“MESS” O’ POTAMIA: THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN IRAQ

A thesis presented to

the faculty of

the College of Arts and Sciences of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts

Marshall L. Lilly

August 2005
This thesis entitled

“MESS” O’ POTAMIA: THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN IRAQ

by

Marshall Lilly

has been approved for

the Department of Political Science

and the College of Arts and Sciences by

Barry Tadlock

Assistant Professor of Political Science

Benjamin M. Ogles

Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
The goal of this thesis is to determine the likelihood of Iraq developing into a democracy in the near future. Given the heightened level of U.S. involvement in Iraq since March 2003, the question of whether or not democracy in the country is possible has risen in significance.

This study differs from more traditional democratization studies because it focuses on the international level of analysis rather than the state level. Due to U.S. involvement in the democratization process, the argument is presented that U.S. actions are more important in the initial stages than state level issues such as constitutional engineering.

The results of this study find that democracy in Iraq will initially depend on actions taken by the United States, and that these actions will have a greater effect on Iraq’s development than actions taken at the state level.

Approved:

Barry Tadlock
Assistant Professor of Political Science
Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................3

List of Figures ......................................................................................................................6

Chapter 1. Introduction ........................................................................................................7

Chapter 2. Democratization Literature: Domestic Level of Analysis.........................14
  2.1 Operationalizing Democracy .................................................................16
  2.2 Democracy as a Broad Concept............................................................17
  2.3 Democracy in the Regional Context.......................................................22
  2.4 A Word About Japan and Germany.......................................................30
  2.5 A Final Look .......................................................................................32

Chapter 3. Iraq’s Ethnic Groups .................................................................34
  3.1 Shi’a Arabs............................................................................................35
  3.2 Sunni Arabs...........................................................................................38
  3.3 Sunni Kurds ...........................................................................................40
  3.4 Neighboring Countries..........................................................................43
  3.5 A Final Look .......................................................................................46

Chapter 4. War with Iran .....................................................................................49
  4.1 U.S. Involvement ....................................................................................52
  4.3 The War of Attrition 1984-88 ...............................................................54
  4.4 The Anfal Campaign & Other Chemical Attacks..................................56
  4.5 U.S. Senators Meet Saddam .................................................................58
  4.6 Implications for the Population..............................................................58
  4.7 A Final Look .......................................................................................62

Chapter 5. Iraq Invades Kuwait .................................................................64
  5.1 The Conflict Begins ...............................................................................64
  5.2 U.S. Involvement ...................................................................................67
  5.3 The Glaspie Meeting .............................................................................68
  5.4 A Negotiated Settlement? .....................................................................70
  5.5 Saddam Survives ..................................................................................71
  5.6 Failed Uprisings ...................................................................................72
  5.7 Implications for the Population..............................................................75
  5.8 A Final Look .......................................................................................77
## Table of Contents (continued)

Chapter 6. Post-War Nineties: Economic Sanctions & the Policy of Regime Change .....79  
6.1 The Sanctions Regime .....................................................................................80  
6.2 How & Why the Sanctions Were Established .................................................82  
6.3 What the Sanctions Achieved ..........................................................................84  
6.4 U.S. Manipulation ............................................................................................87  
6.5 Regime Change as Policy ................................................................................89  
6.6 Operation Desert Fox .......................................................................................93  
6.7 Implications for the Population .......................................................................95  
6.8 A Final Look ....................................................................................................97  

Chapter 7. Operation Iraqi Freedom .........................................................................99  
7.1 Post 9/11 Rationales for Policy ......................................................................101  
7.2 Bush Addresses the UN ..................................................................................106  
7.3 Colin Powell Addresses the UN ......................................................................109  
7.4 Changing Rationales ......................................................................................111  
7.5 Implications for the Population ......................................................................113  
7.6 A Final Look ..................................................................................................115  

Chapter 8. The American Record on Democracy ....................................................117  
8.1 Nicaragua .......................................................................................................119  
8.2 Panama ..........................................................................................................122  
8.3 Afghanistan .....................................................................................................126  
8.4 Haiti ................................................................................................................129  
8.5 A Final Look ..................................................................................................133  

Chapter 9. Conclusion ..............................................................................................136  

References .............................................................................................................140
List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Ethnic Makeup of Iraq</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Donald Rumsfeld meets Saddam</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Ambassador Glaspie meets Saddam</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Iraqi opposition leader Ahmad Chalabi and Washington ally</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>George W. Bush at the UN</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Colin Powell at the UN</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>U.S. Nation-Building, 1898-2005</td>
<td>132-133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One

Introduction

The United States has a long, sordid history of intervening, militarily or otherwise, in the affairs of other countries. Usually these interventions do not receive the type of scrutiny that they deserve, by the media or the U.S. population. Following hotly contested rounds of United Nations Security Council negotiations and debate, in the Spring of 2003 the United States invaded Iraq for the second time in just over a decade, and the entire world was watching.

Despite a certain degree of backpedaling by the administration of George W. Bush, the most prominent reasons for the invasion were the threat posed by Iraq’s alleged weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the possibility that Saddam Hussein’s government was united (or would become so) with terrorist organizations, most notably Al Qaeda. When the Bush administration was making its case to the world throughout 2002 and 2003, the idea that democracy would be created in Iraq and have a domino effect in the rest of the Middle East was present, but it was more of an afterthought amid the visions of a “smoking gun in the form of a mushroom cloud.”¹ As of this writing, no weapons of mass destruction have been found and neither has a link between Hussein’s government and Al Qaeda. The former was discussed in congressional committee reports and the latter by former Secretary of State Colin Powell in early 2004 in addition to the

¹ These were the words used by then National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice in an interview with CNN’s Wolf Blitzer on September 8, 2002. See http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/01/10/wbr.smoking.gun/ President Bush used the same imagery in a speech delivered in Cincinnati, Ohio on October 7, 2002, the full text of which is available at http://www.narsil.org/war_on_iraq/bush_october_7_2002.html.
findings of the 9/11 Committee that was created in an effort to investigate intelligence failures that resulted in the terrorist attacks of 2001. ²

These recent revelations have pushed the creation of democracy in Iraq, as an issue for the Bush administration, to new heights. Although the WMD and Al Qaeda link are still important issues, the Bush administration has been forced to rely on the creation of democracy much more now than they had perhaps originally planned. This paper will attempt to determine how likely it is that Iraq will experience democracy in the near future. There are two ways of viewing this potentially far-reaching question. A determination as to whether or not democracy will begin to emerge in the following decade can be identified as the “short-term” approach. This is of course the alternative to the “long-term” approach, which would look further into Iraq’s future, perhaps 50 years from now. By breaking down the question into smaller, more manageable sections, it will be easier to address.

Having identified two distinct facets of this question, the next step is to determine which one should be addressed now at this critical point in Iraqi history, as well as an appropriate way to answer that particular question. There are many immediate problems and issues facing Iraq today that will determine the course of events for its democratic future. These include the role of the United States inside Iraq, a guerilla war that has cost countless Iraqi lives³, and also the more general hardships of evolving from a state that

---

² Press conference on Thursday 1/8/04. Powell stated that he had no smoking gun proof of the link, but stated that the possibility existed and that it was prudent to consider Iraq at the time. This was also reported by the AP story: “Carnegie Endowment criticizes administration's public assessments of Iraq dangers.”

³ According to an independent organization created to monitor civilian casualties, the death toll at the time of writing was estimated between 23,456 and 26,599 Iraqis. The organization, Iraq Body Count, was created because the United States government is not making attempts, official or otherwise, to monitor civilian deaths. The group examines various accounts given by 38 different news organizations that include print and broadcast sources from the U.S. and around the world. The group’s web address is http://www.iraqbodycount.net
has never experienced democracy in its entire history into some form of a viable democracy.

If Iraq is to survive and evolve into a mature democracy, it must therefore address the immediate problems facing it today. Therefore, this research will focus on Iraq’s short-term problems and short-term prospects for achieving democracy. Only then can the groundwork be laid for further research into the state’s long-term democratic future. What, then, must be studied to address this matter of short-term democracy for Iraq?

To answer the research question, this paper will begin by examining relevant literature on the emergence of developing democracies. There is obviously a large amount of literature on the topic, but since Iraq is an ethnically divided society, the discussion of democratization literature will pay greater attention to the research that analyzes the emergence of democracy in ethnically divided countries.

The main product of this research will show that this literature is inadequate when discussing Iraq. To demonstrate this, a historical analysis will be conducted, drawing mostly on major events from the past 25 years of Iraqi and U.S. history. This will help explain why these events constitute a seemingly insurmountable challenge for Iraq. These events include the Iraq/Iran war that began in 1980, Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the economic sanctions that followed, and the latest war of 2003.

The main theme of this research when analyzing the major events of the past 25 years is of a dual nature. On one hand, it is important to discuss the nature of Iraq’s ethnic groups and the effects of these major events on the Iraqi population. Plainly put: “What did these events mean for the people of Iraq and how did they affect already tense ethnic relations?”
If Iraq were a country that was experiencing a transition to democracy on its own without outside help, it might be enough to leave the research at that. Not all countries experience interference or help from other countries with their transition to democratic rule. However, since the U.S. is the self-appointed bringer of democracy in this instance, we must go beyond the state-level of analysis to the international level and explore how Washington has interacted with Iraq and other developing countries where democracy was a concern. An analysis of U.S. policy and motives in Iraq as well as other developing countries will provide a startlingly clear image of Washington’s attitudes towards the ideas of democracy.

Keeping in mind the dual nature mentioned above, after a review of democratization literature in Chapter Two and a brief overview of the history of Iraq’s ethnic groups included in Chapter Three, the point of departure for this research is the early 1980’s. There are several reasons that this makes a sensible starting point. One being that the early eighties marks the beginning of a very close relationship between the United States and Iraq. With this identified starting point, the U.S./Iraqi relationship can be analyzed in its near entirety. Another benefit from starting at this date is the fact that so many of the key actors in Washington that are helping shape current Iraqi policy were shaping it during the 1980’s as well. The main players of the Iraqi regime during the eighties were still in place at the outset of the latest military conflict. The same can be said of the U.S. government. Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and Colin Powell, among others were all involved in some fashion or another in the Reagan and first Bush administrations and continue to be in the current Bush administration. This is not to suggest that analysis of Clinton policy towards Iraq will be
ignored, but the fact that so many who were involved then are still involved now is a remarkable opportunity to help understand what will happen in Iraq’s future, especially now that George W. Bush has won a second term.

With this basic framework, Chapter Four will analyze Iraq’s war with Iran during the eighties. Chapter Five looks into the first Gulf War to remove Iraq’s military from Kuwait. Chapter Six explores the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq at the beginning of the Gulf War that were still in place while U.S. forces were attacking the country in 2003. Also included in Chapter Six is analysis of the bombing campaign in 1998 by the U.S. and its junior partner Great Britain, following disputes over the weapons inspection process that had been an issue throughout the nineties. Even though events are changing in Iraq every day because of the current war, Chapter Seven brings the work up to date with a discussion of some of the more important themes and developments that have emerged. All events will look at internal repercussions for the population as well as the U.S. role in facilitating these events.

Chapter Eight will be a brief analysis of Washington’s history of nation building and “democratization” attempts in other developing countries. The earlier cases of Nicaragua and Panama will be discussed, as well as the more recent cases of Haiti and Afghanistan. Nicaragua is a particularly useful example to explore here because of the similarities to Iraq: The U.S. was dealing with what it felt to be a hostile government, and the creation of democracy was a professed goal. The U.S. invasion of Panama is important because of its similarities to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. If one looks objectively at the two cases, it is hard to see why it was acceptable for the U.S. to invade Panama, but a crime for Iraq to do the same to Kuwait. Afghanistan is important as it
was the first country to be invaded by the U.S. in the name of democracy. Haiti is perhaps the most important of the four countries analyzed here since the most recent chapter of U.S./Haiti relations happened after the U.S. embarked on its democratization campaign, but the results did not bring democracy to the country in any sense of the word.

While this approach provides what I believe to be a representative cross-section of U.S. interventions, it will however leave out such important case studies as the Israeli/Palestinian conflict (an issue with too much history to be discussed here), the U.S. overthrow of the democratic governments throughout Central America in the 20th century, as well as U.S. attempts to undermine democracy in post-war Italy. The main theme of this section is to draw lines from past U.S. interventions and connect them to Iraq. By doing this, a rich history is revealed, showing that Washington has successfully undermined democracy in many developing countries, as well as supported and given aid to many un-democratic military dictatorships, Saddam Hussein being only one of many examples. Chapter Nine will conclude the research with some observations about U.S. policy towards Iraq and other developing countries along with an attempt to determine if certain explanations given are credible.

Let us now turn to what existing literature has to say about democratization in ethnically divided societies and how quickly it becomes irrelevant if, as Ronald Reagan’s Secretary of State George Shultz explained, “the shadow of power is not cast across the bargaining table, ignoring the power element of the equation.” Or more plainly put, why

---

4 For more on Italy, See James E. Miller, *The United States and Italy, 1940-1950* and Noam Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy*, Chapter 11.

Washington’s actions in Iraq will have just as much, if not more impact on the future than any democratic institutions Iraqis attempt to build in the coming years.
Chapter Two

Democratization Literature: Domestic Level of Analysis

When democratization is the topic being discussed, perhaps the most important aspect of the research is the level of analysis. Different cases will require different approaches. In some instances, focusing solely on domestic issues will produce an accurate analysis of a country’s transition to democracy. The main argument of this research is that, at this point in time, the state level of analysis is not sufficient when Iraq is the country of interest. Literature dealing with the domestic level of analysis will be discussed in this chapter, with the authors below focusing almost exclusively on the domestic issues that influence the transition to democracy.

While analysis of domestic issues is most certainly relevant to the case of Iraq, it may not be entirely sufficient. True, Iraq has a long and violent history of ethnic tensions and military dictatorships that will influence the direction it takes in the future, but it also has a very extensive relationship with the United States. This relationship dates back to the CIA’s involvement in the rise of Saddam Hussein’s Baath party following the removal of the British-backed monarchy and has continued in one form or another to this day. It is because of this relationship, and the nature of it, that the international level of analysis must be the main focus.

A wide variety of issues will be discussed within this framework that speaks to the problems Iraq is sure to encounter during its transition, including what is to be done

---

with the economy, electoral institutions, and most importantly the ethnic conflicts that have had such a destructive impact on the evolution of the state. Attention will be paid to the topic of democratization in the broader sense (as that being applicable in most cases), as well as to democratization as it relates to the region. In this latter instance, scholars such as Noah Feldman, Bernard Lewis, and Samuel Huntington will be discussed as their research goes beyond the domestic level, but does not yet address the level of analysis that is the backbone of this thesis. The following chapters then takes these domestic and regional issues and places them in the context of the international level of analysis as it relates to the United States and Iraq.

The nature of U.S./Iraqi relations is not the only topic at this international level that must be discussed if we are to glimpse into Iraq’s future. As what can be viewed as a companion to this chapter, an in-depth look at Washington’s behavior in other developing countries is also warranted. While this approach largely uses an analysis of case studies rather than theory or existing literature, it will accurately demonstrate that the international level is actually more important when discussing Iraq’s immediate future than the domestic level. These case studies will then be placed in the context of the body of democratization literature that exists, thus demonstrating its inability to fully address the question of Iraq.

Huntington’s seminal work *The Clash of Civilizations* perhaps goes further than any other scholar mentioned in this chapter as “The West” as he describes it, plays an active role in his argument. However, Huntington’s inevitable “clash” argument is based on an entirely different set of premises than mine, which does not pit the United States and Iraq on opposing sides of a predestined fight, but rather that the West has taken deliberate and not predestined actions that have affected Iraq.
2.1 Operationalizing Democracy

Even though defining something as complex as democracy can be a potentially tricky task, for the purposes of this research, it is relatively simple. There are certainly “degrees” of democracy (i.e., is Great Britain more or less of a democracy than Australia?), but it is the basic democratic principles present in all democracies that matter for Iraq today.

There are many different experiences and institutions that can be considered democracies while being drastically different from each other, but for our purposes, let us adopt Joseph Schumpeter’s definition of democracy quoted in Benjamin Reilly’s *Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management*. He sees democracy based on procedural terms and presumes that democracy is the “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote.” Other leading theorists such as Riker and Huntington have agreed with this assessment and further conceptualized that democracy is the “institution of the ballot box and all that goes with it.”

This is a good place to start in the theoretical sense, but we also must take a closer look beyond this type of normative statement to see what democracy is supposed to do. To take these assessments a step further, when democracy is mentioned in this research, it is referring to the ability of a country’s citizens to elect its own leaders and have some form of control over the policies enacted. This does not mean that elections in and of themselves equal democracy, and no serious scholar has suggested it. Saddam Hussein held elections in Iraq that were totally meaningless, but a balance has to be found. For

---


9 Ibid.
example, Iraq’s new government was able to form about four months after the country’s first elections were held. This is a tremendous step in the right direction, but just several weeks after this government was formed, Reuters reported that the U.S. was unwilling to turn over partial control of security/intelligence operations to the new government, due to distrust of the Shi’a majority (with its links to Iran).  

2.2 Democracy as a Broad Concept

The following section will deal with democratization literature that speaks in broader terms. Concepts discussed by the following authors speak to problems that are, to varying degrees, present in any country that is experiencing the transition to democracy. However, Iraq’s status as an ethnically divided society means that the literature included in this section, while being broad in scope, will be mostly limited to works that discuss democratization in the context of ethnically divided societies with the exception of one author.

One of the most useful discussions of democracy in countries like Iraq is Benjamin Reilly’s “Democracy in Divided Societies: Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management” (2001). His work is specifically aimed at the democratization of ethnically divided countries and is quite helpful for considering Iraq.

Reilly introduces a concept called centripetalism that may well indeed be one of the best hopes Iraq has for a democratic transition. Centripetalism is the idea that democracy does not permanently resolve conflicts, but rather it is an effective and

---

10 The problems inherent with Iraq’s Shi’a population and how it relates to Iran is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.
continual process where conflicts are managed through negotiation and cooperation, rather than majority rule\textsuperscript{11}. One of the most vital aspects of centripetalism is that political parties and candidates have electoral incentives to reach out across ethnic lines to foster cooperation. Through the process of reaching out to other groups, political parties will ideally become more moderate in their approach. Also falling under centripetalism is the creation of arenas of bargaining where different ethnic groups can come together to collectively bargain. The now defunct Iraqi governing council was a good example of this type of collective arena. However, certain problems existed with this model when used in Iraq and they will be discussed towards the end of this section.

The bulk of the remainder of Reilly’s book focuses on case studies where different types of electoral engineering have been attempted. The countries that he looks at: Australia, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Sri Lanka, Estonia, and Northern Ireland all experienced ethnic conflicts and have tried different types of electoral systems with varying degrees of success. The type of systems employed runs the gamut of possible democratic institutions. The important point that I will demonstrate is that Iraq experiences conditions not present in any of the above mentioned case studies. Therefore the type of institution, whether it be direct elections (what some leaders of the Shi’a majority in the South are calling for), proportional representation, or a form of preferential run-off voting, will likely aggravate preexisting problems that the Iraqi population, as a whole, will not be able to deal with because of the commanding majority that the Shi’a own.

\textsuperscript{11} Reilly, p. 7.
Another main work on democracy in ethnically divided societies I want to cover is *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* by Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter. They introduce the important idea of what they call pacts. Briefly stated, a pact is a (sometimes) public agreement between a set of political actors that strives to achieve a temporary compromise that guarantees certain vital interests for both sides. The main idea behind a pact is that it can provide a satisfactory, albeit temporary, solution that will ward off any moves by extremist forces that may result in instability or violence.

