamic Republic; Iran therefore used its to ensure that the Shiite areas of Iraq remained quiet, and encouraged their radical leaders to exercise restraint in their struggle against the invaders.[120]

In order to alleviate US control over Iraq, Iran was keen on early Iraqi elections secure in its belief that they would guarantee a Shiite victory. Knowing that a safe and stable environment is a pre-requisite for holding elections, Iran had been shrewdly working with its Iraqi Shiite partisans to establish a relatively secure, sound election environment.

The Bush Administration had repeatedly accused Iran of supporting the insurgency. According to Seymour Hersh writing in the New Yorker, Iran's Revolutionary Guard

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[118] Barsamian, D. (2007). *Targeting Iran*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books. p. 19-20
[119] Taremi, K. (2005). Iranian foreign policy towards occupied Iraq, 2003-05. *Middle East Policy, 12*(4), pp. 28-48. Retrieved January 25, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[120] Taremi, K. (2005).

Corps was the main culprit responsible for causing US casualties in Iraq,[121] The Islamic

Republic was therefore determined to show goodwill, in order to allow the earliest

departure of US troops from Iraq.

For this purpose, Moqtada Al Sadr, known for his firm anti-occupation stand, was

invited to Iran. During the visit, Sadr had met with Iranian leaders such as Rafsanjani,

who placed significant emphasis on the unity of Iraqi Shiites and the importance of

cooperation with Iraqi Islamic movements, especially the SCIRI. In addition, Rafsanjani

recommended that Al Sadr limit military resistance against the US, otherwise this would

only serve to prolong the latter's presence in Iraq.

Thus, Iran endeavored to maintain a peaceful atmosphere between the US and its allies

and the Shiite community. As soon as clashes between those two sides escalated as in

April 2004 when the Al Mahdi Army, the armed wing of Al Sadr movement, engaged in

mutual attacks with US forces in Najaf and Baghdad, Iran would work on minimizing

confrontations.[122] The Islamic Republic was convinced that such military engagements

would only serve the interests of Sunni extremists and elements of the overthrown Baath

regime.

On April 14th, therefore, Iran sent a delegation to Iraq for talks with Shiite leaders urging

them, especially Al Sadr, to cease the aggressive confrontations; the attempt however was

unsuccessful.[123] It was natural that acts of the Al Sadr movement would be attributed to

Iran. The Al Sadr movement, the ferocious anti-occupation organization that often

launches attacks on the US, was in fact initiated during the Iran-Iraq war by Iraqi rebels

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[121] Starr, P. (2007). The Iran wedge. *The American Prospect, 18*(11), pp. 3-4. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[122] Taremi, K. (2005). Iranian foreign policy towards occupied Iraq, 2003-05. *Middle East Policy, 12*(4), 28-48. Retrieved January 25, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[123] Taremi, K. (2005).

and prisoners of war, and had been immensely backed by Iran in regard to organization,

financial funding and military training since, according to a report published by the

Council on Foreign Relations.[124] However, Iran was able to suppress the armed militias

of the SCIRI and the IDP as they intended not to provoke the US and the coalition forces.

In August, Iran took a firmer stand which revealed its disapproval of the Badr militia

when it openly "denounced Moqtada Sadr for launching attacks from the shrines and

prompting the coalition response that damaged them."[125]

Other indications of Iranian willingness to stabilize Iraq for the purpose of holding

elections was the fact that it had indeed encouraged its allies in Iraq such as head of the

SCIRI Abdul Aziz Hakim and head of the Islamic Dawa Party IDP Ibrahim Al Jaafari to

participate in the political process planned by the US: i.e. the formation of an Iraqi

Governing Council. Iran hoped that the IGC would accelerate the transfer of power

through legal elections, thereby ending the occupation. Furthermore, Iran supported the

transfer of authority from the CPA to the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) led by Prime

Minister Ayad Allawi, a close ally of the US, in June 2004, in which members of SCIRI

and IDP participated. Moreover, the Islamic Republic showed signs of goodwill towards

Allawi's government despite the prime minister's hostile attitude towards Iran.

In early August 2004, a conference entitled Opportunities for Iran and Iraq Economic

Cooperation was held in Tehran where Iraq' minister of economy, Safdar Hossein,

announced that Iran had allocated $300 million for Iraqi postwar reconstruction purposes.

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[124] Zelnick, R. (2006). Iraq: Last chance. *Policy Review, 140*, pp. 3-24. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[125] Taremi, K. (2005). Iranian foreign policy towards occupied Iraq, 2003-05. *Middle East Policy, 12*(4), pp. 28-48. Retrieved January 25, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

Also that year, an agreement was brokered whereby Tehran agreed to supply 100

megawatts of electricity per year to its neighbor.[126]

Allawi's government, however, resorted to hostile measures when dealing with Iran,

accusing the Islamic Republic of supporting the insurgency. It had also severely limited

ties with Iran and ordered the closure of the Iraqi office of the Iranian travel agencies.

Hazim Shaalan, the minister of defense, had even designated Iran as Iraq's "number-one"

enemy.

By February 2005, when Allawi had legally been replaced after the election results,

Iran's embassy was the only official body through which that state maintained any

semblance of existence in Iraq.[127] Accused by the US of interfering in Iraq's internal

affairs, the Islamic Republic defended itself by claiming that the support for its co-

religionist Shiite community is a right that Iran exercised everywhere, not just in Iraq; it

was therefore not an act of interference.

Ostensibly, Iranian foreign policy in Iraq consisted of promoting stabilization and

security; in fact, Iran had only temporarily encouraged such a suitable climate until the

parliamentary elections in order for its Iraqi allies to reach power. It was solely a few

months after the US invasion that the Islamic Republic realized, due to the augmenting

vigor of the insurgency and the US inability to stabilize Iraq, that the US was entrapped

in a quagmire of its own creation. "This perception of an embattled United States unable

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[126] Taremi, K. (2005). Iranian foreign policy towards occupied Iraq, 2003-05. *Middle East Policy, 12*(4), pp. 28-48. Retrieved January 25, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[127] Taremi, K. (2005).

to extricate itself from Iraq led to a drastic reassessment of the ramifications of the US

invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq for the national security of Iran."[128]

Iran's enemies such as the Baath regime in Iraq, and the Taliban in Afghanistan had been

overthrown and in deference to Iran's national interest, by acknowledging majority rule

in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein, the US had made Iraq one of the first countries

to be ruled by Shias in recent history. The neighboring Sunni countries are naturally

alarmed at this turn of events and how it could be viewed by their minority Shiite

populations.[129]

Thus, the Islamic Republic came to regard the situation in Iraq in a positive light,

allowing it to benefit from US errors and miscalculations so as to become an influential

power in Iraq and the region. Accordingly, Iran no longer considers the war on Iraq as a

threat, but as an opportunity. Iran believed that by mobilizing the Shiites against the

coalition it could now apply pressure on the United States. Tehran has responded to

threats by the US on their nuclear facilities by reminding Washington that it could "make

life hell for the United States in Iraq."[130]

After the January 2005 elections, with the Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG) now in

power, Iran enjoyed improved relations with the newly elected body given that the ITG

was the first Iraqi government to be elected, and not merely selected by Americans such

as the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) and the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG); it had

therefore benefited from a higher degree of independence upon the US in terms of policy

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[128] Taremi, K. (2005). Iranian foreign policy towards occupied Iraq, 2003-05. *Middle East Policy, 12*(4), pp. 28-48. Retrieved January 25, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[129] Bahgat, G. (2007). Iran and the United States: The emerging security paradigm in the Middle East. *Parameters, 37*(2), pp. 5-19. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[130] Taremi, K. (2005).

choice. As the SCIRI and the IDP were the major winners in the election, it was already apparent that the ITG, led by Ibrahim Jaafari, closely identified with Iran.

In order to further strengthen their ties, Iran's foreign minister had paid a visit to Baghdad in June of 2005, offering help. The two sides agreed to expand bilateral relations and set up a joint commission for that purpose. They also reached an agreement to reopen their respective consulates (closed since the Iran-Iraq War). Although Iran offered military aid to Iraq, US pressure on Iraq prevented this from happening. Prime Minister Jafar and a delegation visited Tehran ten days later; they signed unprecedented agreements covering security, energy, transport and tourism.[131]

5.1.3 Iranian Exploitation of US Entrapment in Iraq

Being a superpower, the US had hoped the outcome of events in Iraq to be more favorable, that it would reinforce the perception of US strength in the region and the world, thereby allowing it to impose an unchallenged agenda on the Middle East. The US initiated the war with a profound and costly misunderstanding of Iraq's social structure and the diversity of its population, which made it difficult for internal conflicts to subside in favor of a national cause. Imposing democracy on a country with a diverse ethno-sectarian population has proved to be an impossible task.

Iran's recognition of Israel is not feasible, and the number of troops the US realistically needs to subjugate Iraq is far larger than the one it currently has in the country. According to Dimitri K.Simes, "That Iraq's neighbors—who in 2003 were often and

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[131] Taremi, K. (2005). Iranian foreign policy towards occupied Iraq, 2003-05. *Middle East Policy, 12*(4), pp. 28-48. Retrieved January 25, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

quite publicly warned that they were next in line for forcible regime change—were

somehow expected to accept American-style stabilization of Iraq defies belief."[132] As the

war took an unanticipated turn due to a number of errors, the sectarian conflict in Iraq

accordingly had been quite detrimental to the US with in fact Iran mainly reaping the

benefits.

This is due additionally to erroneous misperceptions that the US had assumed prior to its

invasion of Iraq. For instance, the US had been confident that Iraqi Shias would identify

with their national partners of different sects rather than their Iranian co-religionists. Not

only did Iraq's plunging into civil war due to unstable and internal conflicts hinder the

US project in Iraq and serve to strengthen Iran, but also the alignment of Iraqi Shias with

Iran was a supplementary factor of negative consequences for the US.

Given the past Iran-Iraq war and the subsequent tension between the two countries, the

United States had expected that the rivalry between the Iraqi and Iranian Shias would be

more intense than that between Iraqi Shias and Sunnis. However, unfolding

developments in Iraq since the war started have proved the US wrong. Sectarianism in

Iraq has proved to be a stronger motivational force for its inhabitants that nationalism; the

civil war in Iraq is driving Iran and the Iraqi Shias closer, while Iraqi Sunnis and Arabs

are allying.[133]

Considering how obstacles confronting the US in Iraq are transformed into benefits for

Iran, Tehran is eager to continue observing American difficulties in dealing with the Iraqi

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[132] Simes, D. (2007). End the crusade. *The National Interest, 87*, pp. 4-12. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[133] Bahgat, G. (2007). Iran and the United States: The emerging security paradigm in the Middle East. *Parameters, 37*(2), pp. 5-19. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

dilemma;[134] since "at the very least, with its hands full in Iraq, Washington appeared unlikely to seek a new bid for regime change in Tehran."[135] Therefore, Iran is a major player on the Iraqi arena, resorting to several measures which serve to prolong the American entrapment in the Iraqi soil in order to be able to maximally exploit the situation in Iraq.

For this purpose, Iran had set up a network of intelligence agencies within Iraq with the task of trailing US army moves inside the country, and planning raids against the US and its allies' troops and their interests. In addition, many terrorist groups, security-disturbing elements and other smugglers were reported to have had a facilitated entry into Iraq through the Iranian borders, some even entering under the cover of religious tourism and trade. Not to mention that the pro-Iranian armed militias in Iraq were assigned a sum of $45 million, along with help in developing effective fighting techniques such as guerilla warfare. Furthermore, Iran had also allocated funds on media stations such as radio stations, televisions and newspapers in order to appeal to the Iraqi population.[136]

Moreover, a CIA report mentioned that "a bounty on U.S. forces of U.S. $2,000 for each helicopter shot down, $1,000 for each tank destroyed, and $500 for each U.S. military personnel killed."[137]

Thus, Iran is seeking to incur maximum political, financial, and military damage on the US. However, US policies themselves exhibit exploitable weaknesses; there is an evident lack of post-war planning which seems to definitely favor Iran's interests. The removal of

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[134] Potter, L., & Sick, G., (2004). *Iran, Iraq, and the legacies of war*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 193.
[135] Potter, L., & Sick, G., (2004). p. 203.
[136] Berman, I. (2005). *Tehran rising: Iran's challenge to the United States*. Lanham, Md.:Rowman & Littlefield. p. 75-76
[137] Berman, I. (2005). p. 77

Saddam Hussein proved to be a blessing for Iran, and at the same time damaged US credibility in the Middle East – the United States has not been able to secure and maintain a semblance of order in Iraq. Iran would like to have a weak and dependent Iraq next to it on a permanent basis; simultaneously, it plans to become the major native regional power. The best way for Iran to achieve its aims is to "instrumentalize" the Iraqi Shiites.[138]

From this it can be inferred that the Iranian influence in Iraq is categorical; the US placed itself in a position where it had no better option than to hold direct negotiations with Tehran concerning the Iraqi dilemma. Thus, for a short period of time, Iran favors a situation in which the US is engaged in costly stabilization efforts. A better scenario however would be a stable but weak Iraq with a federal structure; this would maximize opportunities for Iranian influence – a sound economy would permit Iraq to become a useful market for Iranian goods. A continuation of the present situation offers opportunities to Iran for economic and cultural influence, while conducting a dialogue with the US on Iranian terms.[139] Consequently, Iran was allowed to participate in Sharm Al-Sheikh's conference concerning the future of Iraq in which the US along with Iraq's neighbors, the UN and the G8 states participated.

Despite this conference, the US still believed that Tehran was still supporting militias in Iraq thereby indicating its unwillingness to commit to a sincere and thorough cooperation with the US on the Iraqi issue yet. Furthermore, apart from its lack of cooperation in Iraq, Iran's behavior is deemed unacceptable to the US because it continues to harbor and

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[138] Furtig, H. (2007). Conflict and cooperation in the Persian Gulf: The interregional order and US policy. *The Middle East Journal, 61*(4), pp. 627-641. Retrieved November 8, 2007, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[139] Furtig, H., (2007).

support terrorism, perpetuates its nuclear program and even openly announces its antagonism towards Israel, claiming that it – Washington's right wing in the Middle East – will eventually vanish.

Therefore, the increasing Iranian influence in Iraq is chiefly problematic because it has the ability to extend itself to the entire region and therefore establish Iran as an international power in defiance of American foreign policy. Iran lies at the heart of the Middle East crisis, and it is difficult to imagine without its cooperation any possible permanent solutions to the Iraqi problem, which is indispensable to solving other dilemmas. Lebanon, Iraq, even Palestine and other Middle Eastern countries along with the Persian Gulf entirely concede the major role that Iran is able to play in molding the region one way or another. Tehran is leading negotiator, profiting from the ongoing chaos among countries of short proximity to ensure the utmost lucrative deals possible.

Thus, Iran's cooperation is conditional upon receiving satisfactory guarantees such as the admittance of its leading role in the region, the acceptance of its nuclear program (perhaps also the acceptance of possible future nuclear weapons' acquisition), and the concurrence of the international community that Iran should not be bypassed on issues pertinent to the Middle East, the Gulf and even the whole world.

Despite international disapproval of Iran's nuclear program, it remains determined to persist with its designated plan unimpeded. This in itself reveals the strength of the Iranian regime in having the audacity and intrepidness to defy international opinion, deride and exhibit disdain for the world's super power – the United States - and disregard UN resolutions, regardless of the economic sanctions imposed on it. Iran has so far not capitulated to intimidation policies, whether those consisted of war threats, economic

sanctions or isolation warnings. Even when some measures were taken against Ahemdi Nejad's regime, the Iranian policy still stood its grounds.