The authors go on to discuss what could be considered a necessary condition for a pact to work. The environment that must be present for negotiating a pact is one where the opposing groups are “interdependent, in that they can neither do without each other nor unilaterally impose their preferred solution on each other.” Most would find this to be an accurate description of what must exist in order for a pact to work. The problem is that these conditions do not exist in Iraq. With the population split three ways and the Shi’a having a strong majority, they are in a position to completely bypass the possibility of negotiating pacts with the Sunnis and Kurds. One could make the argument that O’Donnel and Schmitter’s conditions exist within the ethnic groups of Iraq, and that they will make pacts amongst themselves. This is a more feasible line of reasoning because no ethnic group in Iraq is a homogenized, unified group, but these conditions are certainly not applicable among the different groups. This is especially evident in cities with especially diverse demographics such as Kirkuk. The city has large numbers of Kurds, Arabs, and Turcoman, and it has been a showcase for the difficulties of pact

---

making. Investigative journalism by PBS correspondents in November 2003 revealed a city with constant demonstrations and violence due to Arab anger over the predominantly Kurdish police force in the city.\(^\text{13}\) It was clear that there were divisions among the specific groups, but cooperation only existed at that level; it did not transcend ethnic lines in the way O’Donnel and Schmitter describe.

Another facet of the democratization literature focuses on the tensions between liberal democracy and nationalism. Having described a workable definition of democracy is a vital point for this research, but an important distinction must now be made between that definition and the notion of a liberal democracy. In a similar vein to Benjamin Barber’s work *Strong Democracy*, Ghia Nodia notes that the type of liberal democracy that the U.S. is attempting to create in Iraq is one that arguably regards individual human liberty as the most important political value to be achieved.\(^\text{14}\) The problem lies in nationalism’s inherent preference to collective goals that could be based on culture, religion, or a host of other community based identities.

In his recent acclaimed work *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad*, Fareed Zakaria also raises some important questions about just what is a democracy and whether or not it is desirable, or possible, in every instance. While it is the purpose of this research is to determine whether or not democracy in Iraq is possible, rather than desirable, Zakaria contributes something important to the topic. The question is also important because the U.S. could conceivably determine that it is in its own interest that liberalism flourishes in Iraq rather than democracy. He correctly points out that in a place like Hong Kong, for example, a liberal society existed where rights and

\(^{13}\) PBS, *Beyond Baghdad*, 2003.
freedoms were respected, but was in no way democratic. Conversely, in places like India, democratic principles are strong, but individual freedoms are not.

Even though there is much debate surrounding the nature of nations that discuss whether or not they actually exist or if they are “imagined,” the fact is that inside Iraq, a conflict has evolved that can best be described by the notion of nationalism. Even though events between the ethnic groups have sometimes unfolded in ways influenced by outside powers (first the Ottomans, then the British, now the Americans), the dynamic that has emerged in Iraq today is the result of a ruling minority group and its repression of the majority of the country.

The one common theme emerging from all of the country studies on emerging democracies and ethnic conflict is that there is not a single comprehensive formula that can be applied to countries facing transitions to democratic rule. However, there are several broad lessons to be learned according to Diamond and Plattner.

The first lesson is that no group within a country should be excluded from sharing the political power of the state and that everyone should be given some stake in the success of the system. No one group, especially a minority group, should be allowed to “establish a permanent political hegemony,” and all should share that power.\footnote{Diamond & Plattner, Introduction, p. XXIII.} Again, the example of Bosnia’s rotating Presidency is perhaps a useful model for Iraq’s future, but on the other hand Bosnia did not have the luxury of having federalism as an option in the way that Iraq does due to the highly dispersed nature of its ethnic groups.
The other broad lesson to be learned is that ethnic conflict in emerging democracies must be viewed in an international context. Diamond and Plattner contend that neighboring states and the international community must play important roles in seeing that minority (or in Iraq’s case majority) groups are treated fairly. International organizations such as the UN are to play a crucial part in monitoring ethnic tensions in these countries.16

2.3 Democracy in the Regional Context

Moving beyond the literature that deals with democratization in broad terms, this section will discuss some of the more prominent works that deals with the topic as it relates to either the region, as well as within the Islamic context. Serious debate has been raised as to whether or not Arab Muslim democracies can or will ever exist. Even though the following paragraphs cannot by any means purport to represent the entire body of debate on this topic, some of the most prominent scholars and their works are represented. What differentiates each author discussed here is that in some form or another, the role of the West is included.

One of the most well known and perhaps most controversial scholars that fits into this discussion is Harvard Political Science professor Samuel Huntington. In many ways, his seminal work, The Clash of Civilizations was seen as the most important Post-Cold War text on international relations. The terrorist attacks of September 11 may have in some ways reinforced the ideas presented by Huntington, but they may have also

16 Ibid, p. XXVIII
undermined some of his assumptions, particularly in the way the U.S. chose to respond to the attacks.\(^{17}\)

On the surface, Huntington’s work does not seem particularly concerned with the question of democratization. His work seems concerned with a somewhat grander problem. However, Huntington does introduce some limited discussion of democracy, albeit briefly. This discussion, in conjunction with a careful reading of what perhaps lies between the lines in the rest of his research reveals several implicit assumptions about the potential for democracy in the Arab or Islamic world.

Huntington’s thesis originally appeared in the Summer 1993 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. The article caused quite a controversy and resulted in Huntington expanding on the article in the form of a book bearing a similar title. The thesis is well-known, but put briefly, Huntington is making the case that conflicts in the future will be more likely to involve opposing civilizations, rather than traditional conflicts among established states. Although there has been disagreement among scholars as to whether or not Huntington adequately defines the term ‘civilization,’ that is largely besides the point here. What is important are Huntington’s assumptions about the Islamic civilization, as he sees it, and its place in the post-Cold War period.

Huntington notes that throughout the 70’s and 80’s, a wave of democratization swept the world, but that it had relatively little impact in Muslim societies. Mentioned here is the role of radical Islamist parties (as opposed to “normal” or moderate Islamic

---

\(^{17}\) This point is certainly debatable, but the U.S. government tried to make it explicitly clear that by responding to 9/11, it was not engaging in a clash of civilizations. Bush has repeatedly stated that he sees no inherent conflict between the West and Islam.
ones) in these countries that failed to successfully democratize. The role of Islamists and how they will affect democratization movements is an important theme that is addressed by several of the scholars appearing in this chapter, with Huntington taking a decidedly different stance on these groups than authors mentioned below.

Huntington sees these groups as being the main source of power in Muslim countries in the 80’s and 90’s. He argues that opposition forces (like communist parties for example) had been largely discredited and were without popular support. Huntington is right about lack of support for these groups, but is willing to put all the blame on the Muslim “civilization.” He notes the failure of liberal democracy to take root in Muslim societies and in part attributes this “continuing and repeated phenomenon” to the inhospitable nature of Islamic culture and society to Western liberal concepts.

To be fair, Huntington’s argument is much more complex than what is summarized above, but the underlying theme is an implicit belief that there is something inherently “wrong” with Islamic culture that will prevent it from achieving democracy. Huntington is certainly not alone in this assumption, but perhaps makes the argument more forcefully than most.

A relative newcomer to topic of democratization is Noah Feldman. His research, *After Jihad: America and the Struggle for Islamic Democracy*, is perhaps one of the best works available on the subject and established Feldman as an expert in the field. It also comes closer than any other work cited in this chapter to the type of scrutiny being suggested as necessary by this research.

---

19 Ibid.
The bulk of Feldman’s argument deals with his interpretation of why Muslim societies and Muslims in general are indeed compatible with basic democratic principles. A point that Feldman makes repeatedly in print and in lectures is that large numbers of North American Muslims are able to retain their religious values and incorporate them into democratic societies where they are religious minorities. While it may not be a convincing enough argument to simply conclude that Muslim and Arab democracy will work everywhere because it works somewhere, the basic premise is well taken. This point on top of Feldman’s other main statements about Islam’s compatibility with democratic norms (discussed below) forms the basis of a strong argument in favor of Islam’s democratic potential.

There are two distinct facets to Feldman’s argument as to why Islamic (as opposed to the more extreme Islamist) democracy is possible. The reason why pro-democracy movements in these societies are so rare, Feldman argues, is because repression works. The autocratic leaders of these countries saw that by playing Washington and Moscow off of each other, they could essentially act in a way that prevented populations from demanding reforms. Washington’s tacit approval of such behavior in Algeria after the Cold War was essentially over is a perfect example of autocratic rulers effectively silencing democrats in the country, Feldman argues. In other words, the rulers in these countries are the problem, not the populations.

The other facet of Feldman’s argument has to do with the structure of Islam itself, and moves away from the part of his book that deals with autocratic leaders. It is in this area that Feldman directly contradicts Huntington’s thesis. Feldman views Huntington’s

---

21 Ibid, p. 19.
work as fundamentally flawed and argues that the classifications described in *Clash of Civilizations* do legitimately exist and while they can sometimes be at odds with one another, are not the “most important, determinative features of who we are as people.”

Touching on the distinction between democracy and liberty articulated by Zakaria, Feldman poses the question as to whether or not the notion of liberty would be included in Islamic democracy. The main distinction Feldman makes between Islamic societies and Western societies is Islam’s supposed belief that government is to be extended into the private sphere much more so than in Western societies where government is seen to be limited to the public sphere. The argument is presented that the public/private divide is more permeable in Western societies than most acknowledge, and also that there is a greater distinction between the two in Muslim countries than most acknowledge.

The final section of Feldman’s work incorporates the West in more of a broader sense. In sections called “Doing the Right Thing,” and also “How to Do It,” Feldman talks about the West’s willingness to support or put into place dictators if doing so would be in Washington’s interests. Feldman insists that certain policies may have been justified during the Cold War if they could effectively stop the spread of communism, but the U.S. has not significantly altered its policy on such issues since the end of the Cold War.

While some scholars present the idea of democratization in a more liberal or idealist light, Feldman’s presentation is one of realist thought. As it pertains to America’s role as a superpower, Feldman argues that no one can reverse America’s role

---

22 Ibid, p. 31. 
23 Ibid, p. 69. 
24 Ibid, p 204.
as a superpower. But as long as pressuring for democracy is an option for Washington, it weakens itself as a superpower each time it gives lie to the claim of spreading democracy. To sum up Feldman’s main thesis when bringing in the West as an actor that influences democracy, the idea is that sometimes what is moral and what is pragmatic may not always correspond with each other, but when democracy is the issue at hand, moralism and pragmatism are inseparable.

Another somewhat controversial figure in this area is Bernard Lewis. He is criticized by some for a failure to understand the Islamic world he so frequently writes about. While some of this criticism may be warranted, Lewis does make several astute observations about Islamic democracy in one of his better-known works. In *The Crisis of Islam*, Lewis discusses the lack of democracy in Muslim countries (particularly Arab Muslim countries) and actually touches on the role of the West, albeit briefly.

He speaks of the willingness of states to abandon alliances after political conditions change, making specific mention of Iraq and Iran. While this is not a groundbreaking revolution in and of itself, Lewis slightly hints at the potential damage to democratic movements that can result when such events occur. This is a welcome statement, but Lewis goes onto comment on the role of Islam and why it will produce undesirable results inside places like Iraq, an observation that contradicts Feldman’s views.

---

25 Ibid.
27 Ibid, pp. 111-112.
Lewis goes on to repeat the oft-trumpeted claim that somehow by supporting the relatively small democratic opposition in places like Saudi Arabia and Iran that the West’s newfound task of actively promoting democracy in the Arab/Muslim world will be easier.28 Lewis does not give much thought or analysis to this statement. Rather, he mentions it almost in passing, as if it were some sort of obvious truism.

Regardless of Lewis’ somewhat casual adoption of this statement, there is serious debate within the academic community as to whether or not supporting Muslim democratic movements will do much in the way of promoting democracy. A much more forceful stance on the topic than Lewis’ is that of Marina Ottaway and Thomas Carothers. In a column in Foreign Policy that served as a precursor to their edited text, Uncharted Journey: Democracy Promotion in the Middle East, the two authors make an exceptionally convincing argument that Lewis is indeed quite mistaken in his blanket support for Muslim democrats, however admirable the statement may be in theory.29

Ottaway and Carothers make a very detached, but balanced, realistic approach in their argument. They acknowledge that supporting democratic groups in undemocratic states is a commendable stance, but question the efficacy of that support. Their argument is based on the premise that in reality, the U.S. only wants Middle Eastern democracy up to a certain point due to the fact that democracies in these states may pose serious threats to other U.S. interests in the region. Support for such decidedly undemocratic states as Saudi Arabia is a perfect example, the authors argue.30

28 Ibid, pp. 163-164.
29 Marina Ottaway & Thomas Carothers, Middle East Democracy, Foreign Policy, November/December 2004, pp. 22-28.
Keeping that in mind Ottaway & Carothers argue that more militant Islamists may actually hold greater promise for transforming the region than Arab democrats. The key point here is that of popular support. The problem for Arab/Muslim democrats is that they have very little support. Here, the authors strike a very correct note; if these democrats did have wide popular support, the issue of Arab democracies would not be the issue it is today.

Ottaway & Carothers drive home the argument by pointing out the standard fear that real democratic elections in the region would result in radical Islamists coming to power and destroying/preventing democracy is an over-inflated argument. The authors point out that eight countries in the region (Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen) have all had Islamic parties participating with modest results. While certain degrees of government intervention surely existed, the authors assert there is no evidence the Islamists would have fared much better in a more open environment.31

While this is a debatable point, Ottaway & Carothers point to Turkey as a state with Islamists in power, but also being more democratic than any other country in the region with the exception of Israel. In the end the question is one of popular support. These Islamic groups are the only organizations outside of the governments in the region that have large enough constituencies to realistically affect change. There may not be a “best” course of action in this instance. The West may have to settle for the “least worst” option, which might mean supporting elements in these societies it would not normally want to associate itself with.

2.4 A Word about Japan and Germany

Even though the mention of Japan and Germany as examples of Washington’s ability to invade and democratize has certainly declined over the past several years, it was nevertheless constantly brought up as the United States prepared to go to war and therefore deserves some scrutiny. There may indeed be some historical lessons to be learned from the occupation of these two countries, but the situation in Iraq stands as a sharp contrast to what happened after World War II in many respects. Focusing too heavily on this comparison is misguided and will not provide much insight.

Elaborating on this theme in his most recent book, Noah Feldman recounts his transatlantic flight to Iraq along with other advisors to the U.S.-led occupying force in Baghdad in 2003.32 While he was reading a recent book about the Iraqi Shi’a, every one of his companions was busy reading the latest books on America’s occupation and reconstruction of Japan and Germany, rather than about Iraq or the Gulf region. It is Feldman’s argument, and also this author’s, that this type behavior from those who would be shaping how the U.S. handled post-Saddam Iraq is unsettling. The following paragraphs hope to illustrate several reasons why this is so.

Looking at Japan first, there are some major, uncontroversial differences that can be identified. Not least of these differences is that generally speaking and especially compared to Iraq, Japan had at the time a relatively homogenous ethnic society. As demonstrated by several authors below, this is an extremely important factor to take into consideration. Iraq is currently experiencing a sustained guerilla war aimed against U.S. forces and the newly emerging Iraqi police and military forces. It is generally accepted

---

as truth that some of these guerillas are foreign fighters. An accurate, exact count will most likely never be possible, but on November 19th of 2003, *The New York Times* reported that Army Major General David H. Petraeus estimated the number of foreign fighters inside Iraq at somewhere between one and three thousand.\textsuperscript{33} The island nation of Japan did have to worry about foreign fighters entering the country.

Another main difference is the overall situation in Japan compared to Iraq as it relates to the occupation by the U.S. Japan had formally surrendered and its government was left mostly intact after the war. This stands as a marked difference to the situation in Iraq where there was no surrender and the ruling government completely dismantled. There is also the fact that Japan, unlike Iraq, had a tradition of democracy to look back to. Iraq has not experienced democratic rule in such a way to significantly influence the events now shaping the country.\textsuperscript{34}

Looking next to Germany, there are several important distinctions to be made when discussing Iraq. To begin with, Germany also had some form of civil society/government institutions to fall back on in the way that Japan did. There was no armed resistance inside the country that took up arms against the Allies in the way that is currently happening in Iraq. Related to this point is the important factor that states neighboring Germany were not centers of terrorism, or active resistance to the allies in the same way that Iraq’s neighbors are today.

Germany is also quite different from Iraq in that Germany was decidedly split into East and West. While the break-up of the Iraqi state has always been a concern of the


\textsuperscript{34} Remarks by Middle East specialist, Adeed Dawisha during a lecture given as Ohio University’s Contemporary History Institute Spring 2005 speaker series.
U.S. and neighboring countries, Iraq will most likely not follow in Germany’s path in this respect. Germany’s split also introduced a new factor into the equation as it put more pressure on West Germany to cooperate with the Allies to avoid Soviet intervention. This was an important dynamic in Germany’s reconstruction, and it is one that is not present inside Iraq.

On March 3, 2004, a panel of scholars gathered at Harvard University with the hopes of clarifying questions about Iraq and how it relates to Japan and Germany. The panel included John Dower, a distinguished history professor at MIT, Charles Maier, a History professor at Harvard, and Middle East expert Eva Bellin, associate professor of Political Science at Hunter College. The panel discussed many different facets of the issue, bringing to the forefront the similarities as well as the differences. Bellin, though perhaps summed up her thinking in the most succinct manner of the entire panel when she stated:

"Japan and Germany were akin to a firm whose building has burned down and that needed an infusion of capital to get started again. Iraq is like a firm that is putting a business together for the first time, and, as we know, 70 percent of all new businesses fail."35

2.5 A Final Look

All of the domestic and regional issues are quite important and many of the works cited, especially works by Feldman for example, are very important. However, the

35 More can be found in the April 2004 edition of The Harvard Gazette, the paper can be found on line at http://www.hno.harvard.edu/gazette
following chapters will reveal that while important, the arguments mentioned here are not enough. The wild card that is left out of the existing literature is the United States and the extent of its involvement inside Iraq. The role of the United States must be examined and incorporated into the literature in a way that goes beyond that which already exists. Several of the authors hint at the role of the West and the United States, but not in the way that the remaining chapters of this thesis will. Without acknowledging this crucial factor, the works cited in this chapter (even when applied to Iraq) can only operate slightly out of the proper context. After a chapter examining Iraq’s ethnic groups, the following chapters will address major events in Iraq history starting with its war with Iran and moving forward, while examining the way in which the United States specifically undermined democratic ideals.
Chapter Three

Iraq’s Ethnic Groups

One of the main factors that will influence Iraq’s future is how its different ethnic groups will interact with each other in the new post-Saddam era. Although the Hussein government arguably contributed to ethnic tensions more than previous governments, these tensions have always been an issue in Iraq and have historical roots that predate the creation of the Iraqi state. Focusing on a topic like ethnic relations may seem more closely related to the state level of analysis. While the topic is well suited for that level of analysis, the way in which the U.S. contributed to ethnic tensions also means the topic is appropriate when analyzing the international level.

The goal of this chapter is to provide a brief historical background of Iraq’s three main ethnic groups. Who they are, what makes them different from each other, and how the relationship among the groups have influenced Iraq throughout its history as a state will all be discussed below. This chapter is necessary because understanding events that are discussed later in this research is dependent on a basic understanding of Iraq’s ethnic groups. Without this understanding, an event such as the al-Anfal campaign for example (discussed in Chapter Four), might not seem as significant as it actually is. While this chapter can in no way completely cover all of the complexities involved with Iraq’s ethnic groups, the information presented should provide the proper context for the remaining chapters.

There are three main ethnic groups in Iraq: Shi’a Arabs, Sunni Arabs, and Sunni Kurds. These are the three largest ethnic groups inside Iraq, but to simply describe Iraq
in terms of these three groups is an oversimplification as there are other minorities, and none of the three main groups function as a cohesive political unit. Throughout the course of researching Iraq’s ethnic intricacies, a clear line is drawn between scholars that recognize how complex this topic is, and those who simply envision Iraq partitioned into three unified, well-defined sections. All attempts will be made in this research to respect these complexities, but the overall focus lies on the U.S. role in Iraq and not ethnic tensions exclusively.