Undoubtedly, an appeasement policy is more appropriate to contain Iran. Washington should in due time consider persuading Iranian pragmatists to adopt a less antagonistic policy towards the US in exchange for resuming the economic and diplomatic relations. Those pragmatists will work on the internal Iranian political structure in an attempt to marginalize the radicals and thus "tip the balance in their own favor."[140]

5.1.4 US policy towards Iran

A series of military events occurred in Iraq which has been associated to Iranian interests. The US military attacked a Shiite region of Baghdad called Amin on July 12, 2007 arresting two militants thought to have close ties with Iran. The US accused the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) of funding, arming and organizing groups to kidnap and conduct raids on US troops and their Iraqi allies. On August 8, US troops launched an attack in the Shia dominated city of Al Sadr killing thirty-two Shiite insurgents believed to be smuggling weapons from Iran into Iraq, along with Explosively Formed Penetrators (EFPs). This group was also involved in facilitating the passage of Iraqis into Iran for military training.[141] "As part of its more aggressive strategy, the

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[140] Takeyh, R. (2007, March/April). Time for détente with Iran. *Foreign Affairs*. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Columbia International Affairs Online database.

[141] Civilian deaths in truck bombing: US raids, Other security developments. (2007). *Keesing's Worldwide, 53*. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Keesing's Record of World Events database.

United States has apprehended five Iranian personnel in Irbil and pledges more such arrests."[142]

George W. Bush insists that in matters dealing with Iran all options are open for discussion, and even threatens to declare war on that country if peaceful alternatives fail. He refuses to accept that US military power or its threatened usage will not compel Iran to change its foreign policy and play, from his perspective, a more positive role in the region.

The Iranian regime, however, had cleverly thought out and realized a plan of shelter against any probable war.[143] Iran has placed its nuclear facilities deep underground and spread them throughout the country to protect them from possible US air strikes. Thus the US would have difficulty locating the sites and, even if it were to find them, figuring out how to hit them. Also, in the eventuality of the US successfully destroying the sites, this would only strengthen Iran's motivation to acquire nuclear capabilities. It would rebuild its installations and furthermore have even less regard for any treaty obligations.[144] American foreign policy has two options concerning the US-Iranian relationship: either co-existence in a cooperative environment taking into consideration both nations' interests in the region, or confrontation on the terms of a win-lose situation in which a horrendous conflict is discernable, thus stretching the instability of Iraq to neighboring countries and increasingly augmenting the dilemmas of the Middle East region.

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[142] Takeyh, R. (2008). Iran's new Iraq effect of the United States' invasion of Iraq on the Persian Gulf. *Middle East Journal, 62*(1), pp. 13-31. Retrieved March 7, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[143] Takeyh, R. (2007, March/April). Time for détente with Iran. *Foreign Affairs*. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Columbia International Affairs Online database.
[144] Takeyh, R. (2007, March/April).

The latter option is a more difficult one, considering its huge impact on Gulf States allied with Washington. This could cause these states to consider a shift of policy and lean towards Iran in avoidance of such a disturbing possible future scenario.

The Bush Administration has to be considerably cautious in its dealings with the Iranian regime, hopefully learning from Iraq's mistakes and incorporating more effective strategies in the implementation of its projects in the region. Not to mention that the American Congress and public opinion is expected to doubt the efficiency of conflict or war with Iran as a consequence of the still disputed success or failure of Bush in Iraq. Even if the US were to prove successful in the future concerning Iraq, it has nevertheless already displayed an immense lack of credibility throughout this war. This leaves it with limited options in dealing with other states due to its unreliability in delivering on its promises.

War with Iran therefore, or Syria for that matter, is hard to envisage amidst the currently shattered US image. Both internationally and internally there is a great deal of disappointment and cynicism with the United States, "the White House has become a house of mirrors, where nothing is what it seems and almost everything is other than what the president promised."[145]

The first peaceful option of negotiations with Iran which enjoys broad public support and approval of American citizens and politicians should be executed according to a predefined plan. The US for instance could tempt Iran into abandoning its close alliances with Hezbollah and Hamas and motivate it to play a positive role in stabilizing Iraq by offering it something useful: an acknowledged role in the region, US-Iranian diplomatic and economic relationships along with gradually phasing out the sanctions imposed on it.

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[145] Pozner, N. (2005). *How should the United States withdraw from Iraq?* Detroit: Thomson Gale. p. 37

The US should realize that the threats of war and the bargain of "security-for-cooperation" is not a sound method of dealing with this regime by the evidence that it had showed no real improvement in a favorable direction. It might be difficult for the US to rescind the accusations of Iran being a harbor of terrorism; it cannot expect the Islamic Republic to endure those allegations and still seek to pursue a diplomatic relationship with the US. Instead, appealing promises to incorporate Iran into the world's economic markets and international community would be a more convincing approach. Once such a relationship is well-established, the initiation of direct negotiations with Iran will be almost effortless. Issues of critical importance, especially those involving Iraq's future and stability, will then be seriously discussed by both sides in deference to the famous Baker-Hamilton report.

In light of this report, the US-Iranian relationship will then examine points of similarity and mutual benefit and accordingly set up a political agenda to confront the region's controversial issues. Such a constructive approach should pressure Iran into playing a more positive role in the whole region. Concerning Lebanon for instance, the US might perhaps be able to persuade Iran not to abandon, but rather to pressure Hezbollah to change its views in a manner that benefits US policies in the region.[146]

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[146] Takeyh, R. (2007, March/April). Time for détente with Iran. *Foreign Affairs.* Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Columbia International Affairs Online database.

5.2 US-Syrian relationship

5.2.1 US perception of Syria as an obstacle to a peaceful Middle East

Syria expressed its sympathies to the US concerning the tragic events that occurred on

September 11th; and its president Bashar Al Assad indicated that his country had also

been targeted by Islamic fundamentalists, mainly the Muslim brotherhood groups. Syria

has made it evident that it is a supporter of the war on terror; however, it was "unwilling

to enter into a coalition whose goals, outcomes, means, and final date were not defined

except by Washington."[147] The US-Syrian relationship is manifestly similar to that of the

US-Iran one with few areas of exception. The United States is openly dissatisfied with

the Syrian regime and its policies in dealing with Middle East predicaments, particularly

that of Iraq. The US argues that Syria is not playing a constructive role that shapes a

better future for the region. It views Bashar's regime as an obstacle rather than an

assistant for implementing the new Greater Middle East initiative. The US was

increasingly convinced that Syria's support for Hamas, Hezbollah and other radical

Islamic groups was the main obstacle to its Middle East peace plan, and that this backing

for terrorist groups had to end.[148]

Concerning the war on Iraq, the Syrian regime shared views similar to its Iranian

counterpart; it was opposed to the US intervention in Iraq. Syria's geo-economical

interests with Iraq are one of the principle reasons Bashar's regime seeks to disrupt the

American control of Iraq. Such an anti-invasion stand is reflected by the Syrian people,

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[147] Buckley, M. & Fawn, R. (Eds.) (2003). *Global responses to terrorism 9/11, Afghanistan and beyond.* London: Routledge. p. 136
[148] Simons, G. (2003). *Future Iraq US policy in reshaping the Midle East.* London: Saqi. p. 196

along with the Arab and the Islamic world.[149] Furthermore, the US-led occupation of Iraq had direct consequences on Syria leaving behind almost 450,000 refugees according to a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), thus causing an inevitable socio-economic crisis[150].

Abiding by its policy threatening rogue states, the US had reproached Bashar's vehement opposition to the 2003 invasion of Iraq; consequently, "Syria's sharp criticism of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 opened a particularly tense phase in Syrian-American relations."[151] In addition, Damascus has been placed under foreign isolation a few years ago in an attempt to make it change its policy. "Syria was soon being warned of unspecified 'consequences' if it persisted in non-cooperation with US foreign policy. [...] Syria was in America's sights."[152]

5.2.2 US accusations to Syrian involvement in Iraq

The impact of the US invasion of Iraq on Syria was considerably apparent. Although Syria did not suffer any drastic consequences as a result of the downfall of Saddam's regime, a Baathist one just like that of Bashar Al Assad,[153] Syria, however, perceived as an obstacle by the Bush administration, was especially alarmed by the US military presence close to its border. As a state embracing pan-Arab, anti-Israel and anti-

[149] Buckley, M. & Fawn, R. (Eds.) (2003). *Global responses to terrorism 9/11, Afghanistan and beyond.* London: Routledge. p. 142

[150] Macleod, H. (2006). Exodus: Iraqis flee in terror from the war on terror. *New Internationalist, 392,* pp. 22-23. Retrieved March 7, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

[151] Strindberg, A. (2004). Syria under pressure. *Journal of Palestine Studies, 33*(4), pp. 53-69. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from JSTOR database.