Beyond the three main groups, approximately three percent of the population is comprised of ethnic Turks (Turkomons), Assyrian Christians, and various Yezidi tribes, all of whom are located in the Northern part of the country. These groups experience the same issues that the rest of the population does, but unfortunately due to scope of this research, they cannot be discussed here.

3.1 Shi’a Arabs

Comprising around 60% of the population, the Shi’a would dominate Iraq were it to develop into a truly representative democracy. Even though they surprisingly failed to win an absolute majority in the 2005 elections, a coalition of Shi’a parties have effectively come to power in Iraq for the first time in its history. Their majority status, however, does not make the Shi’a a single, cohesive sector of the population. Throughout the history of the Iraqi state, the Shi’a have been successfully manipulated

---

and neutralized by the ruling Sunni government by way of patronage, and through direct intimidation.

Their historically repressed status notwithstanding, some Middle East scholars believe that an increasing sense of modernity and support from predominantly Shi’a Iran will result in the Shi’a becoming a highly politicized sector of the population that will no longer be ignored and repressed, and that representation of the Shi’a will become the most prominent problem to face Iraq in the years to come. Some scholars however, point to the fact that because effective field research was severely limited under Hussein’s police state, the current state of the Shi’a is difficult to ascertain and thus the future will be difficult to predict.

Most importantly to begin with is a short description of how the Shi’a differs from the Sunnis. There is no distinct ethnic identity, nor is there any type of sociological difference associated with the Shi’a in the way that exists with the Kurds. The only way that Iraq’s majority group can be separated from the dominant Sunni minority is the type of Islam that they practice. This Shi’a/Sunni conflict is almost as old as Islam itself and is still an important issue in the Muslim world today. The split between the Shi’a and the Sunnis resulted from a disagreement over who was to become caliph and lead the Muslim community after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in A.D. 632. The Shi’a believed that Muhammad’s son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib should be the Prophet’s successor since

---

37 One of the most comprehensive bodies of research that examines how the Iraqi state, in all of its various forms, has controlled the Shi’a is Charles Tripp’s *History of Iraq*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002.
39 Jabar, p. 32.
he had the closest ties to Muhammad by blood and by marriage. The Shi’a further content that only people who were direct descendants from Muhammad and his family could rightly lead the Muslim community. The Sunni on the other hand believed that the community should choose the position of successor.\textsuperscript{40} This is what began the generations old conflict between Shi’a and Sunni.

The schism was worsened by Ali’s failed attempts to assume a leadership role due to Sunni blockage. Ali did finally assume the position of caliph in A.D. 656, but was murdered five years later. This was bad enough for Shi’a/Sunni relations, but Ali was succeeded by Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan who was hated by the Shi’a because of his opposition to Muhammad. The Shi’a then turned their hopes towards Muhammad’s granddaughters, Hassan and Hussein. Hussein was highly revered by the Shi’a and was later poisoned by the despised Muawiya.\textsuperscript{41}

As time progressed, the Shi’a became a relatively unorganized and divided group, and the Sunnis were able to exploit this to their own benefit. This was achieved by maintaining divides between the Shi’a religious leadership and the mass population. The Sunnis feared that if the two became organized and focused on the goal of controlling the country, they would have little to no problem overwhelming the Sunni minority. The Sunnis rightly feared this unification; it is happening in Iraq today to some extent and may create enough momentum to completely alter the historic nature of Iraqi ethno-political relations.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{41} Anderson & Stansfield, pp. 120-21.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid. p.121.
Lastly, one of the starkest differences between the Shi’a and Iraq’s other repressed minority, the Kurds, is that the Shi’a are traditionally more nationalistic than the Kurds. Put simply, for Shi’a the problem is not the legitimacy of the Iraqi state (the problem for many Kurds), but rather its identity. Their willingness to die in massive numbers during the Iran-Iraq war (even though the war itself was not popular) speaks to the fact that most Shi’a consider themselves Iraqis. This may prove to be one of the biggest issues in post-Saddam Iraq; how to deal with such a large portion of the population that demands to be an active participant in the state. This also creates a delicate problem for the U.S. when dealing with the other Sunni-dominated Arab governments, namely Saudi Arabia, that may become agitated if Iraq were to become a Shi’a-dominated state.

3.2 Sunni Arabs

The Sunnis of Iraq occupy a peculiar position inside the state. Although the terms “Sunni Arabs and “Iraqi government” seem to be synonymous with each other, one should not be led to believe that the Sunnis as an ethnic group inside Iraq have lived an easy life, especially under Saddam’s rule. It is true that Sunnis held the vast majority of powerful positions in the government and military. This means that other Sunnis were in the best position to overthrow the President, and Hussein knew this. Hussein was the architect of a brutally efficient police state and also an extremely paranoid person that never hesitated to purge the military or government of those he felt were not loyal to him. When these purges happened, those killed were likely to be Sunnis.

43 Jabar, Chapters 1 & 2.
While Shi’a and Kurdish repression has been publicized at great lengths, the majority of the Sunnis experienced similar hardships and were subject to the same state-sponsored terror that the other groups were. In fact, the case could be convincingly made that Sunnis were perhaps in the worst possible position of the ethnic groups because they are geographically located in and around Baghdad, which is where Hussein’s control was most pronounced. Careful searching has revealed many scholarly and political analyses of the Kurds and the Shi’a, but repeated searches for a book devoted solely to the Sunnis of Iraq were all fruitless.

That being said, perhaps the only stable aspect of Iraqi society over the last century has been Sunni dominance. This is a tradition that also predates the Iraqi state. Sunni dominance can be traced back to the death of the Prophet Mohammed, which means that the Sunnis have controlled the territory now known as Iraq for the past 1500 years. During the period of British rule up until independence in 1958, the Sunnis were the favored group and subsequently given authority by the British to control the country. After achieving independence, the decades-long struggle for power that followed resulted in the rise of the Sunni-dominated Baath party. The Baathists were a brutal, but efficient and stable force that continued the tradition of Sunni dominance.

The Sunnis are a minority in Iraq that comprises roughly twenty percent of the population, but they are a majority in the Arab Muslim world. This has provided a rough nationalist link between Iraq’s ruling group and the rest of the Arab world. This association with Sunni dominance and Arab nationalism continued throughout Saddam

---

44 Anderson & Stansfield, pp. 120-21.
Hussein’s government and would serve to aggravate tensions between Iraq and neighboring Iran, which is ethnically Persian and where the Shi’a are the majority religious group.

As with the Shi’a of Iraq, it is a mistake to refer to the Sunnis as a cohesive, homogenous group. They also suffer from internal divisions that have been historically marked by violence. This is due to the fact that once the Shi’a and Kurds had been successfully disenfranchised, there was still the matter of which group of Sunnis would rule Iraq. Keep in mind Iraq’s violent history of coups and coup attempts. Up until the relatively free and fair elections of January 2005, every Iraqi government had come to power at the point of a gun. This means that a long and detailed history of violence exists among the Sunni of Iraq.

3.3 Sunni Kurds

“History is said to be written by the victors, and that has meant the Kurds’ enemies.”

-Jonathon C. Randal

Perhaps there is no greater tragedy from the arbitrarily created national borders in the region than what has happened to the Kurds. Ethnic Kurds are an Indo-European people that are spread out over the territories of Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria, and comprise a minority in every one of these states. They are distinct from their Arab, Turkic, and Iranian neighbors and speak their own Kurdish language (with several dialects). In Iraq, they account for roughly seventeen percent of the total population. On

---

top of being the smallest of the three main ethnic groups in Iraq, the Kurds are a non-Arab minority in an Arab state. The Kurds are also quite possibly the largest distinct ethnic group without their own state in the world.

The Kurds in Iraq have been neutralized in the same way that the Shi’a have been, by division. The Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) aided Abdel Karim Qassim in overthrowing the Iraqi monarchy in 1958, but became the victim of policies pursued by Qassim to divide the strength of the Kurds and provoke infighting. These mostly included land reforms that created serious conflicts among the Kurds that destroyed the existing political alliances between the various tribes. This is but one specific example of how the Kurds have been manipulated in the past. Due to the fact that the Kurds lack any institutionalized power of their own, they have always been at the mercy of the states trying to influence the region. In the past, the Kurds in Iraq have been allied with the U.S., the Hussein regime, and Iran. Each time an alliance was forged, the Kurds were sacrificed in the end.\(^{46}\)

There are two main Kurdish parties in Iraq. The KDP headed by Masud Barzani is the older of the two parties and is based in the northern-most part of Iraq bordering Turkey. The other main party is the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), headed by the newly appointed President of Iraq, Jalal Talabani, which operates near the Iranian border. These two parties have had a long history of opposition to one another ever since the more urban PUK split from the rural, tribal based KDP in 1975.\(^{47}\) The Baathist government of Iraq could not have asked for a bigger gift; now the Kurds were actually split into separate groups, making their exploitation that much easier.

---


Being at the mercy of various states usually hostile to their interests is a big enough obstacle. But for the Kurds in Iraq particularly, an even bigger obstacle is the constant infighting among the various factions. The KDP and PUK have constantly entered into various agreements with neighboring countries, and even Hussein himself to secure their prospective hegemony in the region, but to no avail. Talabani even went so far as to publicly embrace Hussein after negotiations were made at the closing of the first Gulf War.\textsuperscript{48} Constant jockeying for power between the groups has always existed in some form or another. The latest conflict actually reached the levels of what was classified as a civil war by many analysts. This war occurred after Iraq was expelled from Kuwait in 1991 and lasted throughout the mid-nineties, jeopardizing U.S. attempts to destabilize the Iraqi regime.\textsuperscript{49}

Even with these internal divisions, the Kurds can definitely be classified as the rebels of the region. They have resisted assimilation or total destruction by Iraq and Turkey (and each other), and have proved to be quite resilient in nature. This is in part due to their distinct culture, and also to favorable geography. The Kurds in Iraq and Turkey are fortunate enough to live in mountainous regions that make invading the Kurds’ home quite troublesome for hostile governments. This reality is even reflected in the title of a study on the Kurds, Bulloch & Morris’ \textit{No Friends But the Mountains}.

If the Kurds can put aside their differences now that a better future seems like a distinct possibility, they may finally achieve the ever-elusive dream of an independent Kurdish state. To be sure, the country of Kurdistan may still be many years from

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, p. 376.
\textsuperscript{49} Michael M. Gunter, \textit{The Kurdish Predicament in Iraq: A Political Analysis}, St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1999, Chapter Four.
existence in a legal/political sense, but some would say the foundation is being laid in
Iraq today.

3.4 Neighboring Countries

The problems Iraq faces inside the country in regard to ethnic tensions are
significant enough on their own. But the unfortunate reality is that other neighboring
countries could potentially become involved if events unfold in a certain way. If a
conflict were to happen, this is a problem that will most likely concern the Kurds, but it
could also become an issue with the Shi’a as well.

As mentioned above, the Kurds are a minority group in Iraq, Syria, Iran, and
Turkey. The possibility of the Kurds declaring independence and creating their own
country has always been a constant problem for U.S. policy makers. The stated objective
for the U.S. that Iraq maintains its territorial integrity has been pursued vociferously for
the past thirty years, sometimes to the detriment of the Kurds themselves.\footnote{A perfect example of this is the failed uprising after Saddam Hussein’s defeat in the first Gulf War. When it looked as if the Kurds and Shi’a might be successful in overthrowing the dictator, the U.S. chose not to aid the rebels for fear of the country breaking apart. For a more detailed description, see Chapter Five.}

Kurdish independence is also a concern for Iraq’s neighbors. Neither Syria, Iran,
nor Turkey want to see a situation in Iraq that could cause their own Kurdish minorities
to start demanding more representation, or even worse, declare independence. While the
U.S. is unlikely to be sympathetic to “axis of evil” member Iran and “junior varsity axis
of evil” member Syria, Washington’s biggest problem lies with Turkey. Turkey
undoubtedly treats their Kurds the worst out of the three neighboring states, banning the
use of the Kurdish language and even denying the existence of a distinct nationality by
commonly referring to their Kurds as “mountain Turks.” The problem is that Turkey is seen as a vital ally in the region and Washington has done little, if anything to address the treatment of the Kurds in Turkey. The U.S. has even gone so far as to continually increase aid to Turkey even as it was conducting “search and destroy” missions in Northern Iraq to combat members of the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK), a separatist group engaged in a limited civil war in Eastern Turkey.

Finally, one of the potential problems that theoretically exists, but has received next to no attention, is the potential for Iraq’s ethnic makeup to change. This problem involves neighboring countries and is ironically, the opposite of a feared outcome from the latest U.S. invasion. That is, what were to happen if Kurds from other countries were to immigrate to Iraq? This of course involves a huge amount of speculation, but when the country begins to stabilize, the Kurds of Iraq may have created a situation where they sit in positions of power in the government. Kurds in Turkey, Syria, or Iran may decide that instead of being a persecuted minority in their own country, they should move to Iraq and actually have a say in how their country is run.

If this were to happen, Kurds in Iraq could suddenly represent 30% or even 40% of the country’s population. All discussion of Iraq’s future has been based around the premise of a Shi’a majority. What happens if the majority shrinks to only a plurality? Will Iraq’s constitution allow for fluctuations in the ethnic makeup of the country? Even though the process is in its infancy, the constitution of Iraq will without a doubt include references to the different ethnic groups and how power is to be shared among them.

---

While the likelihood of a sudden or gradual surge of one group’s population is uncertain, it is possible and another Middle Eastern country has had to deal with the very same issue. Lebanon’s population is also divided among three distinct ethnic groups. Lebanon’s population consists of Christians, Muslims, and Druze and its state structure is flexible enough to allow for changing demographics. Lebanon’s is a model that could be potentially useful for Iraq.

The other potential problem with a neighboring country involves Iran and its links to the Shi’a population in southern Iraq. Two members of the diverse Shi’a coalition that effectively “won” the January 2005 elections are the Da’wa Party and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). These two parties are openly Islamic and have existed inside Iraq for several decades, despite many attempts by Hussein to eliminate them. These parties also have close links to, and are partly based in Iran.\textsuperscript{53} One of Washington’s fears for the aftermath of the invasion was attempts by Iran to influence events in Iraq, either by indirect means or by actually trying to seize Iraqi territory. This has not happened as of yet, but by way of these parties, Iran has much more influence over Iraqi politics than Washington may have originally planned.

If Iran never attempts this land grab, then problems related to territory with the Shi’a of Iraq are unlikely to occur. The Shi’a are standing at the doorstep of political control, something they’ve never had in the past. Whether or not democracy takes hold in Iraq is besides the point for this particular issue. The Kurds have an incentive to strive for independence because their chances for completely controlling the Iraqi state are slim.

\textsuperscript{53} Jabar, pp. 239-249.
But the Shi’a on the other hand are in control of their country and have no incentive to alter its geography.

### 3.5 A Final Look

Thankfully, many of the pessimistic predictions of some war critics have not yet occurred. A civil war among Iraq’s ethnic groups has not broken out and there has not been a mass exodus of Kurds fleeing the country the way they did after the first Gulf War. While the absence of such events should be cause for celebration, becoming overly optimistic about ethnic relations would be a mistake.

To begin with, the elections of 2005 saw a disappointingly low turnout among the Sunni population. While the ongoing insurgency in Iraq, which is most intense in Sunni dominated areas, certainly contributed to low turnout, it is not the only factor. Sunnis are now experiencing a new Iraq where the possibility exists for the Shi’a to institutionalize their version of Islam. Even though a group that comprises only 20% of the population should not be able to impose their will on the remaining 80%, they are entitled to a stake in how a democratic Iraq should function and should be protected as a minority in the country.

There is also a significant problem involving the Kurds that has roots during the Hussein regime and has received little to no attention in the U.S. press. Put briefly, during the series of back and forth negotiation between the Kurds and Hussein during the 70’s and early 80’s, Kurdish representation in the government was to be determined in part by population statistics. On the surface of these talks, it appeared that Hussein was

---

making genuine concessions to the Kurds, but after agreements had been reached Hussein began “Arabizing” Kurdish areas by forcibly settling Sunnis farther north to dilute the Kurdish population. Now that Hussein is gone, the Kurds have already made attempts to expel those Arabs that were transferred to what they see as their territory. This has not evolved into a crisis yet, but the potential is certainly there.

This is one area where the U.S. can and should exercise its influence to ensure that a balance is achieved because the most likely problem Iraq will face in the future is one involving ethnic tensions. Unfortunately, the U.S. record up until this point has been less than perfect. Discussions of the “Salvador Option” have surfaced in mainstream media lately, which, if implemented could be disastrous for Iraq. A more detailed discussion of the Salvador Option can be found in Chapter Seven, but it is worth noting here at the end of the chapter dealing with Iraq’s ethnic groups that the U.S. and Iraq are not out of the proverbial woods yet.

There are still many ethnically related problems that could materialize on Iraq’s road to a democratic future. The problems will certainly affect how Iraq builds its new democracy, and how the state will be structured. However, these problems not only affect Iraqis, but the U.S. and neighboring countries as well, therefore placing the issue of ethnic relations in the international level of analysis as well as at the state level. As the following chapters will demonstrate, how the U.S. chooses to intervene will have a significant effect on how these problems are addressed.

---

Figure 2.1. The Ethnic Makeup of Iraq
Chapter Four

War with Iran

The Shatt al Arab (lit., The Arab River) begins at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Qurna, Iraq. The river then flows south to form a fluvial border between Iraq and Iran before emptying into the Persian Gulf. Quarrelling since the mid-1850’s over this waterway, at one point it measures a mere 75 yards wide, by numerous Iraqi and Iranian governments would lead to the outbreak of war between the two Gulf neighbors in 1980.\textsuperscript{56} It is this conflict that would serve to draw the United States further into the politics and geography of the Middle East than it had ever been before.

Because of the increased U.S. presence in the Gulf that resulted, the Iran-Iraq War will mark the starting point for the international level based analysis described in Chapter 2. After a brief section explaining the roots of the war, the focus of the research is to scrutinize the U.S. role in the conflict and identify its implications. Events impacting the population as a result of the war that also complicated ethnic relations in Iraq, like the issue of conscription into the armed forces, will also be discussed.

The root of the conflict revolved around the issue of border demarcation between the two countries. Since achieving independence in 1932, Iraq claimed sovereignty over the entire river, while Iran insisted that the \textit{thawleg} (or median) principle be applied, which would essentially split the Shatt al Arab down the middle, with each country controlling half of the river.

The most recent instance in which the Shatt again became an issue before the outbreak of the war was the signing of the Algiers Accord on March 6, 1975. At this time, Iraq was bogged down in a civil war being fought between the Baathist government and the Iranian-backed Kurdish insurgents in the North. As the fighting wore on, both countries began to realize the long-term damage to their oil industries that could take place. Since neither country was willing to accept these costs, they encouraged mediation from neighboring Turkey and also Algeria.

The resulting truce, signed by the Shah of Iran and then Iraqi Vice President Saddam Hussein, would be integrated into the Iran-Iraq Treaty of International Boundaries and Good Neighborliness, which was ratified by both countries on September 17, 1975. The treaty incorporated Iran’s demand that sovereignty over the Shatt al Arab be split between the two countries, thus taking advantage of Iraq’s weakened state at the hands of Kurdish rebels. The signing of the Accord left Iraq’s leadership divided, with some factions, most notably the military, extremely upset at the concessions made to Iran.\footnote{Dilip Hiro, \textit{Neighbors, Not Friends: Iraq and Iran After the Gulf Wars}, Routledge, New York, 2001, Introduction.}

When the Islamic Revolution succeeded in removing the Shah from power in the spring of 1979, Saddam Hussein saw an opportunity to fully assert his power, after formally securing the office of the Presidency several months later. According to Iraqi historian Charles Tripp, Baghdad viewed revolutionary Iran as volatile, but also weak. Much of its armed forces had been swept away or reorganized after the Revolution, and in some ways, Iran appeared disorganized in the same way that Iraq was only five months earlier, a condition that forced Baghdad into accepting the compromises in the Algiers Accord.
Accord. Envisioning a swift victory over a perceived weaker enemy to reestablish Iraq’s hegemony in the region and to finally settle in Iraqi eyes the issue of the Shatt al Arab (which was never fully accepted by the Baath Party), Hussein made his move.