[152] Simons, G. (2003). *Future Iraq US policy in reshaping the Midle East.* London: Saqi. p. 334-336.

[153] Cordesman, A. H. (2003). *The Iraq war: Strategy, tactics and military lessons.* Washington D.C.: CSIS Press. p. 563

American convictions, Iraq's removal from the area as a military force to reckon with substantially decreased the pressure on Israel – the eastern front had collapsed. Iraq was no longer viewed as a member of the radical group of Arab states which Syria belonged to.[154]

In addition, with the US troops positioned within short distances of Syrian-Iraqi borders, and US-allied Turkey, Jordan, Israel and later in 2005, anti-Syrian Lebanese authority figures in power, Syria was indeed uncomfortably surrounded by a pro-American entourage. This sense of a US established encirclement of Damascus led Syria to yearn for US troop's departure from Iraq as soon as Saddam's regime was overthrown, much like its Iranian counterpart. As such, Syria had undoubtedly been an important player on the Iraqi arena, paying special interest to the future turn of events in Iraq.

Soon after an interview with the Lebanese newspaper Al Safir in 2003, in which Bashar Asad openly condemned the invasion of Iraq, US secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld asserted that Syria was supporting the Iraqi resistance against the US and its allies and providing them with the necessary equipment to conduct violent attacks against the occupying troops.[155] Other US accusations aimed at Syria included "harboring members of Saddam Hussein's leadership, helping "foreign fighters" travel to Iraq, hiding Iraq's elusive weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), and manufacturing its own."[156]

Acting out on such accusations, the Bush Administration revived previous economic sanctions imposed on Syria which were proposed in 2002 under the Syrian Accountability Act. Renamed as the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty

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[154] Feldman, S. (2003). *After the war in Iraq: Defining the new strategic balance.* Brighton: Sussex Academic Press. p. 111

[155] Strindberg, A. (2004). Syria under pressure. *Journal of Palestine Studies, 33*(4), pp. 53-69. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from JSTOR database.

[156] Strindberg, A. (2004).

Restoration Act, the sanctions were signed by Bush in late 2003 and implemented on

May 11th, 2004 as the US president had claimed that Syria poses an imminent menace to

US national security, its foreign policy and economy.[157]

 As a reaction to the warning of US officials who had openly cautioned Syria about its

choice of political moves in dealing with the Iraqi situation, particularly concerning the

support of Iraqi resistance against American troops and the offer of help to conceal WMD

weapons smuggled out of Iraq, the Syrian regime temporarily closed its borders with Iraq

in May 2003, instantly after the invasion and even vowed not to accept refugees loyal to

the former authoritarian regime.[158]

Similar to the Iranian role, Syria ostentatiously denies American accusations that it is a

destabilizing agent in Iraq; it is therefore sometimes compelled to implement certain

actions as valid proof. Syria has tightened security controls on its border to prevent

insurgents from crossing over, and handed Sabaawi Ibrahim, a senior advisor and half-

brother to Saddam, to Iraq where he will join a group of Baathist awaiting their trial.

Sabaawi was number 36 on the US list of 55 most-wanted officials from Saddam's

regime.[159] The US State Department realizes, yet seems unwilling to admit, that "the few

senior members of Saddam's regime who had managed to flee to Syria around the time of

the invasion were promptly forced to return."[160] However, fugitives of the former Iraqi

regime were sheltered in Syria and weapons of mass destruction were indeed smuggled

[157] Strindberg, A. (2004). Syria under pressure. *Journal of Palestine Studies, 33*(4), pp. 53-69. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from JSTOR database.
[158] Carlisle, R. (2005). *The Iraq war: Facts on file.* New York: Publishing house. p. 133
[159] Moubayed, S. (2005, March 5). Damascus puts Syria first. *Middle East.* Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Asia Times Online database.
[160] Strindberg, A. (2004).

out of Iraq into the Syrian side along with support for armed Syrian insurgents wishing to

cross the borders into Iraq in order to help in the fight against US and allies' troops.[161]

In addition, concerning the border issue, the Syrians argued that the US itself cannot

completely control its borders with Mexico and yet expects Syria to have the ability of

sealing its eastern border with Iraq.[162] However, on April 12, US troops attacked armed

fighters near the north-western Iraqi city of Al Qa'im located along the Syrian border.

The very next day, a clash attempt by Al Qaeda leader in Iraq Al Zarqawi with a US

military base located in same town, caused local citizens to confirm that "insurgents

could move freely into and out of secret hideouts on the Syrian side,"[163] indicating that

insurgency was in fact leaking from the Syrian border into Iraq.

Arrested smugglers in bordering areas have provided further by admitting illicitly

bringing in weapons, foreign fighters and money across the   Syrian border into Iraq.

Also on April 12, in Mosul near the Syrian border a suicide car bomber killed five

civilians. Another car bomb in Tal Afar, a mainly Turkoman town near the Syrian

border[164] has also been reported having occurred.

Syria, as mentioned earlier, claims that it is also involved in the fight against terrorism

and has openly denounced Al-Qaeda; the US, however, views the Syrian role differently.

Moreover, Syria had responded to the US claim of Syria's acquisition of WMDs

smuggled out of Iraq and/or homegrown by drafting a resolution in the United Nations in

spring of 2003 proposing the transformation of the entire Middle East region to a WMD-

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[161]Cumings, B., Abrahamian, E. & Ma'oz, M. (2004). *Inventing the axis of evil the truth about North Korea, Iran and Syria.* New York: The New Press. p. 158

[162] Strindberg, A. (2004). Syria under pressure. *Journal of Palestine Studies, 33*(4), pp. 53-69. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from JSTOR database.

[163] Iraq – the Syrian factor. (2005). *APS Diplomat Redrawing the Islamic Map, 49*(4). Retrieved January 25, 2008 from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

[164] Iraq – the Syrian factor. (2005).

free zone; it included Israel in the resolution, currently the sole country possessing

nuclear capabilities. US officials were outraged to the point of employing their veto

power against the proposed draft. In March 2004, however, Syria reiterated its

proposal.[165]

In November 19-21 in 2006, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Mu'allim paid a visit to Iraq

for talks with his Iraqi counterpart, Hoshyar Zebari. al-Mu'allim. This was the highest-

ranking Syrian official to visit Iraq since the US-led invasion in 2003. On Nov. 21 they

signed a joint declaration concerning the restoration of diplomatic relations at

ambassadorial level between the two countries.[166]

As successive events progressed in Iraq, the evident entrapment of the US in the Iraqi

quagmire was favorable to Syria, leading to a conviction in Damascus that an attempt at

democratizing Syria and its consequent de-Bathification, was unlikely in the near future.

Since the Syrian response to occurring events in Iraq came in deference to Bashar's

unaltered policy, it was deemed unsatisfactory by the Americans.

Syria denied aiding the Iraqi Baathists in any way while at the same time requesting an

end to the US-led occupation of Iraq. Patrick Seale, a British expert on Syria, pointed out

that the President of Syria had displayed firmness from the beginning of the war and was

not likely to be intimidated. His aim was to stay true to domestic and Arab public

opinion. This position was bound to anger Washington and make his regime vulnerable in

the long run.[167]

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[165] Strindberg, A. (2004). Syria under pressure. *Journal of Palestine Studies, 33*(4), pp. 53-69. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from JSTOR database.

[166] Restoration of diplomatic relations with Iraq. (2006). *Keesing's Worldwide, 52,* p. 47610. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Keesing's Record of World Events database.

[167] Simons, G. (2003). *Future Iraq US policy in reshaping the Midle East.* London: Saqi. p. 334-336.

5.2.3 How to deal with Syria

Bashar's adamant adherence to his foreign policy in dealing with the US, Iraq and the whole Middle East region, despite the US pressure on him to adopt a policy more favorable to their own political agenda, created a controversy in the US congress as to whether its hostile designs towards Syria were in fact advantageous. Given that the US is currently entangled in the Iraqi dilemma, and that no clear solutions are in sight, Damascus, much like Tehran, has started to witness the change of events in Iraq as a profitable opportunity rather than a threat. Thus, the war on Iraq, the way it has effectively developed, serves to strengthen the regime of Assad rather than weaken it. Although initially, the US, as a superpower, had assumed that the war on Iraq would be an immediate success enabling it to become the dominant political engineer of the region, the current situation has mirrored the limitations rather than the robustness of the US as a hegemonic power. The major beneficiaries of this US-led war ironically turned out to be the US enemies themselves, blatantly exploiting errors the Bush administration had committed. In addition, the Syrian regime has been able to contain the international isolation towards it, especially the one imposed by the US at political, diplomatic and economic levels. This has been a key strategy of Bashar Al Assad, leading to expanded benefits for the Syrian nation.

It is conceivable that Syria since 2003 has been increasingly satisfied with the ensuing events; starting from a threatened country with enemy troops at its borders and the threat of international isolation, international tribunals and the pressure of abiding by UN resolutions along with the conditions imposed on it, to a better adapted state which has

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successfully contained potentially intractable predicaments. Within a limited time span, Syria was already observing a steady diminishment of its international boycott campaign, indicating that the rewards of adopting such an appeasement strategy paid off largely due to the inability of the US to stabilize Iraq.

Syria was thus able to create internal controversy over Bush's foreign policies; perhaps in a reversal of roles, it would be Damascus who would observe a US policy shift rather than vice versa. Because of the perpetual acrimonious debate among American parties, the democrats in particular, expressing dismay at the inefficiency of Bush's policy towards Syria, sought an ameliorated strategy to initiate a dialogue with it, thus almost ending its isolation in the process. High-ranking US congressmen belonging to the democrat party had visited Syria despite the congressional bickering over the procedure to be adopted when dealing with that country. Although the Bush administration had objected to "normalizing" relations with Syria, it conceded Syrian participation in the Annapolis conference due to this internally generated controversy; this is perhaps indicative that a more suitable, complaisant policy towards Damascus will be noted on its agenda. This has prompted not only American but also international dignitaries to negotiate with Syria, although admittedly at a limited level.

Therefore, the perpetuation of the Iraqi dilemma is a major advantage for the Syrian regime to not only exploit the internal American debate, but also ensure some major benefits for itself in the region, as it seeks to play a more powerful and active role, much like the Iranian one. Since Lebanon has been of primary interest to the Syrian regime, which was accused of numerous brutal actions committed during and after its occupation of that country, Bashar Al Assad will definitely endeavor to clear Syria's negative image;

both Syria and its president are confronted with international and UN accusations regarding their involvement in Hariri's assassination; an international tribunal has been established which is actively supported by the US.

This Syrian interest in Lebanon is tantamount to a US interest in that country as well, since Lebanon could then be used as a negotiation pawn between the two countries. Consequently, it is important to note the recent international visits paid to Syria in relation to the current Lebanese presidential elections. European statesmen, along with the general secretary of the Arab League Amro Moussa, have visited Damascus, particularly in the recent period when the Lebanese presidential elections have unfolded evolved into a crisis.

In addition, one cannot ignore the important role of Israel in the turn of events on the Iraqi arena. Israel is currently holding peace negotiations with Syria, indicating that a bargaining policy is taking place. As mentioned earlier, the United States' trap in Iraq has led to the gradual phase out of the coercive policy and instead the adoption of a more negotiate one towards Syria, especially after the international visits paid to this country thereby ending its isolation. This policy serves to disturb the Syrian-Iranian alliance for the benefit of US and Israel by providing tempting incentives, such as the return of the Golan height to Syrian sovereignty, for the Syrian regime to engage in positive talks with US and Israel. If an Israeli-Syrian peace is reached, it becomes much easier to control Iran's foreign policy moves, in Lebanon for instance. [168]

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[168] Simon, S. (2004). The Road to Damascus. *Foreign Affairs, 83*(3), pp. 110-117. Retrieved June 25, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

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Separating Syria from its Iranian ally will definitely favor the US position in Iraq and weaken the threat of Hezbollah in Lebanon on Israel, as it would receive less support from Syria.

5.3 US-Saudi relationship

5.3.1 Prior to the war

Prior to the Iraq war, the Gulf region, especially Saudi Arabia, was not demonstrating any signs of reluctance to cooperate with the US, and was even confident that the Iraqi war would be a success. However, its subsequent actions were only in partial submission to the Bush Administration's will, taking into consideration its internal citizen's reaction to an unconditional support of invading another "Arab" country.[169] Surveys even reveal that "97% of the Saudi population was adamantly opposed to any form of cooperation with an American attack against an Arab, or even a neighboring state such as Iraq and saw it a wise political step to prohibit the US from using Saudi soil for direct military attacks against Iraq."[170]

However, Saudi Arabia's inability to provide unequivocal support for the war and in fact adopting the official position of being against it in order to mitigate any internal public fury was not what the US had hoped for. This, paradoxically increased Washington's desire to hasten the invasion because the American authority believed that if its close

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[169] Simons, G. (2003). *Future Iraq US policy in reshaping the Midle East.* London: Saqi. p. 190-192
[170] Furtig, H. (2007). Conflict and cooperation in the Persian Gulf: The interregional order and US policy. *The Middle East Journal, 61*(4), pp. 627-641. Retrieved November 8, 2007, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

Middle Eastern ally and main source of oil could not be relied upon, the acquisition and securing of Iraqi oil fields became "a must-obtain asset."[171]

5.3.2 US-Saudi conflicting interests in Iraq

Saudi Arabia is perceived as being the most devout Sunni Gulf state; therefore, its interests in Iraq lie in the preservation of Sunni rights and perhaps even a Sunni rule. Conscious hat the Sunni sect comprises a minority and that the Shiites consist of the overwhelming majority, Saudi Arabia is not understandably pleased with a democracy being established in Iraq, from which the long oppressed Shiite majority rules. Instead, Saudi Arabia would be eager to see Sunni Wahhabism as an applied form of government "through political and financial sponsorship and cross-border tribal connections."[172] Mohammed Abdul Wahhab was the founder of Wahhabism back in the 18th century. Wahhabism believes in a literal interpretation of the Holy Quran's verses and maintains a strong animosity towards the Shiite Muslims. The KSA has long supported this ideology and generously funded its establishment.

Saudi Arabia being the significant Sunni Islamic state it is, had thus nurtured a marked antagonism towards the Shiites, further widening the gap between Sunnis and Shiites and encouraging sectarian conflict. In fact, Wahhabism was the main precursor of Salafist movements such as Al-Qaeda.[173] Wahhabis considered the veneration of saints and their shrines as polytheism, and viewed Muslims who engaged in this practice as heretics. In

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[171] Simons, G. (2003). *Future Iraq US policy in reshaping the Midle East.* London: Saqi. p. 190-192.