During a televised speech to the Iraqi National Assembly, on September 17, 1980, Hussein boldly proclaimed that Iran was in violation of the Algiers Accord by backing and financing the Kurdish insurgents, thus intervening in Iraq’s domestic affairs. He then tore up Iraq’s copies of the Algiers Accord as well as Iran-Iraq Treaty of International Boundaries and Good Neighborliness. In doing so, Hussein proclaimed that Iraq regained full sovereignty over the Shatt al Arab. From the Iraqi perspective, this meant that all Iranian ships using the waterways must engage Iraqi pilots and fly the Iraqi flag. Tehran refused, and five days after Hussein’s abrogation of the treaty, Iraq began bombing Iranian military and economic targets and invaded Iranian territory in multiple locations.

This daring move, described by Gulf security expert Shahram Chubin as one “motivated by opportunism and overconfidence that sought to draw revolutionary Iran into a bloody competition between neighboring autocrats’ circles of power,” would also draw the United States into the region. Replacing Great Britain as the biggest Western presence in the Gulf, the United States would assume a remarkably similar role, attempting to balance the myriad of opposing forces and interests in the region while maintaining its own.

The war with Iran would last for eight years. It extracted a tremendous human toll for both countries, while not settling any of the major issues that led to the war’s

---

outbreak, most notably the question of the Shat al Arab. While both regimes survived the conflict, they were changed in several respects. Middle East scholar Dilip Hiro notes that had Saddam not invaded Iran, the Islamic Republic would have likely slipped into a civil war, but because of the conflict, the Iranian regime was able to mobilize its population and consolidate the revolution.⁶¹

The remainder of this chapter examines how the war unfolded and how it finished. Close attention will be paid to how the United States crafted its policy, as well as the repercussions felt by the Iraqi population.

4.1 U.S. Involvement

Since the “renewed” interest in Iraq after September 11, much has been made of Iraq’s relationship with the United States during its war with Iran. The now famous meeting of then Middle East envoy Donald Rumsfeld and Saddam Hussein (see picture below) has been used by some to imply somehow that the United States and the Iraqi dictator were close friends. This is an ingenuous characterization of America’s relationship with the Iraqi dictator. The actual nature of the relationship, discussed below, simply serves to demonstrate the uncontroversial reality of how states, especially powerful ones, behave. It is precisely this reality that will do more at this point in time to determine Iraq’s future than perhaps anything else. This reality is what is focused on and demonstrated during this chapter and throughout the rest of this research. While the analysis of the war and subsequent events are of a condensed nature by any standards, the

goal is to construct an overall tapestry of U.S. policy, in order to draw conclusions that demonstrate why the international level of analysis is so important when discussing Iraq.

Figure 4.1. Middle East Envoy Rumsfeld and Saddam Hussein in Baghdad, December 20 1983


The United States suffered a substantial loss in the region when the pro-Western Shah of Iran fell to Islamic revolutionaries in 1979. Desperate to contain this new hostile force in the region, the United States turned to secular Iraq. The United States had officially restored diplomatic relations with Iraq in November 1984. But support for the Baathist regime had begun in 1982 (despite official claims of neutrality) in the form of military and intelligence aid, pursuant to policy directives from President Reagan, following his March 1982 National Security Study Memorandum that was to review U.S.
policy toward the Middle East. The United States also took the significant step in
February 1982 of removing Iraq from the State Department’s list of states supporting
international terrorism. This was coupled with U.S. pressure on the Export/Import Bank
to provide Iraq with aid and to enhance Iraq’s credit standing in order for the country to
receive aid from other international financial institutions.

According to National Security Archives, the U.S. also considered taking
significant steps towards helping Iraq develop a nuclear capability. The documents
reveal that the U.S. was reconsidering the policy of selling Iraq dual-use items (which
could be used in unconventional weapons production) as well as “expanding trade to
include Iraqi nuclear entities.” According to administration rhetoric and Presidential
Directives, a general condemnation of unconventional weapons was issued, but Iraq was
never mentioned specifically, and no moves were made to seriously challenge Iraq’s
tactics during the war.

4.3 The War of Attrition 1984-88

Benefiting from American aid, in 1984 Iraq was inflicting serious damage on
Iran’s oil industry. These attacks not only inflicted damage on Iran’s economy, but it
also upset the balance of the international oil industry, making some Western countries
apprehensive. This in turn led to an increased Western presence in the Gulf. While

Joyce Battle, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 82, February 28, 2003. Available at
http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB82/
Ibid.
Ibid.
Ibid.
France and Great Britain also had a presence in the area, it was the introduction of U.S. naval forces that would prove most significant.\footnote{Tripp, p. 239.}

After the American vessel \textit{USS Stark} was “accidentally” hit by Iraqi missiles in May 1987, the U.S. presence in the Gulf increased rapidly.\footnote{Iraq officially apologized for the attack (which killed 37 U.S. sailors), and would pay compensation to the U.S. However, according to Historian Phebe Marr, some in the U.S. felt that the attack was Iraqi retribution for the IranGate-Contra scandal.} Increasingly nervous about the hostile activity taking place in the Gulf, Kuwait would approach the U.S., asking it to re-flag its own vessels under the U.S. banner for protection. After the Soviet Union offered its help to Kuwait, the U.S. quickly agreed to intervene, lest the Soviets gain a foothold in the Gulf. During these last years leading up to the end of the war, confrontations between Iran and the United States increased, with the U.S. actively fighting on the side of Iraq.

Events in the region came to a head in the summer of 1988 when the U.S. shot down an Iranian commercial airliner, killing all 290 civilians on board. The U.S. claimed that the shooting was a mistake, stating that it “deeply regretted the incident.”\footnote{George Wilson, \textit{The Washington Post}, “Navy Missile Downs Iranian Jetliner on 4th of July,” July 4, 1988, p. A1.} The apology came with a disclaimer however; Washington pressed that since Iran let the airliner take off from an airfield also used by military aircraft, and that it had flown over the scene of recent combat, Iran was partly to blame for the incident.\footnote{Hiro, \textit{The Longest War}, p. 240.}

The downing of the Iranian airliner coupled with Iraq’s continued use of chemical weapons without reprise created the sufficient conditions for Iran’s capitulation. Rather than escalate the confrontation with the U.S. in the Gulf, in July 1988, the Islamic
Republic agreed to the ceasefire outlined in UN Security Council Resolution 598, which was passed unanimously by the Council in July 1987.

4.4 The Anfal Campaign & Other Chemical Attacks

The charge that “Saddam gassed his own people” was given at every possible opportunity by the Bush administration in 2002-03 as a justification for removing Hussein from power. The claim is perfectly accurate. Saddam’s gassing of the Kurds in 1987-88 during the Al-Anfal (lit., the spoils of war) is a well-documented event that shows just how brutal the Baathist regime had become. What was omitted from the lead-up to war was the U.S. response after the gassings occurred. This is perhaps the most important event for the purposes of this research as it demonstrates the degree to which the U.S. has tolerated what can only be described as genocide in order to preserve stability. The U.S. response is discussed in this section, while the severity in nature of the campaign and its impacts are discussed in a later section.

Initial reaction to news of the gassing by the U.S. government was mixed. Some members of Congress expressed outrage over the events, but at the highest levels of the executive branch officials admitted that any feelings of opposition towards Iraq were weak, in large part because “there was too much animus against Iran to allow for effective protests.”*70* This stance was nothing new. Iran had been registering complaints of Iraqi chemical weapons attacks with the United Nations since 1983 and the U.S. also

---

had intelligence detailing Iraq’s “almost daily” use of chemical weapons, but international isolation again kept Iran from receiving sympathy.

U.S. inaction due to hostilities towards Iran was taken a step further, when it increased aid to Iraq following the gassings. Since the scorched-earth nature of the attack had damaged much of Iraq’s northern food-producing areas, Washington offered subsidized food and agricultural supplies, to “put the U.S. in a better position to deal with Iraqi human rights abuses.” The Bush administration would oppose Congressional efforts to impose sanctions on Iraq for the gassings, calling any action “premature,” while also stating that sanctions would “hurt U.S. exporters and worsen our trade deficit.”

The U.S. response (or lack of one) to Anfal is important to the development of democracy in Iraq because of the perceptions it created. It is unreasonable to suggest that U.S. actions during this time of severe crisis for the Kurds did not further damage Kurdish willingness to deal with the U.S. While the true extent of the damage cannot be measured, it is important to keep in mind that Anfal happened only seventeen years ago. As discussed in Chapter Three, the U.S. and the Kurds were already involved in a somewhat rocky relationship. An event as massive as this that the majority of living Kurds have firsthand knowledge of is an incredible barrier for effective cooperation in building democratic institutions.

---

71 Battle, NSA documents.
73 Assistant Secretary of State John Kelly at a Congressional panel in June 1990.
4.5 U.S. Senators Meet Saddam

Several years after the gassing of the Kurds occurred, a delegation of U.S. Senators met with Hussein in April 1990. The bipartisan group was led by Republican Majority Leader Bob Dole and included Senators Alan Simpson, Howard Metzenbaum, James McClure, and Frank Murkowski. The meeting occurred at a time when Iraq was being criticized by the U.S. press for human rights abuses, threats to Israel, and the government’s hanging of a British journalist accused of espionage. In this meeting, the Senators assured Hussein that President Bush supported their visit to Baghdad, and that Iraq’s problem was not with the U.S. government, but rather with the “haughty and pampered press.” Senator Alan Simpson advised Hussein to “invite them to come here and see for themselves.” Senator Metzenbaum added his opinion during the meeting that he perceived Hussein to be a “strong and intelligent man that wants peace.”

This meeting is a significant event for the purposes of this research and how it relates to the international level of analysis. After everything that happened during the war, after the chemical weapons attacks, and after the genocidal campaign against the Kurds that Washington effectively ignored, the U.S. government still met with Hussein in the Kurdish city of Mosul to state that Iraq’s problems were with the Western media, not the U.S. government.

4.6 Implications for the Population

There are many different ways that the war with Iran impacted the Iraqi population. Some of the events were simply byproducts of the war itself, while other

important events were tied to U.S. policy during the war. This section will discuss the ways in which the war affected the Iraqi population, with particular focus on how the war affected Iraq’s tense ethnic relations.

The Anfal Campaign & Repression of the Kurds

The gassing of the Kurds was highly significant from the perspective of how the U.S. dealt with Iraq, but it also sent reverberations throughout Iraq’s domestic arena as well. As far as the basic issue of the number of people killed, experts estimate that anywhere from 50,000 to 100,000 Kurds were killed throughout the campaign, the vast majority of them civilians. In addition to those killed, an estimated 4,000 villages were destroyed and as many as 1.5 million people were forcibly displaced.\(^\text{76}\) Even for a regime well known for its brutality, the Anfal campaign set a new standard for state-sponsored terrorism.

Beyond the alarmingly large number of civilians killed is the psychological impact that Anfal had on the Kurds and the rest of the population. To begin with, the campaign demonstrated the government’s willingness to punish those it saw as hostile to the regime. Any future attempts to dislodge the Baath party would be colored with the memory of what happened to the Kurds. Also an issue was the alienation that most Kurds were sure to have felt in the years after Anfal.\(^\text{77}\) The event no doubt created an increased desire to achieve Kurdish independence, while at the same time making the Kurds increasingly apprehensive about carrying out subversive activities.


\(^{77}\) Ibid.
Repression of the Shi’a

Although the Shi’a escaped an Anfal-type disaster, the Baathist regime also took steps to manipulate and repress them during all phases of the war. Some of the more notable examples include Hussein’s repeated expulsions of Shi’a to Iran, due to their “Persian” background, numbering an estimated 40,000 in the first year of the war alone.\textsuperscript{78} 1980 also marked the year when Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr was executed in response to an attempt on the life of Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz by the Shi’a groups Al-Da’wa, Jund al-Imam and the Islamic Task Organization. Iraqi historian Charles Tripp notes the significance of this event as it marked “the first time that so senior a cleric had been killed and was an ominous indicator of the regime’s determination to force the Shi’as leaders into a posture of obedience.”\textsuperscript{79}

Related in some respects to the repression of the Shi’a is the topic of conscription into Iraq’s armed forces. Comprising the majority of Iraq’s population, and also taking into account the general hostility towards the government displayed by the Kurds, the Shi’a were affected by this practice more than any other group inside Iraq. However, throughout the war, as a result of a mixture of national pride and also concerted efforts by the Iraqi government to encourage division among the community through patronage and deportation, the Shi’a were reluctantly forced into fighting Saddam’s war.

Iraq’s Middle Class

Arguably the most significant impact of the war on the population at large was the devastation suffered by Iraq’s prosperous middle class. Before the war, Iraq’s population

\textsuperscript{78} Tripp, p. 228. 
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
was beginning to benefit greatly from a vast increase in social spending, due to the increase in oil prices in the late seventies. In 1972, Iraq’s oil export revenues totaled $1 billion. In the months preceding the war this figure would jump to $33 billion. Much of this revenue would increasingly be used to pay for the execution and reconstruction of the war. Total estimated cost of reconstruction after the war was placed at $230 billion, with oil export revenues only reaching $13 billion, coupled with an $80 billion foreign debt to the surrounding Gulf monarchies.

This was how things looked for Iraqis who stayed in Iraq. This time period also marked a mass exodus of intellectuals and professionals from Iraq due to the deteriorating economic and political situation inside the country. This departure would greatly inhibit Iraq’s ability to rebuild after the war. Some of these exiles would leave for the United States and Europe with plans of eventually returning to overthrow the Baathist regime. This topic in particular will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

Closing of the Shatt al Arab

Lastly, in what would seem to be a minor incident on the surface, due to accumulated wartime debris, sunken ships, and the possibility of contamination from chemical weapons (the river had not been dredged in eight years), Iraq lost its ability to use the Shatt al Arab as a trading lane. This was troubling in one respect since use of the river was one of the main reasons for going to war, but also more importantly because

---

before the war, Iraq used the Shatt al Arab to carry nearly two thirds of Iraq’s non-oil cargo. Its closing would further exacerbate Iraq’s deteriorating economic predicament. Beyond these effects, the closing of the Shatt also served to irritate relations between Iraq and Kuwait. With a coastline of only 36 miles, any disruption of Iraq’s access to the Gulf was a serious problem. The closing brought to the fore Iraq’s ongoing border dispute with Kuwait, which would eventually turn into one of Hussein’s reasons for invading yet another neighboring state, a conflict that will be discussed in the following chapter.

4.7 A Final Look

The Iran-Iraq War is an important event in several respects. First, for the Iraqi population, it marked the beginning of a steep decline in every imaginable way that would continue for the next 25 years. Next, and perhaps more importantly it created the basis for an increasingly complex, interdependent relationship between Washington and Baghdad. This relationship demonstrated that the United States was willing to back undemocratic forces inside the country to achieve its goal of regional stability and also that it was willing (as will be discussed below) to take unilateral, undemocratic actions for the same purpose. Because of these policy choices, the U.S. directly affected the outcome of the war, ensuring that Iran would not emerge victorious. However, even with the aid of the United States, the Soviet Union, and many other countries, Iraq was only able to fight Iran to what amounted to a draw.

---

82 Marr, p. 206.
As the response to the Anfal Campaign discussed above demonstrates, since another issue was perceived to be more important, the population of Iraq could not rely on the United States government to act in their interests. The willingness of the United States to interject itself into Iraqi affairs therefore has a direct link to whether or not democracy can flourish. While the U.S. intervention in the Iran-Iraq War is significant, it is not enough on its own to be a predictor of the future. Events that took place since the war and what role the U.S. played in them must also be analyzed. Chapter Five will examine Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait, and the subsequent war effort led by the United States to expel him.
Chapter 5

Iraq Invades Kuwait

“It's really not a number I'm terribly interested in.”

- General Colin Powell when asked about the number of Iraqis who had died in the war.  
  (Other military sources at the time estimated 100,000 dead Iraqis)

Operation Desert Storm serves as an important point for our discussion of Iraqi democracy because it marked a complete and total departure from previous U.S. policy towards Iraq, as well as the continuation of hardship for the Iraqi population set in motion by the war with Iran. This chapter will recall the events of the 1991 Gulf War, and explore the U.S. role in this conflict and also the repercussions for the people of Iraq.

5.1 The Conflict Begins

On August 2, 1990 Saddam Hussein’s armies invaded neighboring Kuwait following months of tension fueled by numerous disputes. The invasion caught the world off guard; no one (including the United States) had thought Hussein would take over the entire country. The surprise over the event is itself surprising in some respects since Hussein had just invaded a much larger neighbor less than a decade ago. The invasion also marked a drastic change in Iraq’s relationship with the United States. Up until this

---

84 Ibid.
85 Even though her comments most likely influenced Hussein’s final decisions to invade, former U.S. ambassador to Iraq April Glaspie commented to The New York Times that Washington had not expected Iraq would take all of Kuwait. Quoted in The Iraq War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions, edited by Micha Sifry & Christopher Cerf, p. 46.
point the U.S. saw the Iraqi dictatorship as a stabilizing, secular force in a particularly unstable region of the world where religious passions ran high.

The roots of Iraq’s conflict with Kuwait were not entirely a creation of Saddam Hussein to justify an invasion. The two countries have had a longstanding dispute over delineation of borders, dating back to the carve-up of the Middle East by the victors of World War I. It was not until after the end of the war with Iran, when Iraq was deeply in debt to many countries for financing his aggression, that Hussein took issue with Kuwait. The grievances included Kuwait’s alleged over-drilling of the Rumailah oil field that both countries shared, as well as alleged over-production of oil; a move that Hussein viewed as economic warfare against a vulnerable Iraq.

Although Iraq’s dispute with Kuwait was somewhat legitimate, its method of dealing with the dispute was not. It is perfectly clear that the type of unprovoked aggression practiced by Iraq constitutes a war crime in violation of international law. This latest example of Iraqi aggression was remarkably similar to the previous one when Saddam invaded Iran after months of tensions fueled by border disputes. What was not remarkably similar was how the United States and the rest of the world reacted. It was because of this difference that Hussein was set to make the transition from favored satrap to “The Beast of Baghdad.”

Roots of the Conflict

As mentioned above, there were several justifications given by Iraq for invading Kuwait. Let us begin with the matter of border delineation. During the reign of the
Ottoman Empire, the territories now known as Iraq and Kuwait existed as part of that empire. Kuwait formally became part of the Ottoman province of Basra in 1871; Iraq was then created by joining together Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. Hussein claimed that Iraq was reclaiming what had been taken away from her by annexing Kuwait, proclaiming it to be the nineteenth province of Iraq following the imposition of sanctions by the UN.

This justification invites a certain level of scrutiny due to the fact that by the same logic, Turkey could then make territorial claims on Iraq. But looking at the bigger picture, in 1899 Britain officially established Kuwait as a protectorate, thus detaching it from the Ottoman Empire. While the Ottomans did not officially agree to the arrangement, Kuwait was recognized as a distinct state in several international treaties, and when Iraq gained independence in 1932 it signed an international treaty that legitimized the Kuwaiti state. This is not to downplay the fact that the issue has existed since Iraq became a state, but this particular justification did not present as airtight a case as Hussein would have made the world think.

The next Iraqi justification involved the issue of Iraqi debt to Kuwait. As discussed in the previous chapter, Iraq fought Iran largely with Saudi and Kuwaiti money. Iraq made the argument that since Iraq had taken the burden on itself, spilling its own citizens’ blood to protect the Arab world from Iran, that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait should forgive the debt.