[172] Furtig, H. (2007). Conflict and cooperation in the Persian Gulf: The interregional order and US policy. *The Middle East Journal, 61*(4), pp. 627-641. Retrieved November 8, 2007, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

[173] Barsamian, D., (2007). *Targeting Iran.* San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books. p. 26

1802 Wahhabi armies desecrated the shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala—an occurrence that Shiites never forgave nor forgot.[174]

In spite of Saudi Arabia being an intimate ally of Washington, the US did not prioritize its allies' interests in Iraq and prolong the Sunni minority's rule. It instead emphasized and toiled hard for the implementation and maintenance of democracy throughout Iraq, which was established, although not in a perfect manner for reasons discussed earlier, through the parliamentary elections that transpired in the country for the first time in decades in 2005. As such, the KSA realizes that the US presence in Iraq does not benefit it, and vice versa according to recent evidence showing the KSA's support for Sunni extremists in the sectarian Iraqi conflict leading to continuous instability thus diminishing US progress, despite the close ties between the two countries; therefore, Saudi Arabia has much to fear from the possible repercussions regarding the Iraqi situation. Although the US administration is appreciative of the Saudi motives for exporting home-ground terrorists, it is not tolerant of Saudi funding and arming of Sunni insurgents in Iraq.[175] With modest expectations, the KSA does not wish to intervene to impose changes on the Iraqi arena, it just seeks to ensure that possible deteriorating scenarios that have the potential to threaten Saudi Arabia's image are prevented. In spite of the KSA's wishes of Iraq becoming a Sunni state, it does not really encourage Iraq's breakup into several independent states, as this is not advantageous for it. A disintegrated Iraq would serve to strengthen other sects such as the Kurds and the Shiites due to the geographical nature

[174] Barsamian, D., (2007). *Targeting Iran*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books. p. 25
[175] Furtig, H. (2007). Conflict and cooperation in the Persian Gulf: The interregional order and US policy. *The Middle East Journal, 61*(4), pp. 627-641. Retrieved November 8, 2007, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

Iraq's territory.[176] The distribution of population is more in favor of sects other than the Sunnis in the case of disintegration. (As it turns out, regions highly populated with Shiites concentrated in the south are rich in oil and other natural resources and that most occupied by the Kurds also has quite generous wealth of such resources. As a result, those lands, if disintegration were to take place, will have an advantage of being independently autonomous provinces.) On the other hand, areas highly populated with Sunnis are relatively barren. "Anbar and adjacent Sunni provinces have little water, few other natural resources, and no access to the outside world except through hostile territory."[177]

Ironically, Saudi Arabia's aspiration for a wholly unified Iraq lies at an alarming intersection of interests with Iran although for different reasons. Iran prefers a unified Iraq ruled by the Shiite majority instead of a disintegrated one, in which the Sunnis assume control of several regions. Saudi Arabia's viewpoint however, essentially differs from that of the Iranians, as it would aim at preventing a centrally governed state where Shiites play a leading role, since a Shiite dominance over Iraq would startlingly awaken the long oppressed co-believer citizens of the KSA, thus possibly creating problematic internal tensions in defiance of the historical Sunni Wahhabite rule of Al Saoud. It is understandable that Saudi Arabia has cause for concern about a Shiite-dominated Iraq influenced by the Iranian theocracy. Saudi Arabia's eastern province – where the

[176] Furtig, H. (2007). Conflict and cooperation in the Persian Gulf: The interregional order and US policy. *The Middle East Journal, 61*(4), pp. 627-641. Retrieved November 8, 2007, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[177] Riedel, B. (2007, May/June). Al Qaeda strikes back. *Foreign Affairs.* Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Columbia International Affairs Online database.

majority of its oil fields and refineries are concentrated – is densely populated by Shiites. The province is currently quiet and its people submissive to the crown.[178]

Therefore, Saudi Arabia would implicitly attempt to disturb the process of democratizing Iraq due to the fact that it is governed by such a type of ideological monarchy.[179] In addition, the KSA is troubled by the thought of pro-Iranian Shiite dominated Iraqi regions in the south where most of Iraq's oil wealth is concentrated; therefore, Saudi Arabia, in order to prevent such a status quo from occurring, has been supporting mainly Sunni insurgents to clash with Iranian Shiite allies in Iraq thereby contributing to the prolongation of the civil war and the perpetuation of instability in Iraq in contrary to US interests.[180]

Thus, the KSA's alliance with the US is more based on mutual interests than on common values such as democracy; in the case of the Iraq war, even these mutual interests are at risk of becoming separate. In this case, the KSA displays a divergence of interests from its own ally, US which is constantly pressuring Saudi Arabia in demand of reform that is harmonious with US values.

It is evident that the KSA is in a significantly vulnerable position vis-à-vis Iraq, appearing as an additional obstacle rather than a helpful ally. To better illustrate this, it has been reported by the Los Angeles Times that 45% of insurgents in Iraq attacking Iraqi civilians and US troops and military personnel came from the KSA. The report proceeds to mention that only 15% of those militants come from Syria and Lebanon

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[178] Salhani, C. (2007). Commentary: Saudi Arabia's challenge. *Middle East Times.* Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Middle Eastern & Central Asian Studies database.

[179] Furtig, H. (2007). Conflict and cooperation in the Persian Gulf: The interregional order and US policy. *The Middle East Journal, 61*(4), pp. 627-641. Retrieved November 8, 2007, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

[180] After Baker-Hamilton: What to Do in Iraq. (2006). Crisis Group Middle East Report, 60. Retrieved March 25, 2008, from http://*www.crisisgroup.org*

while 10% from North Africa. In addition, out of the 135 imprisoned fighters in US

prisons in Iraq, almost half are Saudi Arabian nationals.[181] According to the LA Times

journalist, Ned Parker, the Iraq situation has left the U.S. military in an awkward position

of battling an enemy whose top source of foreign fighters is a key ally that "at best has

not been able to prevent its citizens from undertaking bloody attacks in Iraq, and at worst

shares complicity in sending extremists to commit attacks against U.S. forces, Iraqi

civilians and the Shiite-led government in Baghdad."[182]

According to Saudi Arabia, the more the US remains involved in attempts to stabilize

Iraq, the less likely it is for it to intensify its demands of reform in the KSA. "Fortunately

for the Saudis, the more the Americans are focused on crisis management in Iraq, the less

they press for reform in Saudi Arabia."[183] This helps to comprehend the momentous

mistake of rushing into the Iraq war without previous carefully studied calculations; it has

also served to conspicuously display the paradoxes and contradictions of the US-KSA

alliance.

5.3.3 Sectarian conflict spread beyond Iraq

The entire Middle East and surrounding Gulf area has suffered the consequences of the

US-Iraq conflict. Iraq's civil war, and the ensuing insecurity and instability threaten the

region with substantial chaos that especially affect the Gulf States. At the same time, the

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[181] Mitchell, G. (2007, July 15). Did military and media mislead us? Most outside insurgents in Iraq come from Saudi Arabia. *Los Angeles Times.* Retrieved March 25, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[182] Mitchell, G. (2007).
[183] Furtig, H. (2007). Conflict and cooperation in the Persian Gulf: The interregional order and US policy. *The Middle East Journal, 61*(4), pp. 627-641. Retrieved November 8, 2007, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

Iraqi civil war is based on sectarianism whose most alarming danger is that once spread

in the region will have appalling consequences. The most troubling quandary is that

parallel to the civil war in Iraq and the substantial fear of the chaos spreading, the

overbearing power of Iran is relentlessly on the rise. Since the essence of the internal war

within Iraq is mainly attributable to the ethnic Sunni-Shiite division, the spread of this

war in the region will invariably exhibit the same mask: it will acquire the shape of a

severe Sunni-Shiite conflict.

Therefore, Saudi Arabia, widely acknowledged as being the powerful Sunni state will

perceive it mandatory to confront Iran, the new powerful Shiite state, leaving the destiny

of the area fairly ambiguous. Such confrontation was not really in the Iraq war's pre-

calculation. However, when the war took such unfortunate and unanticipated turns, the

whole Gulf region was subject to a novel awareness.

In case the US was to precipitously withdraw from Iraq, it would not only risk a damaged

accountability and reputation but also fuel an Iranian-Saudi sectarian clash on Iraqi soil.

Saudi Arabia, perceiving Iran as a threat of Shiite dominance, would then prioritize the

protection of the Iraqi Sunnis from possible massacres from the Iraqi Shiites. Saudi

Arabia is already considering plans to provide Sunni military leaders ("primarily ex-

Baathist members of the former Iraqi officer corps") with the funds, arms, and logistical

support that Riyadh believes Tehran has been providing to Shiite armed groups for a long

time.[184] Both the US and the KSA are conscious of the necessity to remain united in

containing Iran to prevent it from becoming an overwhelmingly superior power in the

Arab world. Lebanon is a clear example of the Saudi-Iranian struggle; one side consists

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[184] Meyer, K. (2006). The mother of all nightmares. *World Policy Journal, 23*(4), pp. 110-114. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

of Iran and its Syrian ally, and the other is Saudi Arabia which is backed by the West and so-called "moderate" Arab countries.[185]

To sum up, Saudi Arabia has not been a beneficiary of the Iraq war on many levels. To begin with, its American ally who protects it and preserves its interests in the region is growing weaker than ever. Furthermore, the Sunni status in the Arab world is losing power to other sects, mainly the Shiites in favor of Iran. In case the United States decides to go to another war with Iran, its Saudi ally might reflect upon its ties with the US, perhaps shifting in policy into new alliances in order to pursue its security interests, considering that US would be unable to provide KSA with the desired benefits. The consequence of an Iran-US war could result in costly prices on KSA if it chooses to stick to its US ally as it might be a target for Iran's military operations. If a change of alliances does take place, is it possible that the Sunnis and Shiites of Iraq unite against a common American enemy in pursuit of their security interests?