Another facet of Iraq’s dispute with Kuwait involved oil. Related to the issue of foreign debt, Iraq accused Kuwait of exceeding its OPEC quotas, keeping oil prices

---

artificially low. For a country with such a vulnerable economy, this was viewed by Hussein as “an act of economic warfare.” Hussein further stated that acts of war “could be waged by military means by sending armies across frontiers, by acts of sabotage, by killing people and by supporting coups d’etat, but war can be also be waged by economic means…and what is happening is war against Iraq.”

5.2 U.S. Involvement

The invasion was presented to the world by the U.S. as a complete and total crisis. President Bush famously stated in his 1991 State of the Union address that “this aggression will not stand,” further articulating the Western stance of indignation that a powerful country would invade a weaker neighbor. Suddenly, Washington policy makers were comparing Hussein to Hitler, and stating that Iraq was poised to take over the entire Middle East. There is some disagreement among Middle East scholars about Hussein’s military capabilities after the war with Iran, but the inescapable fact that is that even with the help of the U.S., the Soviet Union, the Gulf monarchies, and many European countries, Iraq was still only able to fight Iran to a draw. This often overlooked fact does not paint the picture of the next Hitler poised to take over the world. When one takes into consideration the U.S. stance towards Iraq only a few years before, along with the U.S. invasion of Panama less than a year earlier (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Eight), the initial U.S. response to the invasion invites a certain amount of skepticism.

5.3 The Glaspie Meeting

On July 25, 1990, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, met with Saddam Hussein in what would be the last high-level meeting between the two governments before Iraq invaded Kuwait (see Figure 1). This meeting has become very controversial and used by both sides to defend their subsequent actions. The only official transcript of the meeting was produced by the Iraqis, but it has never been refuted by the U.S. What is known about the meeting is that in it, Hussein went through his list of complaints with Kuwait, and that Glaspie criticized the U.S. media for their negative portrayal of the Iraqi regime (much in the same way that Senator Simpson had several months earlier). What would prove to be the most important revelation from the meeting was Glaspie’s admission that while the U.S. was concerned at Iraqi troop movements in the south, “the U.S. has no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait.”

While it is unrealistic to infer from this meeting that the U.S. was giving its approval of the invasion to Iraq, it is fair to say that Glaspie’s comments more likely than not gave Hussein the last push he needed to invade Kuwait; the invasion took place only eight days after the meeting. Looking at the meeting from Hussein’s perspective can perhaps put the meeting in the proper context. The last time Iraq was faced with the opportunity to again invade a neighboring country, they chose to do so and received the aid and support of the United States. The Vice President in the administration that aided Hussein was now the President, and his Ambassador stated that that U.S. did not have an opinion on Arab-Arab conflicts.

---

89 Taken from the complete transcript of the meeting, quoted in Sifry & Cerf, The Gulf War Reader, p. 130.
The misunderstanding that was the Glaspie/Hussein meeting is unfortunate because it *can be* interpreted as tacit U.S. approval. But realistically, the U.S. was more preoccupied with the Soviet Union and the emergence of Germany at that point in time to worry about Iraq. On the other hand however, the U.S. knew perfectly well that Hussein was willing to invade a neighboring country. If more foresight had been exercised, the whole ordeal might have been avoided. Even though the U.S. may deserve a pass on this particular point, analyzing how the U.S. responded to Iraq’s aggression is a better indicator of how the superpower would behave in the post-Cold War era.
5.4 A Negotiated Settlement?

A little over a week after the invasion, on August 12 Iraq proposed a settlement to the crisis. In it, Hussein suggested linking Iraq’s withdrawal from Kuwait to Syria’s withdrawal from Lebanon, and Israel’s withdrawal from the occupied territories. Some in the British media felt that while not taking care of the problem entirely, the proposal “might yet serve some useful purpose,” especially the recognition that “Israel’s refusal to withdraw from the occupied territories was a source of conflict in the entire region.”

That night’s evening news featured President Bush brushing off Hussein’s “so-called offer,” stating that it was not to be regarded as serious.

The August 12 offer was not to be the last. On August 19, Hussein again proposed resolution of the settlement, this time by making it an exclusively Arab issue. The conflict would then be resolved in the same manner that the Arab world was dealing with Syria’s occupation of Lebanon, and also Morocco’s attempted invasion of the Western Sahara, that is, without outside intervention from the West. When this proposal received no consideration, another offer was made on August 23.

This latest offer was taken by most to be the most serious attempt to avoid war. The offer, confirmed by the emissary who relayed it, was brought to the public’s attention by Knut Royce, a reporter for the British newspaper, Newsday on August 29. According to Royce, Iraq offered to withdraw from Kuwait in return for a lifting of the sanctions, access to the Gulf, and full control of the Rumailah oil field. Further stipulated in the proposal was the formulation of an Iraqi/U.S. oil agreement, and an agreement to work together on Gulf stability. Also reported by Royce were the comments made by a Middle

---

91 Chomsky, Ibid.
East specialist in the administration that described the Iraqi offer as being “serious,” and “negotiable.”

The public may never know for sure the exact reasons why the U.S. chose to bypass these proposed diplomatic settlements. Any mention that the U.S. wouldn’t negotiate or cooperate with someone like Hussein as a reason why is not credible in the least. What is more important for our purposes is that the U.S. made the conscious decision to choose the military option over diplomacy, not necessarily why the U.S. chose that particular route.

5.5 Saddam Survives

Almost as important as the decision to eject Iraq’s forces from Kuwait was the decision not to proceed to Baghdad and topple the regime, even though the objective of capturing the capital could have been easily achieved (as U.S. forces demonstrated in 2003). Had Bush decided to wipe out the Hussein government, the international security environment of the nineties and beyond would have been drastically altered.

In the aftermath of the war and also more thoroughly in his memoirs *A World Transformed*, Bush explained that he was not permitted under existing Security Council resolutions to remove Hussein from power. The resolutions, Bush argued, only allowed for the ejection of Iraq’s forces from Kuwait. Had the United States taken further action, Bush felt that the large international coalition that had been assembled would have disintegrated, leaving the U.S. alone to the dangerous job of rebuilding a broken Iraqi state.\(^2\)

\(^2\) Bush & Scowcroft, *Chapter 13.*
Realistically, this type of justification can be viewed as rhetoric for two reasons. To begin with, the U.S. has a long history of ignoring the dictates put forth by international organizations like the UN (see Chapter Eight). The imposition of the “no-fly zones” in southern and northern Iraq is a perfect illustration of this point. Nowhere in any of the relevant UN resolutions is there mention of these zones. In fact, all resolutions make mention of “Iraqi sovereignty,” and that it was to be recognized and respected. The no-fly zones are in direct contradiction to these provisions. Regardless of what the resolutions actually said, the U.S. and Britain, with the backing of France, decided to unilaterally create and enforce the zones.

The second reason why Bush’s reasons for not going to Baghdad are questionable is to mask the fact that for the U.S., Desert Storm was fought as a conservative war. The war was not fought to change the region; it was fought to keep the status quo intact. The administration’s behavior at this time clearly demonstrates this point. If we listen to Washington’s wartime ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Chas Freeman, we find out that the Bush administration was “terrified of post-war plans leaking out that might unhinge the huge and unwieldy coalition that George Bush had put together to support the war. Officials were discouraged from writing, talking, or even thinking about what to do,” once the question of Kuwait had been settled.93

5.6 Failed Uprisings

Another crucial aspect of U.S. policy towards Iraq during this period was the encouragement of the failed uprisings of first the Shi’a, then the Kurds to overthrow

Hussein. This appears to be the result of what has been termed a “misunderstanding.” Before the cease-fire that ended hostilities was announced, President George H.W. Bush called upon the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people to “take matters into their own hands” and force Saddam Hussein out of office. It would appear that the phrase ‘Iraqi people’ was included without much oversight. When the Iraqi people, in this case the Shi’a and the Kurds, actually did take matters into their own hands, the Sunnis (most of whom understandably clung to Saddam in terror of the revolting masses) rallied around the government and the military, who proceeded to put down the rebellion in a typically bloody manner.

The Shi’a in this particular instance were out of luck, but due to the widespread favorable coverage of their exodus to southeastern Turkey (see more below), the Kurds were the unsuspecting recipients of a sustained campaign by the coalition countries to fend off the hostile Iraqi government. Dubbed “Operation Provide Comfort,” the undertaking effectively created the autonomous zone for the Kurds in northern Iraq when coupled with the economic blockade imposed by Hussein. While the Kurds benefited greatly from Operation Provide Comfort, the most important factor to remember is the widely recognized notion that the U.S. would not have taken any action had it not been for the outpouring of sympathy from Western populations. Had it not been for the television cameras in the mountains of northern Iraq, the Kurds would have faced a fate similar to that of the Shi’a.

After being effectively forced to do something about the Kurds, Bush would appear defensive about his call to Iraqis to rise up against Hussein. When asked about the uprisings, Bush replied “Do I think that the United States should bear guilt because of
suggesting that the Iraqi people take matters into their own hands, with the implication being given by some that the United States would be there to support them militarily? That’s not true. We never implied that.”  

This attempt to deflect blame away from the U.S. was similar to the Glaspie incident, only this time, Iraq was the most pressing issue facing the United States. It is unreasonable to suggest that Iraqis would interpret Bush’s words as anything other than a pledge of support. The administration was so focused on the possibility of a military coup (what the call to rise up was supposed to accomplish) that they were completely unprepared to deal with a popular uprising. This type of attitude is indicative of the overall failure to construct a post-conflict strategy that so many Middle Eastern experts describe. The Bush administration, once again, spoke without thinking and created a humanitarian catastrophe.

One concrete tenet of U.S. policy that did manage to emerge during this period after the failed uprisings was the idea that Iraq had to maintain its current territorial integrity. This was a relatively new problem for the U.S. because Hussein had performed a useful function by always keeping the state intact. The possibility that the state would splinter into three smaller states was considered unacceptable by Washington and its allies in the region, due in large part to alleged Kurdish ambitions for statehood that could have pulled Turkey, Iran, and Syria into a larger regional conflict. Bush and Scowcroft let it be known that “However admirable self-determination for the Kurds or Shi’a might have been in principle, the practical aspects of this particular situation dictated the

94 Cockburn & Cockburn, p. 42.
policy" (emphasis added). Adherence to this decision has been strictly enforced since the end of the Gulf War, seemingly to the detriment of opposition groups in Iraq and to U.S. strategic goals in the region.

5.7 Implications for the Population

The next crisis for Iraqi society (following the 176 million pounds of explosives that were dropped on the country) were the failed uprisings. It is hard to imagine that these failed rebellions did not have a tremendous, lingering effect on the Iraqi population. Lines were clearly drawn among the different ethnic groups in an extremely violent way. The Sunnis may have not wanted to huddle around Saddam and the military, but in their eyes they had no choice. As the rebellion in the South was beginning, Baath party officials (mostly Sunnis) were being killed, execution-style, in front of large crowds of cheering Shi’a. This is something that everyone in Iraq today above the age of 13 will remember. Ironically, the mass graves that were created as a result of this slaughter were later used in 2003 as justification for intervening to remove Hussein. It is evident by Colin Powell’s remarks (see above) that an accurate death toll is most likely not available, but conservative estimates would certainly put the number of people killed during the uprisings at well above 3,000.

96 See Cockburn & Cockburn, Chapter Two. The authors present the view of disorganized, ill-informed Washington policy analysts who had never set foot in Iraq who were obsessed with the idea that the Kurds and Shi’a would attempt to carve up the Iraqi state. These and many other authors stress the historical independence of Iraqi Kurds and Shi’a and offer numerous instances where these groups pledged to maintain Iraq’s territorial integrity.
The internal ramifications were a serious enough wound for the country to experience, but the U.S. role in this event complicates the situation even further. Looking at the U.S. through Iraqi eyes will reveal the impact that this event had. When the uprisings started, the Shi’a and Kurds were not asking for direct U.S. military assistance. They simply asked for access to the weapons that the U.S. had confiscated from Hussein’s army. In any instance, the tacitly implied help from the U.S. never came, and access to captured arms was never granted.

*The Kurdish Exodus*

The separate Kurdish rebellion was distinct from that of the Shi’a in that it sparked a mass exodus of the population to southeastern Turkey. For such large numbers of Kurds to seek safe haven in Turkey speaks volumes when considering Turkey’s historical hostility towards its own Kurdish minority.\(^{97}\) It is also remarkable that the Kurds would even decide to revolt at all so soon after the Anfal campaign. According to Washington Post reporter Jonathan Randal, all fingers point back to the promises made by Bush, and also the leaflets dropped by American planes urging desertion. It was this tacitly implied support that caused many Kurds to ignore the ominous warning of Hussein’s deputy, Izzat Ibrahim Duri when he traveled to the Kurdish city of Sulaimaniyah in the fall of 1990 “(that) if you have forgotten Halabja, I would like to remind you that we are ready to repeat the operation.”\(^{98}\)

---

\(^{97}\) Of all the countries where Kurds are a minority, Turkey is perhaps the most repressive. There the government has banned Kurdish broadcasting, closed Kurdish schools, and forbade the use of the Kurdish language.

Coming off the heels of Anfal, the Kurds were arguably in worse shape than the Shi’a at the time of the rebellions, and the situation under which the government response and subsequent exodus occurred was comparatively much worse. After being granted the flight privileges by the U.S., the Iraqi government was carrying out attacks on the retreating civilians with military helicopters. The attacks were conducted in the cold snow of the mountains without adequate food, shelter, or clothing, and would result in an estimated 500 to 1,000 casualties a day during the peak of the attacks.\footnote{Marr, p. 253.}

No doubt benefiting from coalition support after the worst was over, bitter sentiments among the Kurds remained. Perhaps the best way to condense the Kurdish reaction to all of this can be found by what French Ambassador Eric Rouleau was told by an angry group of Kurds that repeatedly spoke of the tracts dropped by American planes as proof of their betrayal. According to Rouleau, the tone was: “Thanks for the nice words, but we don’t trust you Westerners after you armed Saddam, then told us to desert and revolt against him and then let us down. You didn’t lift a finger for the two weeks we were bombed and massacred.”\footnote{Randal, p. 60.}

\section*{5.8 A Final Look}

Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait and the fallout that came afterwards adds several more examples of why the international level of analysis is crucial for determining Iraq’s immediate future because every key event during this time period was either carried out by, or directly affected by the United States. Desert Storm demonstrates that, besides the Iraqi government, Washington had become the biggest determinant of events inside Iraq.
First and foremost, it is clear that once Washington’s perceived interests changed, it immediately went from “seeking a better relationship with Iraq,” to leading the military coalition that expelled Iraq from Kuwait and inflicted massive damage to Iraqi infrastructure. This in turn led to the failed uprisings by the Shi’a and Kurds, instigated by the United States and resulting in thousands of civilians killed. Most importantly, it created the necessary conditions for the emergence of the sanctions regime that would further debilitate the Iraqi population throughout the nineties. Chapter Six will examine the sanctions, as well as Washington’s gradual adoption of the policy of regime change in Iraq.
Chapter Six

Post-War Nineties: Economic Sanctions & The Policy of Regime Change

The post-war nineties era proved to be a turbulent time for U.S./Iraqi relations. President Bill Clinton would deal with Iraq more than any other foreign policy issue throughout his two terms. During this time, the United States would escalate Iraqi policy from containment in the early nineties, to actively pursuing regime change as the decade progressed. This was in addition to maintaining the economic sanctions regime placed on Iraq after the invasion of Kuwait. The issue of Iraqi disarmament played a large in the sanctions regime, so it would be during this period that U.S. opposition to Iraq became firmly entrenched, establishing a basis for a large part of George W. Bush’s case against Iraq in 2003.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the economic sanctions regime and how the United States would manipulate the weapons inspection process to achieve its own goals. The second half of this chapter will deal with the U.S. sponsored coup attempt against Saddam Hussein. The coup attempt would appear to be a step in the right direction for democracy, but upon further analysis, the operation proved to be plagued with the same shortsightedness that had characterized U.S. policy since the war with Iran. The actions taken by the U.S. during the nineties would unfortunately serve to make a bad situation even worse, further damaging the population’s ability to function, and also perhaps stunting Iraq’s democratic growth.
6.1 The Sanctions Regime

“It’s a very hard choice, but we think the price is worth it.”

-Madeline Albright on 60 Minutes May 12, 1996

When asked what she thought about the 500,000 Iraqi children that had died as a result of the sanctions.

President Bill Clinton inherited in 1993 an Iraqi state demoralized by a humiliating military defeat, as well as an international sanctions regime placed against it in order to disarm Saddam Hussein. The economic sanctions were seen in the beginning as a legitimate response to Iraqi aggression, but as time progressed, they became more controversial. World opinion viewed the sanctions as hurting the Iraqi population and not its dictator and by the end of the nineties, larger powers such as China and Russia were actively trying to undermine the sanctions. Obviously the Clinton administration as well as a majority of other Democrats and also Republicans felt that the sanctions imposed by the first Bush administration were an acceptable way of dealing with Hussein.

Unfortunately what the sanctions accomplished was the destruction of whatever remnants remained of the once vibrant and healthy Iraqi middle class, already weakened by the first Gulf War and eight years of war with Iran. The sanctions would also arguably serve to make Hussein stronger, at least in his own country. Besides the fact that he was viewed as standing up to the “evil” superpower among the population, the people of Iraq

---

101 Leslie Stahl, “Punishing Saddam,” produced by Catherine Olian, CBS, 60 Minutes, May 12, 1996. To be fair to Albright, in her memoirs published in 2003, she apologized, claiming to have made a terrible misstatement. However, most of the damage caused by this comment had already occurred.
were also dependent on the rationing system established by the government as food production and imports steadily declined.

Pundits and ideologues have debated this topic, but before looking at the effects of the Iraq sanctions and how the U.S. was involved, it will help to look at the sanctions from a theoretical point of view first. In theory, it is safe to assume that the leaders of a country are, to varying degrees, better off than the people of that country. If sanctions are imposed that disrupt the flow of food, medicine, or other goods, the leaders of a country will not be directly affected. The citizens however, will be greatly affected. After sanctions have been imposed, there are roughly two directions for the population to choose from. The first choice is for the population to view deteriorating conditions as the leader’s fault and revolt. The second choice is for the population to view those imposing the sanctions as the enemy and rally around the supposedly weakened leader whether or not they feel like they have a choice.

Iraq falls uncomfortably into this second category. An undisputable reality of post-Gulf War Iraq was the fact that the Iraqi population was in no way going to revolt against Hussein. Due to the gassing of the Kurds several years before and the brutal manner in which Kurdish and Shi’a rebellions were crushed immediately after the Gulf War ended, the population was more afraid of Hussein than they had ever been. The only reason that the Kurds were able to continue subversive activities throughout this period was because of the cover provided by the U.S. The Shi’a on the other hand, were brought under near total control. Another factor that must be taken into consideration is that at this point in time, Iraqis were the weakest they had ever been. The general terror that Hussein’s regime established aside, Iraq was emerging from two devastating wars.
Infrastructure inside the country had been destroyed on a massive scale. The population became dependent on Hussein for survival, and anti-American sentiment inside the country certainly did not decline.

The following section discusses how the sanctions were created and what they were supposed to accomplish. Knowledge of the sanctions regime and its mechanisms are absolutely vital to understanding this period of U.S./Iraqi relations, as well as how the U.S. manipulated the entire process for its own perceived goals. The sanctions also demonstrate the willingness by the U.S. to make up and change the rules as it went along, even when doing so actually produced the opposite of the stated goals.

6.2 How & Why the Sanctions Were Established

The economic sanctions placed against Iraq were the result of Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. They were the first means of response by the international community, preceding any military action. The sanctions were officially created and enforced through a series of UN Security Council resolutions. Only by understanding these resolutions will it become clear that the U.S. and Iraq were manipulating the process for their own ends with the unfortunate result of making a bad situation worse for all involved.

The enabling mechanism for the sanctions regime itself was Security Council Resolution (SCR) 687, adopted on April 3, 1991 by a vote of 12 to 1 (with Cuba dissenting and Ecuador and Yemen abstaining). This particular resolution is relatively lengthy by UN standards, much more detailed than SCR 678 which authorized “all
necessary means” to remove Iraq from Kuwait, and contained a large preamble and a total of 34 paragraphs contained in 9 sections.

Like most UN resolutions, contained in SCR 687 were many provisions that were either vague or overly broad. The process of reaching consensus without invoking a veto from one of the five permanent members usually means language that is open to interpretation. That fact notwithstanding, SCR 687 was clear on several points. The most important being found in paragraph 22 states:

“…upon the approval by the Security Council of the programme called for in paragraph 19 above and upon Council agreement that Iraq has completed all actions contemplated in paragraphs 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 above, the prohibitions against the import of commodities and products originating in Iraq and the prohibitions against financial transactions related thereto contained in resolution 661 (1990) shall have no further force or effect…”

Paragraphs 8 through 13 deal explicitly with the matter of weapons inspections and disarmament. There is no linkage to human rights abuses, reparations to Kuwait, or any other issue in regard to the lifting of the sanctions. Even though terms such as “all necessary means” are vague and mean different things to different countries, the matter of how the sanctions were to be lifted was explicitly clear. This is one of the most important points to be made throughout this entire body of research. Viewing all subsequent U.S.
and Iraqi actions beyond the passing of SCR 687 can be legitimately done only with the understanding of this crucial resolution’s wording and intent.

6.3 What the Sanctions Achieved

In order to effectively control Iraq, the international community had to be assured that Hussein was not spending money to rebuild his unconventional weapons programs, and also that items used in the production of these weapons could not enter the country. In order to achieve these goals, there were both economic aspects to the sanctions as well as restrictions on what Iraq could import into the country.

Looking first at the economic portion of the sanctions, oil is Iraq’s main export. Iraq’s supply comprises eleven percent of the world’s proven reserves, second only to neighboring Saudi Arabia. Under the terms of the Security Council resolutions and agreements, there was a limit set by the UN that determined how much oil Iraq could sell to the world. In 1998, the limit was $2 billion every six months.\(^\text{102}\) All of the revenue went into an escrow account at the Bank of Paris located in New York City that the Iraqi government had no control over. As outlined in SCR 687, before any of this money went back to Iraq, reparations were to be paid to Kuwait for damages resulting from the 1990 invasion. Also taken out of the account before Iraq had any access to it was compensation to the UN to cover its daily operating costs inside the country to conduct weapons inspections.\(^\text{103}\)

The UN also played a role in restricting items from entering Iraq that could be used for unconventional weapons purposes by establishing the Office of the Iraq Program.


\(^{103}\) Ibid.
(OIP). Such “dual-use” items were on a UN-approved list of nearly five hundred pages and included medical items like heart or lung machines, syringes, water pumps, wheelbarrows, pencils, and detergent.\textsuperscript{104} Internationally acclaimed documentary filmmaker John Pilger noted in his trips to Iraq during this period that “in hospitals and hotels, there is the inescapable, sickly stench of gasoline, which is used to clean the floors, because detergent is ‘on hold.’”\textsuperscript{105}

The restriction of items was enforced by requiring any country or company that wanted to sell goods to Iraq to apply to the UN for permission to do so. Getting a contract application approved was a long process that was capable of being delayed at several different points. Once it was clear that the items being requested were not explicitly prohibited, the application itself had many standards to meet. The OIP published a six-page list of guidelines to be followed when submitting an application. The list included over 20 different violations that could result in an application being rejected. Some of these violations included submitting a request in the wrong language (only French and English were allowed), listing imprecise quantities of items sold, failure to include a contract number, and failure to indicate the proper port of entry. The guidelines also specified that the list of violations was ‘not exhaustive,’ and that all applications were subject to review whenever deemed appropriate.\textsuperscript{106} This provision meant that any application was subject to review at this initial stage by any country involved, particularly the U.S.

\textsuperscript{104} A complete list of prohibited items can be found at http://www.un.org/Depts/oip/
\textsuperscript{105} John Pilger, “Collateral Damage” appearing in Iraq under Siege.
Review by the OIP was not the final step before a contract application was completed however. Upon approval, the contracts were sent to the 15-member UN Iraq Sanctions Committee. Creating a new name for this group was somewhat disingenuous because the Sanctions Committee was comprised of the current Security Council. There were ten rotating spots on this committee, but the five permanent members of the Council were also the five permanent members of the Sanctions Committee.

There were however notable differences between the Sanctions Committee and the Security Council. Perhaps the most notable was that every member had veto power over contract approvals instead of only the five permanent members. The Sanctions Committee also met in closed sessions, which were not held on regular dates, and records of its discussions were not made public.  

This is only a sampling of the many steps involved in the process of trying to get goods into Iraq. The important point being made here is that the process was capable of being delayed or stopped completely in many different ways. The bodies that made these decisions were protected from public scrutiny and were heavily influenced by the U.S. and Britain. While it may have been unreasonable to demand that the U.S. had no role in determining what Hussein could and could not import, it is important to remember that the U.S. viewed Iraq in a hostile manner and was in a position to unilaterally manipulate the entire process.

At first, the fact that delays could happen so often was not Iraq’s only concern. More troublesome for Iraq was that the process lasted 13 years. The effects of material not getting into Iraq were minimal during the first several years, but as time passed they

107 Ibid., pp. 87-88.
would only grow worse. A dilapidated medical system was already in existence by 1992 or 1993. By the end of the decade critics of Washington’s policy were rightly calling the events inside Iraq a form of genocide.

6.4 U.S. Manipulation

Contrary to what is commonly (and mistakenly) reported, Iraqis did not experience the hardships wrought by the sanctions entirely because Hussein was not complying with UN weapons inspection teams. The U.S. stance that Saddam was fully responsible has been actively perpetuated by the United States for over a decade. It is a dishonest stance that was perfected by Clinton, and then used by George W. Bush as one of the many justifications for invading Iraq in 2003. This section will outline how the U.S. formulated its Iraq policy to fit its own needs, in spite of the Security Council resolutions that clearly stated otherwise.

At her Senate confirmation hearing for Secretary of State, Madeline Albright stated that “Saddam Hussein is the one who has the fate of his country in his hands…He is the one responsible for the starving children, not the United States of America.”

This is one of many examples. We would then hear Clinton make statements at the other end of the spectrum when he stated that the sanctions would remain in place as long as Hussein was in power. Again, in one of many examples Clinton stated in 1997 that “sanctions will be there until the end of time, or as long as he (Hussein) lasts.” Even though it would mostly be a trademark of Clinton’s Iraq policy, the roots of the policy date back to the first Bush administration. Bush’s Deputy National Security Advisor

---

Robert Gates had originally outlined the plan in May of 1991, stating that “Iraqis will pay the price while he remains in power. All possible sanctions will be maintained until he is gone…Any easing of sanctions will be considered only when there is a new government.”\textsuperscript{110} This latter view that the sanctions will be in place whether or not Hussein complies with weapons inspections directly contradicts UN SCR 687 that states, “upon compliance, the sanctions shall have no further effects.” The U.S. position in effect, was that it had somehow been elevated to a position that allowed it to make unilateral changes to the terms of Security Council resolutions that had already passed.\textsuperscript{111}

The decision by the U.S. to change the terms of the sanctions regime was incredibly important for several reasons. To begin with, the UN resolutions state that once the disarmament process had been completed, the sanctions were to be lifted. When the U.S. states that the sanctions will be in place as long as Hussein is in power, they then remove any possible motivation for Hussein to actually cooperate with weapons inspectors. If he cooperated and fully disarmed, he would be militarily weaker, and still have the sanctions to deal with. From this point alone, the U.S. stance does not make sense. The only two logical explanations is that Washington either wanted Iraq to defy the weapons inspectors, thus providing the context for more military action, or this was another classic example (in the tradition of the Glaspie meeting and Bush’s call for rebellion discussed in Chapter Five), of the U.S. not thinking before it acted.

Beyond the effect of giving Hussein no reason to comply with the UN and actually disarm lays the more troubling aspect of U.S. credibility in general. One of the most repeated claims during the build-up to the war of 2003 was that Iraq was defying the

\textsuperscript{111} Article 22 of Security Council Resolution 687.
will of the UN. This claim loses all credibility when the country making it is guilty of exactly the same thing.

6.5 Regime Change as Policy

In the early to mid nineties, the decision was made by the Clinton administration to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Many of the same rationales were given by Clinton that would be later used by George W. Bush. Claims of “gassing his own people,” and “defying the will of the UN” would serve as the backbone of U.S. policy towards Iraq. The U.S. policy of regime change has undergone several incarnations. In its first form, regime change was to come in the form of a covert CIA-sponsored coup. After this attempt failed miserably, regime change would then evolve into a more official venture, when Congress passed the Iraqi Liberation Act. This era in U.S./Iraqi relations is important because it marks the first time the U.S. made the effort to work with the democratic opposition inside Iraq. This section will examine the regime change policy and implications that stemmed from it.

Regime Change as “Unofficial” Policy

During the mid nineties, Clinton authorized the CIA to plan and implement a coup to remove Saddam Hussein from power.\textsuperscript{112} This evolution in policy did not come after a single, dramatic event. Rather, the decision slowly gained momentum over the years, drawing on the rationales that would later be officially outlined in the 1998 Iraqi Liberation Act (see below).

\textsuperscript{112} For one of the most comprehensive accounts of the coup, see Dilip Hiro, \textit{Neighbors, Not Friends: Iraq and Iran After the Gulf Wars}, Routledge, New York, 2001, Chapter 4, or Andrew & Patrick Cockburn, \textit{Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein}, Perennial, New York, 2000, Chapter 7.
The coup was to be implemented mainly with the help of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), led by Ahmed Chalabi. The CIA and the INC were able to use the northern region of Iraq not under Hussein’s total control as a staging ground. The goal was to take greater control of the northern region with the help of the INC’s forces, while fomenting a rebellion amongst the armed forces. Events went well at first with significant gains made in the northern cities, but as time wore on, coup conspirators were eventually captured and Washington’s willingness to participate slowly waned. Once again, Washington displayed ignorance towards the internal workings of Iraq; had more resources been devoted and had plans been executed in a more timely fashion, the coup may have been successful.

As a related aside to this section, the choice of Chalabi is also of some significance for the purposes of this research as it represents a miniaturized version of everything that’s wrong with U.S. policy towards Iraq. The Chalabi family was by all accounts an elite Shi’a group in Iraq before the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958. After the revolution, the family fled to London, where they continued to prosper by forging close ties with the Lebanese Shi’a community. In 1977, Ahmed himself would use his family’s name to found Petra Bank in Jordan. The venture would prosper initially, but as the eighties wore on, allegations of embezzlement would surface against Chalabi, who would soon be convicted, in absentia, of embezzling $60 million. Chalabi claims that the conviction was politically motivated, but his journey from Jordan to Damascus in the trunk of a friend’s car may suggest otherwise.113 His status as a possible bank robber notwithstanding, the false assurances that Chalabi gave the U.S. concerning

113 Cockburn & Cockburn, p. 50.
Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction and the nature of the response the U.S. would receive after invading Iraq would prove that Chalabi has numerous credibility problems.\footnote{While the administration of George W. Bush was making the decision to invade Iraq in 2003, Chalabi was among those exiled Iraqis who were painting a somewhat rosy picture of what the immediate aftermath of the invasion. Chalabi was particularly influential among certain elements of the Pentagon, including Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, as well as his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz.}

Figure 6.1. INC leader Ahmed Chalabi and former Senate Republican Majority Leader Trent Lott in Washington D.C. during better times (for both)

*Regime Change as “Official” Policy*

After the attempted coup of 1996 failed so miserably, Congress passed the Iraqi Liberation Act in 1998. This document represented the single largest shift in policy since Iraq invaded Kuwait. In it, the United States officially made the promotion of democracy in Iraq through regime change stated government policy. Passed unanimously in the Senate and with only eight dissenters in the House, the Act allocated approximately $100 million to aid Iraqi opposition groups pledged to removing Saddam Hussein.\footnote{Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2002, p. 275.} Perhaps the most under-discussed point of the latest debate over Iraq is that the Bush
administration is simply executing a more militant version of a policy that emerged during the Clinton years.

The Iraqi Liberation Act also served to officially enshrine rationales that had been stated by Clinton administration officials such as Defense Secretary William Cohen and Secretary of State Madeline Albright. Mentioned in the legislation was the recognition that:

- In 1980, Iraq invaded Iran, thus starting a decade-long war in the region.
  - Committed ethnic cleansing against the Kurds in northern Iraq.
  - Committed chemical warfare against the Kurds in northern Iraq.
- In 1993, Iraq organized a plot to assassinate former President Bush.
- In 1998, ceased all cooperation with international weapons inspectors.

While these points do not represent everything outlined in the Iraqi Liberation Act, they do represent what could arguably be called the backbone of Washington’s policy towards Iraq. Both the Clinton and the new Bush administrations used these rationales constantly and consistently to justify their policies towards Iraq. These are no doubt serious complaints. But as far as the five points mentioned above, the first three were without question carried out with either the explicit support or the quiet approval of the U.S. The attempted assassination claim is far from concrete. The plot was uncovered in Kuwait, where torture was still being used by the government, while there is also disagreement among analysts on whether or not the evidence points back to the Iraqi
And finally, Iraq ceased cooperation with the weapons inspectors because of alleged U.S. espionage; a claim the U.S. would later admit (see below). Therefore, while it is important to remember the menacing nature of the Hussein regime and the impediments it placed on the growth of democracy, it is also clear that the U.S. has played a very significant part in the deteriorating situation inside Iraq.

6.6 Operation Desert Fox

By the late nineties, the relationship between Iraq and the United States was becoming ever more confrontational. The U.S. had just unsuccessfully attempted to remove Hussein from power, no doubt resulting with an inflated Iraqi ego and sense of invincibility. This, along with Clinton’s demonstrated unwillingness to adhere to the UN Resolutions as they were written resulted in a major dispute involving the weapons inspection team, the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM). This dispute would be the precursor to the largest bombing campaign against Iraq since 1993.

Stated briefly, upon allegations that UNCSOM was being used by the United States and Israel for purposes of espionage, American inspectors were kicked out of the country and Hussein announced that Iraq would no longer cooperate with UNSCOM. This followed many months of a cat and mouse game between the two countries, with the United States and Great Britain threatening to bomb Iraq, and Baghdad waiting until the last possible moment to pledge full cooperation, then provoking the West again after a

117 Cockburn & Cockburn, p. 229. In early 1996, Iraqi intelligence officers had captured coup conspirators and confiscated a CIA-owned satellite system being used for communications purposes. After the coup attempt failed, the Mukhabarat transmitted the following message to the CIA: “We have arrested all your people. You might as well pack up and go home.”
period of limited cooperation. Scott Ritter, one of UNSCOM’s chief inspectors, acknowledged this back and forth relationship in his account of the inspections process. Ritter noted: “Concealment-oriented inspections would in fact be at the heart of every major confrontation between UNSCOM and Iraq.”\(^{118}\) This game was not to last forever, and in December 1998, the United States and Great Britain would move beyond the sustained, albeit limited, attacks over Iraq’s no-fly zones, to a full-scale bombardment of Baghdad that lasted four days.

When the bombing campaign was actually carried out, it was seen as only being somewhat effective. According to the Pentagon, only nine targets out of ninety-seven were actually destroyed (no unconventional weapons facilities were destroyed). But the most damaging aspect of the bombing from the U.S point of view was that the bombing effectively ended the weapons inspections process. Now with no weapons inspectors inside the country, it was impossible to know if Iraq was working on unconventional weapons programs.\(^{119}\)

Later, in January 1999, the U.S. would admit that it was indeed using UNSCOM to spy on Iraq. According to U.S. and UN officials, the U.S. periodically monitored the coded radio communications of Hussein's personal security forces for nearly three years, using equipment secretly installed in Iraq by UN weapons inspectors. After UN officials judged it too dangerous for its own inspectors to install the equipment (perhaps learning from Washington’s mistake in 1996), the U.S. took control of that particular part of the operation. Information that was relevant to the inspections process was shared with the UNCSOM team. Other sensitive information that Washington felt would help destabilize


\(^{119}\) Cockburn & Cockburn, p. 284.
Hussein however, was retained. Up until this point, the U.S. had vehemently denied Iraqi claims of espionage, claiming that all intercepts had been used to help the UN team do its job.\footnote{Colum Lynch, “US Used UN to Spy on Iraq, Aides Say,” The Boston Globe, January 6, 1999, p. A1, and also The Washington Post, “US Used UN to Spy on Iraq,” January 8, 1999, p. A8.} The supreme irony here is that because of the provisions that funneled Iraqi oil profits to the UN to pay for UNSCOM, Iraq was paying to be spied on by the U.S. It also meant that, technically, Saddam Hussein was telling the truth in this instance, and the U.S./U.K. justifications for attacking Iraq were without merit.

\section*{6.7 Implications for the Population}

“...nothing that we had seen or read had quite prepared us for the particular form of devastation which has now befallen the country. The recent conflict has wrought near-apocalyptic results...Many food prices are already beyond the purchasing reach of most Iraqi families...”


Plainly put, the sanctions had devastating effects on the population of Iraq and they were still in place when the war of 2003 began. Under the circumstances, both the Iraqi and U.S. governments were responsible for the plight of the Iraqi population.

To begin with the Iraqi side, an important aspect of the sanctions regime is the charge that the Iraqi government was purposely not spending the oil revenue on humanitarian items for the population. It is a surprise to no one that Iraq under Hussein continued to be a corrupt state that operated as the result of a vast network of patronage.
The recent oil for food scandal that erupted in U.S. media in late 2004 demonstrates this point. While misuse of funds is not a debatable point, it is difficult to reconcile the issue with the fact that the program was never intended to adequately meet the needs of the Iraqi population, a topic discussed in greater detail in the work of Geoff Simons. An important detail usually left out of the discussion of this topic, at least by the U.S., is the fact that after the sanctions were implemented, the Iraqi government immediately established a rationing program by its own initiative. This rationing system was created in September 1990 as soon as the sanctions were in place and provided a steady supply of food to aid the population. The rationing system was enough to warrant the comment from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) that “The food basket supplied through the rationing system is a life-saving nutritional benefit which also represents a very substantial income subsidy to Iraqi households.”

Even though the government rationing program helped to relieve the plight of ordinary Iraqis, it is most likely a safe assumption that Hussein had no intention of fully disclosing his weapons programs. Iraq specialist and unofficial Hussein biographer Efraim Karsh notes throughout his research that Hussein saw his armed forces and weapons systems as a means to achieve a dominant position in the Gulf. Had policy makers in Washington paid more attention to Hussein’s idiosyncrasies, any forced confrontation would be entirely Hussein’s fault. In other words, the U.S. should have abided by the Security Council Resolutions as they were worded, and let the blame fall on Hussein. Because of Washington’s actions, blame cannot be strictly applied to Iraq.

122 Ibid, Chapter 5.
The end result was that the people of Iraq were caught in the middle between two fighting governments, where the destruction of civil society continued, and the hopes for a full recovery were diminishing.

6.8 A Final Look

The nineties were definitely a busy time for the U.S. and Iraq. The living situation inside Iraq would only get worse as the decade progressed for those living in the country. As described in greater detail above, the long-term implications of this are difficult to ascertain. The health and well-being of the Iraqi people were severely compromised. So was their perception of the United States, which may prove to be an even bigger impediment for future U.S./Iraqi relations. It is clear that, as was the case since the early eighties, the two main determinants of events inside Iraq during this period were still the United States and the Hussein government.