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[185] Salhani, C. (2007). Commentary: Saudi Arabia's challenge. *Middle East Times*. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Middle Eastern & Central Asian Studies database.

CHAPTER 6

US internal perception of the war

A profuse amount of attention has been focused on the Iraq war in the United States. It is a highly controversial matter which has divided the US public in a profound manner, perhaps even more substantially than the Vietnam War. The American people have held numerous demonstrations against the war in various parts of the country and have vehemently expressed their opinions concerning the invasion of Iraq by the Bush administration. US troops have occupied Iraq for the past five years, and Americans find themselves opposed to the prior miscalculated decision of hastily launching a war. The democrats especially have been pressuring the Bush Administration in manifold ways to withdraw from Iraq. Many Americans hope that significant progress will result; however, the time factor is an additional strain testing the patience of the public. The birth of the Baker-Hamilton report under the title of the Iraqi Study Group consisted of a revision and recommendation for the US foreign policy to correct or change its strategy in order to minimize the damage committed in Iraq.

6.1 Public Opinion

Since 2003 the continuous war on Iraq has far from been an uncomplicated, untroubled undertaking. It has caused a deep shift in American perceptions and popular misgivings; this has been true in the case of most expert analysis, as well as among politicians and

voters.[186] In fact, it has been one of the major causes for the birth of a new political order in the Middle East region and the Gulf. The internal discord among Americans about the Iraq war is indeed inescapable. "There is no way to avoid a debate about "Who Lost Iraq?" Indeed, it's already begun."[187] Due to its significant impact on many levels, the Bush strategy has been subject to much criticism, "the legitimacy of his action in accordance with normative behavior is evaluated domestically and internationally, and there may be divergence of opinion about the policies chosen or the means by which they were prosecuted."[188]

Some would argue that Bush's policy has been a remarkable failure, while others promptly dispute this allegation. Critics point out that Democrats won the 2006 congressional elections as a public protest to the Iraq war, and that they will most probably win the 2009 presidential elections. Towards the end of his term, however, George Bush is expected to claim that progress has been made on the Iraqi arena in an effort to escape blame for the US being caught in the Iraqi morass, thereby relinquishing the responsibility on his presidential successor who, as a Democrat, is likely to schedule a troop withdrawal.[189]

The repeatedly discussed miscalculations of the Iraq war include the following consensus: this war has increased rather than decreased the threat of terrorism, contributed to weaken the status of America in the region as a super power, and weakened US credibility around the world. As an American citizen stated: "Our military

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[186] Pfaff, W. (2007). When fear rules: Why the United States won't leave Iraq. *Commonwheel, 134*(11), pp. 6-7. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[187] Starr, P. (2007). Iraq trap 2. *The American Prospect, 18*(10), pp. 3-4. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[188] Douglas, S. (2007). *The limits of American power: Prosecuting a Middle East peace*. USA: Edward Elgar. p. 24
[189] Starr, P. (2007).

presence in Iraq is making us less safe then more so. It is inflaming people in the Middle

East, and thereby magnifying the danger of terrorism."[190] Hence, American public

opinion against the Iraq war had augmented.

In evidence for such a claim, "growing public disaffection with the Iraq war and rising

US troop casualties have led to declining recruitment rates for the US armed forces. On

June 10, the Pentagon announced that the US army had missed its recruiting goal for May

by 1661 recruits, or 25%"[191] while other reports indicate that the shortage was closer to

40%.[192] Within Congress, Representative Nancy Pelosi, the Democrats' leader in the

House of Representatives had condemned the Bush Administration in its choice of

foreign policy and political moves in Iraq that had, according to her, resulted in the

"diplomatic isolation of the USA."[193]

It is essential to note the discrepancy in positions concerning the war on Iraq among

American politicians. Those initially in favor of invading Iraq such as Democratic

Senators Hillary Clinton and Joseph Biden, and Republican Congressmen such as Walter

Jones and Tom Davis are increasingly changing their beliefs of the US possibly making

progress through military means after the start of civil war in Iraq. Thus, even

Republicans are dissatisfied with the direction of the war. Senator John McCain, Senator

Chuck Hagel and Representative Christopher Shays have criticized the Bush

Administration's conduct of the Iraqi situation. Additionally, they accused the

[190] Sheehan, C. (2006). *Dear president Bush.* San Francisco: City Lights. p. xiii
[191] Lorimer, D. (2005, June 22). United States: Six out of ten voters want Iraq withdrawal. *Green Left Weekly.* Retrieved January 15, 2008, from World Socialist Website database.
[192] Lorimer, D. (2005).
[193] United States. (2004). *Keesing's Worldwide, 50, p. 45775.* Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Keesing's Record of World Events database.

administration of inefficient tactics, questioning its arguments employed for decision-taking and openly demanded withdrawal of US troops from the Iraqi soil.

This division even within the Republican Party itself reflects the significance of seeking progress in Iraq; it is inferred that the American public could endure deaths of US soldiers, unverified assumptions for beginning the war, and the subsequent military and economic damage done, as long as there are indications of progress, but they will not accept failure.[194] Moreover, the House of Representatives on February 16, 2007 had adopted a resolution that condemned Bush's suggestion of sending 21,000 additional troops to Iraq as the belief of achieving progress is diminishing.[195] On May 1st, 2007 President Bush had even vetoed a "bill that made provision for $124 billion in expenditure on military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan," presented by Congress since it required US troop withdrawal from Iraq by October 1st, 2007.[196]

It is therefore apparent that the internal pressure caused by the US congress, the families of soldiers who died or were injured fighting an enemy wrongly accused of possessing weapons of mass destruction cannot be ignored. The irony is that as the U.S. military is currently improving its counter-insurgency capabilities, the American public has lost its patience for this war.[197] Some even argue that this immediate US military existence in Iraq is in fact hampering such progress. "In Washington, on the other hand, among the nation's political class, the growing consensus is that the war in Iraq in not only not winnable but as good as lost—Congressman Henry Waxman of California, for one, has

[194] Dueck, C. (2006). The politics of quagmire. *The National Interest, 86*, pp. 39-43. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

[195] Continued controversy over Iraq policy. (2007). *Keesing's Worldwide, 53*, p. 47739. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Keesing's Record of World Events database.

[196] Veto of Iraq withdrawal deadlines and military funding legislation. (2007). *Keesing's Worlwide*, pp. 47855-57. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Keesing's Record of World Events database.

[197] Dueck, C. (2006).

proclaimed that the war is lost. [...] The Democratic party has devoted much internal discussion to whether and how to restrict the president's ability to carry out even the present counterinsurgency efforts".[198]

Meanwhile, US troops remain in Iraq under a tremendous amount of pressure to either remain or withdraw. The skepticism and hesitation among American politicians leaves the United States image as the only superpower in a state of weakness relative to itself as being the world's dominant hegemony. Unless the Bush Administration makes obvious progress in the near future, it will remain under pressure from various sources to provide immediate achievements. The time factor, thus, is of great importance. The Bush administration needs to secure more public support in order to implement its intended plans and useful strategies in Iraq. The major allies of the US, Britain and Australia, furthermore, have begun to gradually withdraw from Iraq; this action is evidently also exerting pressure on the US.

6.2 Democrat's perspective

The intensity of public dissatisfaction concerning the war on Iraq and the subsequent pressure on the Bush administration to either urge for progress or order a troop withdrawal within a short timeframe led to the birth of the Baker-Hamilton report, which had proposed a number of recommendations in order to restore US credibility. Reflecting the American public's frustration, the report had displayed by means of statistics the public discontent with the Bush Administration: Sixty-six percent of Americans

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[198] Herman, A. (2007). How to win in Iraq, and how to lose. *Commentary*, *123*(4), pp. 23-29. Retrieved November 8, 2007, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

disapprove of the way in which the war has been managed, and more than 60 percent feel that there is no perceptible plan for making progress.[199]

However, Bush did not feel pressured to change his policy in Iraq after the much-publicized Democratic victory in 2006, even though the Democrats closely identified with the Baker-Hamilton report.[200] This shows that even when Democrats seize power, the objectives of the American policy will remain unchanged. What will change, however, is the means used to reach the same desired ends. Democrats, contrary to what some believe, have long supported the US firsthand presence in the Middle East region, which allows it to become relatively independent of its alliance with Arab states in the region and able to pursue its national interests on its own. The Baker-Hamilton report had nonetheless generated a lot of internal debate. Due to its scrutinized study of the US entrapment in the Iraqi dilemma, it was certain to provoke instantaneous reactions, especially among the defenders of the Bush strategy and the Republican Party. "In Congress, the US administration, the media and in the cities numerous right-wing think tanks are already mounting a robust campaign against it. [...] Predictably President Bush and most of his Republican colleagues simply brushed aside the report's recommendations. [...] But most Democrats staunchly defended the Baker-Hamilton assessment of the status quo, insomuch as it made them look better in the eyes of the American public."[201]

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[199] Baker, J. & Hamilton, L. (2006). *The Iraq study group report.* New York: Vintage Books. p. 35

[200] Leverett, F. (2007). To the incoming president: On Iraq it's January 2009, a democrat has just become president and confronts one mean conundrum; What's the best way to leave Iraq? *The American Prospect, 18*(6), pp. 16-20. Retrieved November 8, 2007, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

[201] Raising hell. (2006). *Kurdish Life, 60*, pp. 18-25. Retrieved January 25, 2008, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

In light of the internal American disagreement concerning how to deal with Iraq, one important proposal is the following: an extrication of the US from its involvement in the Iraqi civil war in an effort to allow the Iraqi people themselves the ultimate responsibility of resolving their differences and deciding their own future. Such a withdrawal could be displayed in the form of a redeployment of US troops in order to gradually phase out from Iraq. This plan, if it was executed in such a way so as to be described as an accomplishment for the Iraqi government, would increase the government's legitimacy, and permits the Baghdad authorities to exert more control over the internal situation. In addition, if the US troops were to eventually withdraw, Al Qaeda would automatically be weakened since this terrorist Sunni fundamentalist group has been reported to fear the clash with the Shiites and the Kurds more than its own fight with the US. Therefore, when the US troops leave Iraq, Al Qaeda will be in a state of fear when facing the Shiites' possible dominance and their ways of dealing with this terrorist Sunni group more than it would if the Americans stay in Iraq.[202] "There is no certainty as to what would happen in our absence. But there is absolute certainty about the results of our presence – escalating deaths on both sides."[203]

On the other hand, if the lamentable occurs, and the US is forced to withdraw in what is perceived as a "weak" manner from Iraq, terrible consequences would result. In addition to the criticisms that will undermine US achievements in Iraq, the political world order

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[202] Riedel, B. (2007, May/June). Al Qaeda strikes back. *Foreign Affairs.* Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Columbia International Affairs Online database.
[203] Sheehan, C. (2006). *Dear president Bush.* San Francisco: City Lights. p. xiii

would most probably exhibit changes. On a regional level, Washington's allies in the

Gulf would be more likely than ever to question the power of the US and consider a shift

in their policies. Although the US has intimate ties with such countries and has even

ensured their dependence on it for political and other reasons, Gulf States will no longer

feel as confident as they had before concerning their alliance with the world's super

power and its capacity to protect and defend them.

The change in their policies, much to the detriment of the US, would reflect their

intention to follow their own interests and ally themselves to the existent 'stronger'

current. As leaders in Pakistan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the other gulf sheikhdoms

witness the US withdraw in defeat from Iraq they would confront difficult choices. How

much trust can they still invest in the US when the latter country had falsely promised to

never abandon Iraqis and their new democracy? Should they instead make arrangements

or compromises with their victorious neighboring terrorists and other enemies of the

U.S.?[204]

Even though the above scenario would reflect negatively on Washington, it could also be

argued that the US as a leading nation was prepared to risk its own interests, alliances,

benefits and even credibility in order to aid an oppressed Iraq become a fully democratic,

free nation, one in which citizens are entitled to equal rights and where corruption does

not exist. This exceptional attempt of democratizing and shaping a better country has not

been executed as perfectly as the US would have hoped, but nevertheless, to have tried

and failed is better than not to have dared try at all, "there are terrible costs in the present

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[204] Hanson, V. (2007). If we exit: The costs, economic and otherwise, of staying in Iraq are terrible: The costs of leaving are much, much worse. *The American, 1*(4), 70-72. Retrieved November 8, 2007, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.

effort to secure a democratic Iraq, but they pale in comparison with the long-term

expense of defeat, both to the United States and to the world at large."[205]

However, it cannot be overlooked that many miscalculations and wrong moves did occur

in the Iraq war. And it is thanks to these ruinous blunders that the United States of

America, the world's super power, is currently ensnared in the war on Iraq.

Although it is conceivably feasible that super powers can afford to make mistakes, those

committed in the war of Iraq have resulted in being too costly even for the world's most

powerful nation. Therefore, super powers do visibly suffer from limitations and cannot

indeed, contrary to what numerous people believe, force their ways upon the nations of

the world, no matter how weak those nations are.

As a direct consequence of the results of this war (time has yet to determine their true

nature), "the global standing of the United States could suffer if Iraq descends further into

chaos. Iraq is a major test of, and strain on, U.S. military, diplomatic, and financial

capacities. Perceived failure there could diminish America's credibility and influence in a

region that is the center of the Islamic world and vital to the world's energy supply."[206]

The Iraq war is thus additional proof that super powers do not have the absolute freedom

to act arrogantly and impetuously to attain their objectives. In fact, superpowers are

fraught with burdens of accountability, increasing responsibility towards world nations

and enhancement of the globe's issues. Their actions and policies should provide an

exemplary model for other states to learn from, and its agenda consist of a democratic

world constitution that nations engage in, contribute to and unite upon. However, the

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[205]Hanson, V. (2007). If we exit: The costs, economic and otherwise, of staying in Iraq are terrible: The costs of leaving are much, much worse. *The American, 1*(4), 70-72. Retrieved November 8, 2007, from Expanded Academic ASAP database.
[206] Baker, J. & Hamilton, L. (2006). *The Iraq study group report.* New York: Vintage Books. p. 34-35

present US foreign policy of unilateralism is viewed as being essentially autocratic and impetuous; it has the opposite intended effect, and results ultimately in constraining its freedom of action and in accomplishing its aims.[207]

Unilateralism therefore proves to be a sensitive concern; the superpower has to cautiously and minutely scrutinize details, carefully plan every possible outcome and calculate every feasible future case scenario in order for its objectives to be realized. Power alone is not sufficient for the United States to achieve its intentions, especially since the inability of this country to achieve its imperious program is accompanied with a hefty price: the risk of losing its credibility, status in the world and damage to its own reputation. Whereas on the other hand, USA's success in realizing objectives is more or less predictable considering it to be the world's only superpower.

To sum up, since policies, interests' priorities, and alliances are dynamically subject to perpetual changes in the political world, it is impossible to predict the future of the region; the tumultuous Iraqi conflict has not ended yet and its outcome has been left for time to decide. The sole foregone conclusion of this war on Iraq is that the Middle East has been politically engineered to head for an entirely new course and its status quo dramatically and conclusively altered; whether a positive or negative entity is capable of being shaped out of this new construction has yet to be determined.

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[207] Johnson, L. & Caruson, K. (2003). The seven sins of American foreign policy. *PS: Political Science and Politics, 36*(1), pp. 5-10. Retrieved April 24, 2008 from JSTOR database.

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