Even though positive steps were being taken in the attempts to remove Saddam Hussein, they took place against the backdrop of the sanctions regime (whose effects were arguably made worse by the U.S.), and what some analysts would later call “knowledgeable ignorance.” This term, when applied to U.S. policy towards Iraq, implies that even though the U.S. was spending a great deal of time, effort, and money on Iraq, there was still a fundamental lack of real knowledge about the country and how it operated, and this inhibited the chances for success.\textsuperscript{125}

While this knowledgeable ignorance does not carry with it the more troublesome aspects of previous U.S. decisions (like the apparent refusal to seek diplomatic resolution

to the invasion of Kuwait), it still produces tangible effects on the ground in Iraq. When the U.S. is doing so much in attempting to alter the Iraqi state, actions being carried out without a proper understanding of the society have the potential to do as much harm as good.

A quick look back at the history of Iraq shows just how remarkable a figure Hussein really was. The way he transformed the state to ensure his political and physical survival above all else, and the fact that he remained in power for so long is truly an amazing feat. It is being argued here that events that happened during the nineties showed just how little the U.S. actually understood about Iraq. Judging by what has happened since the renewed effort to remove Hussein by George W. Bush, it is clear that the U.S. has not learned from its past mistakes. Chapter Seven will deal with this renewed effort and how it will affect Iraq’s democratic future.
Chapter Seven

Operation Iraqi Freedom

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003 marks the latest chapter of its history with Iraq. With the invasion, Washington has committed itself to a direct role inside Iraq for the foreseeable future. With the removal of the Hussein government, for now, the U.S. remains as the sole, major determinant of events inside Iraq. The provisional government that was established surely influenced the direction of the future of Iraqi state to a certain degree. However, to suggest that a hybrid group consisting of exiled Iraqis and reformed members of the Baath Party had somehow risen to surpass Washington’s level of influence in the country is simply not the case.

Having recently conducted what was generally seen as free and fair elections, Iraq is now on its way to creating a democracy. However, comments made by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld in April 2003 illustrate the above point. When asked about an Iranian style government with clerics in charge, Rumsfeld replied "If you're suggesting, how would we feel about an Iranian-type government with a few clerics running everything in the country, the answer is: That isn't going to happen."126 This is important as it illustrates the distinction between democracy and its outcome. Iraq may well create an inclusive, constitutionally based government, but here we have a senior administration official quoted as saying that Iraq will only have a democracy if it produces the outcome desired by the United States. Iraq is in fact a step closer to creating the type of

126 Associated Press, April 24, 2003, “Rumsfeld rules out Iran-style regime, Rule by few clerics “isn’t going to happen,” he says.
government that “isn’t going to happen.” The Shi’a coalition that won a plurality of seats in the election counts among its members the Da’wa Party and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). Both of these groups are well-established Islamic groups with ties to Iran that were able to survive under Hussein’s rule. While their exact role in Iraq’s new government is not certain, their influence on the new state most certainly is.

The latest conflict between the two countries is an especially complex issue, more so than the other events discussed in this chapter. The level of attention, the level of resistance, and the controversial justifications for executing the war all make for a difficult case study. Also problematic is the fact that the conflict has not come to a decisive end in the way that the Iraq-Iran war did. The sheer scope of the problem notwithstanding, this chapter will attempt to provide a thoughtful analysis of the U.S. role in the conflict and the repercussions for Iraq. The U.S. role in the conflict will receive the most attention, while a discussion of how the population is being effected will be discussed in lesser detail afterwards. When discussing Washington’s involvement, this chapter will pay particular attention to the justifications given for invading Iraq in an effort to identify the problems that the justifications have created for the U.S. in trying to democratize Iraq.

The approach taken for the first section of this chapter will examine the rationales given by the Bush administration for going to war. This in turn can be divided into several categories since the rationales have been constantly evolving. There was the

127 Descriptions of these groups can be found in most any Iraqi history text, but two of the more detailed looks at the groups can be found in Phebe Marr’s *Modern History of Iraq*, and Gareth Stansfield & Liam Anderson’s *The Future of Iraq: Dictatorship, Democracy, or Division?*
group of rationales that could be called “the standards.” These were the rationales that had been in place in some form or another since Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. These rationales are mentioned below in the analysis of Bush’s address to the UN on September 12, 2002. Another group of rationales emerged after September 11 that focused around the threat that Iraq supposedly posed to the U.S. Finally, there are the justifications that formed after events inside Iraq did not meet expectations of the administration. More specifically, as time passed and no weapons were found, the administration was forced to change its stance in order to create the appearance of being successful with its decision to invade.

7.1 Post 9/11 Rationales for Policy

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, scrutiny of Saddam Hussein’s Iraq was a much more prominent issue. Up until this point, the second Bush administration was practicing a continuation of Clinton’s Iraq policy (i.e., sanctions and limited bombing campaigns). No significant changes were made; Bush simply inherited his approach and justifications from the previous administration.

It was not until September 11 that new justifications emerged for attacking Iraq.128 The rationales offered during this period were offered in addition to what could be called “the standards” discussed below (i.e., he gassed his own people, invaded his neighbors, etc.). Even though this group of justifications was relatively new, they would be adjusted as events on the ground in Iraq changed. This section looks at these most recent justifications and their evolution.

---

128 See Bob Woodward, Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2004. Woodward demonstrated that the early stages of war planning for Iraq was taking place while the war in Afghanistan was barely underway.
Before the War

In addition to previously existing rationales, the Bush administration argued that the events of September 11 changed the way America should conduct itself in the world. This was a significant break from the language candidate Bush used during the Presidential campaign in 2000. Bush campaigned as a candidate skeptical of intervening in the affairs of other countries and implicitly expressed a dislike for Clintonian nation building. After September 11 this stance changed. He argued that the new realities that accompanied the terrorist attacks meant America’s policy towards Iraq should also change. Thus, the Bush administration would go on to present a plethora of justifications for invading Iraq. These ranged from petty, seemingly arrogant reasons such as Defense Secretary Rumsfeld’s claim that our assured victory made the venture worth pursuing, as well as the more serious claims of links to terrorist groups like al Qaeda.

Perhaps the most oft-repeated justification was that Saddam Hussein possessed chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction (WMD). This particular claim was made over a long period of time by numerous administration officials in nearly every major speech or address in an attempt to convince the world that Hussein’s regime was indeed in possession of prohibited weapons. Such landmark speeches included Bush’s September 12, 2002 address to the United Nations General Assembly, the 2003 State of the Union address, as well as Secretary of State Colin Powell’s February 5, 2003 speech to the UN Security Council.

---

Arguably the administration’s first major attempt at convincing the world came in the form of a CIA White Paper. Up until this point, the administration asserted that statements made during the major speeches mentioned above should be sufficient evidence for those members of Congress wanting to see more evidence before they voted to give Bush the authority to go to war as he saw fit. Some members persisted and were referred to the newly released National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraq. The eventual release of the White Paper was produced under the seal of Director George Tenet and released only after direct pressure from some members of Congress.  

The CIA White Paper was essentially a condensed version of the NIE. Upon examination, no new claims were actually made in the document, rather it reads like a more technical version of any of Bush’s major Iraq addresses. For example, according to the October 2002 White Paper:

-If left unchecked, Baghdad will probably have a nuclear weapon during this decade.

-Iraq has largely rebuilt biological weapons facilities.

-Iraq has begun renewed production of chemical warfare agents.

-Baghdad hides large portions of its WMD efforts.

The other major new justification for invading Iraq was that Saddam Hussein was somehow linked to the Islamic terrorist network al Qaeda. This allegation was made by most of the major players of the Bush administration during major addresses and media appearances, including, but not limited to: Vice President Cheney, National Security

---

Advisor Rice, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, and of course Bush himself. The argument that the administration made during the build-up to war (and also during the 2004 election campaign) was that invading Iraq to topple the Hussein regime was a part of not separate from the “war on terror” declared on September 11.

One of the pillars that this argument rested on was an alleged meeting between 9/11 hijacker Mohammed Atta and an Iraqi intelligence operative in the Czech Republic during April 2001. Cheney mentioned this meeting more than any other official, but the FBI was unable to produce any records that Atta (who was residing in Virginia at the time) had left the country. It was also reported that Czech President and Bush ally Vaclav Havel informed the White House that the Czechs had no evidence to prove the claim.

The results of several investigations would reveal Iraq had no working, operational relationship with al Qaeda. However, holdouts in the administration such as Dick Cheney would still insist that a relationship was there, repeatedly citing the Atta meeting in the Czech Republic.

The other terrorist-based claim Washington has levied against Iraq, although an issue separate from 9/11, was that Hussein’s government was paying twenty-five thousand dollars to the families of Palestinian suicide bombers in Israel. Middle East specialist Dilip Hiro has reported that while Saddam’s government did give payments to

---

131 Schneidman.
134 See findings of the 9/11 Commission Report released in July 2004, and the findings of Iraq Survey Group’s Duelfer report, which was released in October of 2004.
the families of suicide bombers, it was part of an overall project to compensate the families of all Palestinians killed in the Second Intifada.¹³⁵

During this period before the war, the democratization of Iraq was also touted as a reason for invading the country. Even though regime change was officially enshrined in the Iraqi Liberation Act of 1998 (discussed in Chapter Six), it was not until after September 11 that the Bush administration deemed it necessary to commit armed forces en masse to achieve this goal.

The goal of democratization was made most forcefully by a small group of Bush administration members called “neoconservatives.” This group rose to positions of considerable influence after September 11 and includes such heavy hitters as Under Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, (now former) Chairman of the Defense Policy Board Richard Perle, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, among many others. The neoconservatives are characterized by an extreme willingness to use military power to achieve U.S. goals, inherent dislike of multilateral diplomatic institutions such as the United Nations and the State Department, an intense focus on the Middle East (especially Israel), and the professed goal of spreading Western-style democracy throughout the world.¹³⁶

Because of their positions in the Defense and State Departments, as well as the Vice President’s office, the neoconservatives had considerable influence over Cabinet members Cheney and Rumsfeld, who in turn influenced Bush’s decisions in a substantial

fashion. It was also this group that had written to Bill Clinton in January 1998 that the U.S. should be committed to removing Hussein from power.

7.2 Bush Addresses the UN

Another major theme in the build-up to war was the argument that the numerous UN Security Council Resolutions involving Iraq had to be upheld in order to preserve the integrity of the United Nations as a legitimate global organization. To drive home this point, the Bush administration released a document called: “A Decade of Deception and Defiance: Saddam Hussein’s Defiance of the United Nations.” This was to serve as a background paper for Bush’s speech to the UN General Assembly on September 12, 2002, detailing the ways in which Iraq had violated existing resolutions. Due to their inherent hostility towards the UN, the neoconservative faction of the administration, with members including Under Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Cheney’s acting National Security Advisor, I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby, almost never mentioned this particular reason for going to war. The split among the administration notwithstanding, Bush, Powell, and Rice would repeatedly integrate the UN into their public addresses. The document elaborated on the following points:

-Saddam Hussein's Defiance of United Nations Resolutions
-Saddam Hussein's Development of Weapons of Mass Destruction
-Saddam Hussein's Repression of the Iraqi People
-Saddam Hussein's Support for International Terrorism

137 Ibid, Chapter 4.
-Saddam Hussein's Refusal to Account for Gulf War Prisoners

-Saddam Hussein's Refusal to Return Stolen Property

-Saddam Hussein's Efforts to Circumvent Economic Sanctions

Figure 7.1. Bush describing the decade of defiance and deception to the UN, September 12 2002

The document was a mixture of the old and new justifications for policy towards Iraq and some items were less convincing than others. Again, the main point was to describe a scenario in which Iraq was presented as a grave threat to world security. The WMD claim was heavily emphasized, as was Iraq’s links to international terrorism. While we know now that these two claims have been largely discredited, they were still

---

seen as legitimate issues at the time and presented as such. As for the underlying theme that Iraq was putting the integrity of the UN at risk, careful scrutiny reveals exaggeration on the part of the U.S. Iraq was certainly defying UN resolutions, but the U.S. was defying those very same resolutions by unilaterally changing the conditions under which the sanctions regime would be removed. While this policy was started under the Clinton administration, the Bush administration adopted the same stance of also defying the United Nations by attempting to circumvent the lifting of the sanctions.

The other remaining claims represent somewhat of a patchwork of rationales. The two oldest and most commonly used items from this list include the claim that Hussein had gassed his own people, and that he had invaded his neighbors. Both statements are indisputably true, as is the fact that the U.S. was supporting Iraq while these events were taking place. The U.S. undeniably had motives for its policy choices during this time period, and most likely felt it was making the right decisions. Whether or not these motives are legitimate is for others to decide. The only claim being made here is that constantly repeating these two examples does not make a convincing argument for war when the U.S. originally supported them, regardless of the motives. The remaining issues of stolen property and prisoners are legitimate, as Iraq had indeed committed theft and kidnapping on its way out of Kuwait. However, it is unlikely that these two specific examples had anything to do with the decision to invade.  

---

Woodward, *Plan of Attack.* Woodward’s account goes into great detail about the planning of the war and neither of these minor details were discussed by the administration. The focus was almost exclusively on WMD and terrorist links.
7.3 Colin Powell Addresses the UN

In what would be the most persuasive attempt by the U.S. to win the support of the world, on February 5, 2003, now former Secretary of State Colin Powell addressed the UN Security Council. The mission was clear: convince the council that Iraq did in fact possess WMD and poses a significant threat to world peace. In a symbolic show of solidarity, former CIA director George Tenet was seated behind Powell. Tenet never spoke, but his presence had the effect of conveying to the council that Powell’s presentation was true and endorsed by the CIA.

The speech was largely hailed as a success during the following days by the administration and most mainstream media outlets, but close scrutiny reveals that Powell’s performance did not present as airtight a case as the U.S. would have led the world to believe. Below are several of the more important points presented by Powell along with brief analysis that demonstrates their inherent weakness.

One of the most dramatic presentations of the address was when Powell played what the U.S. claimed to be intercepted discussions among Iraqi officials planning ways to hide prohibited material from the weapons inspectors. These tapes seemed damning on the surface, but taking into account the fact that the U.S. had faked similar audio tapes in the past makes for a less convincing case.\footnote{In a program that aired November 30, 2001, Public Radio’s “This American Life,” broadcast recently declassified tapes from a clandestine radio station set up by the CIA in the 1950s to help provoke a coup against the democratically-elected government of Guatemala. The radio station, which broadcast fake opposition voices, was credited with helping bring a repressive American-backed client regime to power. Taken from the station’s website, \url{http://www.thislife.org}}

Powell also relied on satellite images to make the case that Iraq was either producing or hiding weapons. In one particular instance, Powell claimed that some of the images he showed were of the Iraqis sanitizing the Al-Taji chemical munitions storage
site before UN inspectors arrived. But The New York Times had reported the previous week that American officials had recently given the UN inspectors satellite photos of "what American analysts said were Iraqi clean-up crews operating at a suspected chemical weapons site." But when the inspectors went to the site, they "concluded that the site was an old ammunition storage area often frequented by Iraqi trucks, and that there was no reason to believe it was involved in weapons activities."142

![Figure 7.2. Former Secretary of State Powell making the case at the United Nations, February 5, 2003.](image)

Also discussed in the same article was Powell’s claim that Iraq possessed mobile weapons labs that could be used to manufacture and disperse chemical and/or biological

---

weapons. The U.S. had no proof that these labs existed and was forced to offer up artists’ renderings of what these labs may look like, but Powell claimed that “we know Iraq has at least seven of these mobile, biological agent factories.” Again, chief weapons inspector Hans Blix (heading an organization that actually had staff members inside Iraq) contradicted the administration’s story.\textsuperscript{143}

Powell also touched on the familiar claim of an Iraqi link to Al Qaeda. During the presentation, the focus was on the terrorist Abu Musab Zarqawi, an individual suspected of hiding in Iraq. At this point, Zarqawi was the only link offered by the U.S. that implicated Iraq with Al Qaeda activities.\textsuperscript{144} It was commonly asserted during this time period that Zarqawi was operating a terrorist training/poison production camp in northern Iraq, and Powell made this claim in his presentation, complete with satellite imagery of the alleged camp. Omitted from the presentation however, was the fact that Zarqawi would have been operating in a part of Iraq that was controlled by the semi-autonomous Kurds along with the U.S., and no longer under Hussein’s effective sphere of influence. The resulting question then is, “if this camp actually existed, why had it not been targeted by the U.S. since it regularly bombed the southern and northern regions of the country to contain Hussein?”

\textbf{7.4 Changing Rationales}

The preceding section fully outlines the justifications given for invading Iraq during the buildup to war and during the initial months of the war. Clearly, a sense of danger and urgency was presented to the world. The idea that the U.S. was at risk as long

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{144} \textit{The Washington Post}, "U.S. Effort to Link Terrorists to Iraq Focuses on Jordanian," February 5 2003.
as Hussein remained in power was a recurring theme. However, as time passed, no weapons were found, a reality that remains true today. The Bush administration was now in the awkward position of having to defend a war whose main pretenses were slowly being proven false. The “standards” discussed above still existed, but this was obviously not enough for the Bush administration to convince the world that the invasion was still justified.

Even though the Bush administration made numerous, explicit claims that there were indeed WMD inside Iraq, it was forced to shift its reasoning for invading the country. The U.S. was not willing to let the weapons claim go completely, and this reluctance was demonstrated through the summer and fall of 2003 as the WMD claim was being adjusted. This shift represented the latest evolution in the rationale for Washington’s policy towards Iraq. This section discusses the evolution in justification.

The shift began as early as April of 2003. On the 25th of that month on NBC’s Dateline program, Bush made the comment that: “I think there’s going to be skepticism until people find out there was, in fact, a weapons of mass destruction program,” later adding that “(Hussein) had a weapons of mass destruction program (emphasis added). We know he had a weapons of mass destruction program.” Similar comments were made emphasizing “programs” rather that “weapons” at talks at Santa Clara California on May 2 and also when Bush named Paul Bremer as the envoy to Iraq as well as during a cabinet meeting press conference on June 9, 2003. It was at this particular speech in June that Bush was asked whether or not U.S. credibility was on the line over weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Bush replied that he was not exactly sure what that meant, but repeated that Iraq had a weapons program.
This evolution from weapons to weapons programs was reinforced the day after in a White House press conference given by former Press Secretary Ari Fleischer on June 10, 2003. Fleischer claimed that the terms “weapons” and “weapons program” could be used interchangeably, and thereby stating that the President’s remarks from the day before was a correct characterization of current policy.

As 2003 turned into 2004, the creation of a legitimate democracy inside Iraq became the biggest, most persistent reason for invading the country. The administration was distancing itself more and more from the WMD claim, but was still left with the matter of explaining why the U.S. had initiated the war.

7.5 Implications for the Population

Attempting to analyze the impact of the war on the Iraqi population is just as difficult as examining the U.S. role in the conflict because it has not fully come to a close. While there has been a significant amount of civilian casualties due to the war, a convincing case can be made that large numbers of ordinary Iraqis would continue to be killed if Hussein was still in power. Now that the U.S. has demonstrated commitment to staying in Iraq, there is perhaps a better chance that those killed will not have died only to produce a puppet regime or another military dictatorship. If that turns out to be the case, one could present the claim that the effects on the population were in fact positive.

At this point, the population’s welfare is still dependent on U.S. actions. A new Iraqi government certainly does not have the ability to run and protect the country. This new government, along with the U.S., is currently occupying the power vacuum left by

http://www.iraqbodycount.org provides an updated estimate of Iraqis killed during the war by providing the lowest and highest numbers reported by various worldwide media outlets.
Hussein’s regime. If the U.S. were to leave, other forces (most likely hostile ones) would move in to fill this vacuum.

Even though the U.S. is performing a valuable function by simply keeping other actors in the region from adversely affecting the democratic process, it is still capable of doing the same thing. The most disturbing example of this was the announcement in the mainstream media that the U.S. was considering the “Salvador option” for Iraq. Without going deeply into the history of Central America in this chapter, the Salvador option is essentially referring to the training of paramilitary squads (often referred to as death squads) to seek out and eliminate insurgents. In El Salvador specifically, death squads were responsible for killing more than 70,000 people, between one and two percent of the population.146

In Iraq’s case, these death squads would presumably be comprised of Kurdish and Shi’a fighters in order to combat the largely Sunni insurgency.147 Remarkably, this discussion is a quiet admission 20 years after the fact that the U.S. was indeed training death squads back during the Reagan years (something that has been denied by the U.S. before). More alarming however is the fact that it would be discussed enough for reports to surface in mainstream media and that the U.S. would so openly consider the ethnic make-up of the death squads. This proposed plan seems to practically beg for a civil war

---

to occur with the different ethnic groups actively trying to kill each other, a scenario that up until this point has fortunately been avoided.

7.6 A Final Look

Even though the U.S. military is still somewhat engaged in Iraq and most likely will remain so for the foreseeable future, enough time has passed since the initial planning and execution of the war that careful analysis is possible. Looking back at events that led to the current war and how the issue has evolved over time, it is clear that the United States has experienced difficulty with the clarity of its message.

It may not seem initially clear why the content of this chapter matters, but the ever-changing motivations and lack of clarity actually tell us quite a bit. Is it unreasonable to suggest that despite the public appearance of a very steadfast, firm administration, the haphazard, constantly evolving justifications for the war may actually jeopardize the chances for success? The U.S. and Iraq have recently experienced a relatively large success in the form of the January 2005 elections, but as mentioned in Chapter Two, elections do not automatically mean democracy.

However, in reviewing the important details from this period, another important and interesting question must be raised. Even though no weapons have been found, Iraq is now without a dictatorial regime. Had weapons inspections been allowed to proceed, presumably no weapons would have been found and war may have been averted. Would Bush have been able to convince the U.S. to go to war if it were solely on the question of democratizing Iraq? Perhaps. But in this latest confrontation between the U.S. and Iraq, traditional U.S. policy (which always has an element of self-interest), may have actually
unfolded in a way that helped Iraq rather than hurt it. According to *Washington Post* reporter Bob Woodward’s official account of the war, it was clear that senior intelligence officials within the administration were operating under the assumption that Hussein could not be overthrown through covert means.\(^\text{148}\) Had war been averted, Hussein would presumably still be in power and Iraq would be no closer to democracy today than it was when Hussein took control of Iraq in 1979.

While the tone of this research may seem largely negative or pessimistic, it is important to clarify here that guaranteed failure for Iraq is *not* the claim of this research. What is being presented throughout these chapters is that the U.S. role must be examined when contemplating Iraq’s future. This does not imply that Iraqi democracy is doomed, or that the country will not make strides towards democracy. While I have briefly touched on the topic of justifications for the invasion in this chapter, what this might mean for the future will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Nine.

This chapter concludes the portion of the research dealing with the Iraq’s relationship with the U.S. While I believe that these chapters provide the telling story of why Iraq’s future is almost wholly dependent on the U.S., it is not enough to end this discussion without including several other case studies involving the U.S. and democratization. Chapter Eight examines four other countries whose experiences with the U.S. should strengthen the argument that the international level of analysis is appropriate and must be considered before all other levels when Iraq’s future is being discussed.

Chapter Eight

The American Record on Democracy

Chapter Two identified and discussed what I feel is a realistic definition of democracy. The characterization of democracy given is one that many other scholars would also agree with. To recap, democracy in this research is referring to “the ballot box and all that goes with it.”\(^{149}\) Again, this is not to suggest that elections equal democracy, but that elections like the ones Iraq recently experienced are a basic prerequisite for a functioning democracy. And it is here that the operationalization of democracy must stop because to go further is to confuse democracy with liberalism.

Reiterating what Fareed Zakaria states in his work, *The Future of Freedom*, “putting qualifiers as to what type of outcomes will be accepted as “democracies” renders the term analytically useless.”

With that in mind, it is vital to our discussion of Iraq’s future to include a telling, albeit brief examination of Washington’s record when democracy and other developing countries are concerned. Keeping with the general framework that established for this research, Washington’s record on democratization attempts as well as other foreign interventions will be discussed starting in the 1980’s. This starting point has many advantages that have already been discussed in Chapter One. Analyzing Washington’s past behavior in other developing countries will allow us to compare what the U.S. *says* with what the U.S. *does*, because in the end, Washington will be judged by its actions.

\(^{149}\) Benjamin Reilly, *Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management: Democracy in Divided Societies*, p.3.
This comparison, in turn, will unveil a limited but telling tapestry of U.S. foreign policy that will assist in predicting how the U.S. will deal with Iraq in the future and what that means for Iraqi democracy. The spirit of this chapter is perhaps best embodied by the work of Noam Chomsky. When discussing the U.S. role during the Kosovo crisis of 1999, he stated “…this is an elementary prerequisite for inquiry into their (U.S.) motives and goals, and the implications for the future.”

To achieve this elementary prerequisite, an examination of a representative sample of case studies where the U.S. directly intervened in the affairs of a developing country will be conducted. It is important to clarify at this point that intervention does not necessarily mean U.S. troops on the ground. Intervention certainly can mean a military invasion as was the case in Iraq, but it can also mean more subtle forms of manipulation by the U.S. such as recent events in Haiti demonstrates. The level of U.S involvement will vary among countries, but the effects are quite consistent.

Different countries will be discussed on a case-by-case basis. The chapter will begin by looking at several countries that were for the most part affected by the Reagan and first Bush administrations. These countries include Nicaragua and Panama. The next section of the chapter will cover the only other significant foreign policy case studies from the second Bush administration aside from Iraq. This of course refers to Afghanistan and Haiti.

---


151 The original intent of this chapter was to include several examples of intervention from the Clinton administration. Discussions of Kosovo and Indonesia/East Timor would demonstrate that U.S. goals in a broader sense remain the same under both Democratic and Republican administrations. There was also the matter of the 2004 Presidential elections in the United States. Had John Kerry defeated George W. Bush, these discussions would have been even more vital, since Kerry supported Clinton’s foreign policy.
It is worth noting here that since the Gulf War of 1991, Iraq has arguably been the most significant foreign policy issue for the United States. George H. W. Bush launched the most comprehensive intervention of his administration against Iraq. Bill Clinton maintained the sanctions regime started by Bush, as well as a limited bombing campaign throughout his entire administration. Even though U.S. troops were on the ground in places like Kosovo during the Clinton years, the amount of time and effort spent dealing with Iraq obviously surpasses what was spent in the Balkans. Finally, it should be manifestly clear that no other country has received more attention from the current Bush administration than Iraq.

Even though there are important lessons to be learned from how Washington has interacted with Iraq, its behavior in other developing countries is also telling. The nature of this behavior is the focal point of this chapter. Unfortunately, this exercise runs the risk of being overly simplistic as four very complex cases are discussed here in very short form. While this weakness is admitted here, the purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that types of policies implemented in Iraq since the early eighties were not isolated instances limited to only one country, but were consistent with Washington’s overall foreign policy decisions.

8.1 Nicaragua

Washington’s relationship with Nicaragua may be the perfect example of what happens when democracy fails to produce the desired results. What the U.S. did in Iraq, under the leadership of mostly the same individuals (see below), might just be the
“smoking gun” as it were that demonstrates the overall point being made in this research. While justice can in no way be done on these pages to address the complexities of this case, the main points will be discussed in an attempt to tie this case to Iraq and demonstrate its relevance.

During the 1980’s, Washington was involved in an openly hostile relationship with Nicaragua. The popular Sandinista revolution had succeeded in overthrowing the U.S.-installed and backed Somoza dictatorship, and according to the Reagan administration, was quickly becoming a de facto Soviet base in Central America.

Assuming such a hostile stance, the U.S. began acting accordingly. This came in the form of a U.S.-backed paramilitary war carried out by a group called the Contras. This group was based in neighboring Honduras where they were overseen by Washington’s ambassador John Negroponte (who would later serve as Washington’s ambassador to Iraq in 2004). Throughout the course of the decade-long Contra war, the U.S. proceeded to do everything in its power to undermine the Sandinista government. This included attacking what could be viewed as legitimate military targets, but it would also include “soft targets” such as civilian agricultural collectives, villages, etc.

These actions did not go unnoticed and earned the U.S. significant world condemnation. World opinion was expressed mainly through the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council. Any time either of these bodies passed resolutions that condemned or expressed concern over what the U.S. was doing to one of the poorest countries in the hemisphere, Washington would vote against it in the General Assembly, or simply exercise veto power in the Security Council. U.S. willingness to continue a war that was widely seen as illegal and immoral did not just stop at the U.N.
Rather than respond to U.S. aggression by carrying out terrorist acts against the country, or attempting to assassinate U.S. leaders, Nicaragua approached the World Court in 1986. In that year, the Court ruled in Nicaragua’s favor and condemned Washington’s “illegal use of force.” Beyond this, the Court ordered that Washington was to pay reparations to the amount of $17 billion to Nicaragua for its illegal actions. The rulings were ignored fully by the U.S., who refused to pay, claiming that the case was not under the World Court’s jurisdiction.\(^\text{152}\)

These actions would continue throughout the eighties and are damaging enough on their own, but the way in which Washington would intervene in Nicaragua’s elections in 1990 is more important for this argument. The important points here are that the U.S. was heavily pushing for elections, and that it had its own hand-picked candidate by the name of Violetta Chomorro. Most important is the message Washington was sending to the Sandinistas and to the people of Nicaragua, that essentially threatened to continue the Contra war if the people voted for the Sandinistas.\(^\text{153}\)

Without going into more specific details, which are better left to the experts of the country, the situation that existed between the U.S. and Nicaragua was such that Washington was willing to continue the execution of an illegal and immoral war against a third world country unless the population voted a certain way in its elections. Given such a choice, the people of Nicaragua bent to U.S. will. The elections were then lauded by

\(^{152}\) Noam Chomsky, \textit{Hegemony or Survival: America’s Quest for Global Dominance}, Metropolitan Books, New York, 2004, p. 100. Chomsky points out the irony of the $17 billion dollar figure: “…the figure…is the amount that Iraq has paid to people and companies in compensation for its invasion of Kuwait. The numbers killed in the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait appear to be on the order of the U.S. invasion of Panama a few months earlier (hundreds of thousands, according to various estimates)—a fraction of the deaths in Nicaragua and perhaps five percent of those killed in the U.S.-backed Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. There is, of course, no thought of compensation in such cases.”

Washington as a successful exercise in democracy, but what they really were should make anyone currently watching Iraq very nervous. It is quite clear that Washington is not overly comfortable with Iraq’s new Shi’a dominated government and its ties to Iran. Due to the amount of attention being paid to Iraq now by the world, Washington may not feel confident enough trying to get away with something comparable to the Nicaragua case, but it is painfully clear that if given the chance, the U.S. may do just that.

8.2 Panama

Another American adventure in foreign policy from the Reagan/Bush years is the invasion of Panama. This case differs from Nicaragua in that there was no prolonged ideological struggle, and only brief lip service was provided to protecting or restoring democracy in Panama. Rather the U.S. became impatient with its surrogate regime and decided to take action. Panama serves as the one of the first instances of U.S. foreign policy as the Cold War was coming to a close, and its similarity to the type of actions Iraq perpetrated against Kuwait supplies a deeper sense of irony.

To provide context, Panama was controlled during the early to mid 1980’s by Manuel Noriega, by all rights at least a minor league thug and drug trafficker. He was not committing the type of human suffering and lawlessness that Saddam Hussein was, but the U.S. still saw fit to support him even as he stole the Panamanian elections of 1984 by any definition of the word, and even though his actions in drug trafficking were well known.

There were several reasons given for Washington’s change of heart. One of these reasons included alleged instances of harassment of Americans by the Panamanian
regime, although no travel warnings were given to Americans to stay away from the country. In another instance that has some surface validity, George H. W. Bush was reportedly moved to action when the wife of an American soldier that had been arrested was also threatened. On December 22 1989, the New York Times had quoted Bush as saying “this President is not going to stand by while American womanhood is threatened.”

While the statement had moral overtones, it was disingenuous. The kidnapping, sexual abuse, and torture of an American nun by the name of Diana Ortiz around the same time by Guatemalan police forces elicited no response from Bush, nor did the murder of two other American nuns by Contra forces in Nicaragua during the first week of January.\(^{154}\)

For the sake of being able to link Panama to Iraq, let us put aside these instances of hypocrisy and focus only on the matter of Panamanian democracy. Washington offered up the fact that Noriega had stolen the 1989 election from the U.S.-favored Guillermo Endara (who was subsequently put in place by the U.S. invasion).

The point here is not the invasion of 1989 itself, but the fact that all of the reasons presented by Washington for its actions existed years before. No one can realistically say that Noriega was a legitimate leader by any stretch of the imagination, but his case is another example of Washington throwing democracy to the wolves when seems convenient. The fact that these actions were taken largely by those again in the government today makes the example all the more compelling.

Even though the latest military campaign against Iraq is arguably the most memorable foreign policy event in recent years, the second Bush administration has been directly involved in the affairs of several developing countries where democracy was a concern. Afghanistan is perhaps next in line after Iraq, followed by Haiti in a distant third if we are to take into consideration the amount of media coverage given to each country. Each of these countries has a detailed relationship with the U.S. that goes back to the Reagan administration, and in some instances further back than that. But since democracy inside these countries has been directly affected by the second Bush administration in the past several years, it is appropriate to discuss them here.

The second Bush administration provides a remarkable opportunity for analysis because so many of the major foreign policy decision-makers in George W. Bush’s White House are veterans of the Reagan and first Bush administrations. These most notably include current Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense in the first Bush administration; current Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was Ronald Reagan’s special envoy to the Middle East (the position that spawned the now infamous photo of Rumsfeld shaking Hussein’s hand during the Iran/Iraq war); current Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham served as Deputy Chief of Staff to Vice President Dan Quayle; former Secretary of State Colin Powell served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the first Bush administration; Powell’s deputy, Richard Armitage held numerous diplomatic positions under both Reagan and George H.W. Bush, but was denied what would have been his most prominent position of Assistant Secretary of State in 1989 because of his implication in the Iran/Contra arms scandal. Recently appointed as the new Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice served in the first Bush administration as Senior Director of
Soviet and East European Affairs in the National Security Council. Another prominent link between past and present administrations is Paul Wolfowitz. Seen as the chief architect of the current Iraq war during his tenure as Deputy Secretary of Defense, Wolfowitz is set to become President of the World Bank. At the beginning of the Reagan Administration, he served as Director of Policy Planning for the Department of State and then as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. In 1986, he was appointed U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia. Under President George H. W. Bush, Wolfowitz served as Undersecretary of Defense for Policy. The last link to the past I will mention here, though certainly not the last link to the past that exists, is that of John Negroponte. Negroponte was ambassador to Honduras in the 1980’s and helped coordinate Reagan’s Contra War against Nicaragua. Despite his implication in the Iran/Contra arms scandal and his support of the brutal military dictatorship of General Gustavo Alvarez Martínez in Honduras, Negroponte was appointed as the new U.S. ambassador to Iraq on May 6, 2004 by a Senate confirmation vote of 95-3, dissenters including Senators Harkin, Durbin, and Dayton, with Senators Kerry and Thomas not voting.

This type of historic continuity is quite impressive and analysis will provide a startlingly clear view of Washington’s attitudes towards democracy. By examining what these individuals did in administrations past, their attitudes towards Iraq’s future in particular should be easy to anticipate. Perhaps the best way to conduct an investigative look at this second Bush administration is to start with the first post-9/11 intervention.

---

155 There is a wealth of information on this topic from declassified U.S. documents. Notable analysis includes the works of Thomas Walker and Noam Chomsky.
156 For complete details of the vote, see [http://congress.org/congressorg/home/congressorg/issues/votes/?votenum=85&chamber=S&congress=108](http://congress.org/congressorg/home/congressorg/issues/votes/?votenum=85&chamber=S&congress=108)
8.3 Afghanistan

After nearly two decades of neglect by the United States, and the rest of the world for that matter, in September 2001 Afghanistan was thrust back into the spotlight and back into American crosshairs. The idea that “America had to do something” after September 11 was discussed in many places by many people, perhaps most notably by Bob Woodward in his account of the Bush White House immediately following September 11, Bush at War. This is the most important distinction to be made when mentioning Afghanistan, that U.S. involvement in the country was not conducted out of goodwill; it was a response to being attacked on September 11.

After the military campaign and the democracy rhetoric, where is Afghanistan today? The country has progressed towards democracy, but it has not yet reached that goal. Keeping in mind our definition of democracy and how Afghanistan’s first elections unfolded, unfortunately there is some truth to the cynical statement that the country is not much more of an actual democracy today than it was under the Taliban.

Iraq’s first post-war election was much different than Afghanistan’s. The elections in Iraq went relatively well. There was less violence from insurgents than expected and there were no claims of fraud from any major participants in Iraq. Those who voted had to first dip their index finger into a bottle of purple ink to signify to polling workers that they had already voted once. Pictures of Iraqi’s ink stained fingers became the most memorable picture from the war since the fall of Hussein’s statue in Baghdad.

Afghanistan however, did not enjoy such circumstances. There were higher levels of resistance than in Iraq, and the legitimacy of the elections was also questioned
by all other candidates. As in Iraq, there were large numbers of individuals/parties running in the election, but the vast majority of the Afghans made claims that the ink used to signify that a person had voted was easily washed off, allowing people to vote multiple times. There is at least some legitimacy to this claim as a Washington Post reporter witnessed voters’ hands being marked with the black pens used to mark ballots rather than the purple indelible ink which was supposed to be used.\textsuperscript{157} Also mentioned in virtually all reports that included reaction from the other Afghan candidates was a certain level of cynicism that the U.S.-installed and backed Hamid Karzai was seen as the obvious frontrunner. These disgruntled voices remained after Karzai was pronounced the winner.

A look beneath the surface of Karzai’s relationship with the West can touch on some taboo subject matter. Namely, the idea that what the West does, it does for oil or other energy sources. This type of argument is usually tossed aside in mainstream discussion and labeled as a conspiracy theory. It is not the point of this research to speculate about Washington’s energy related motivation for choosing the policies that it does, but Karzai’s position as a representative for the U.S.-based oil company UNOCAL and its desire to construct a natural gas pipeline through Afghanistan adds gives more ammunition to disgruntled Afghan candidates.\textsuperscript{158}

No one could reasonably suggest that the Afghan population is not better off today that it was ten years ago, but that is beside the point. Pointing out that Hamid Karzai is not as bad as the Taliban is an incredibly weak argument that has no moral

value. It is very reminiscent of Republican Senator James Inhofe’s statement during Senate hearings on the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal that Iraqis “…wake up every morning thanking Allah that Saddam Hussein no longer runs the prisons.”159 Clearly Senator Inhofe is assuming that the U.S. has clean hands, which is hardly the case, but the moral argument has been reduced to that of “We’re not as bad as Saddam.” However, looking at the circumstances surrounding Hamid Karzai and then comparing the Afghan electoral experience to that of Iraq’s, it is clear that the two countries are operating on completely different levels, despite the fact that they are the only two recipients of Washington’s latest attempt at democratizing the world.

From an idealist’s point of view, one would hope that the U.S. is finally going to give Afghanistan the attention it deserves. The U.S. shares at least half the blame for leaving the country in virtual anarchy after the Soviet’s invasion and one could certainly make the case that the U.S. “owes” it to the country to help it rebuild. On the other more pragmatic hand, the argument can be made that it is absolutely vital that the U.S. do more to ensure Afghan democracy succeeds. How can the U.S. be willing to settle for mere stability in Kabul when large parts of the rest of the country are not under government control? Did the U.S. learn nothing from September 11? Can the U.S. afford to pay so little attention to the country, compared to that of Iraq, and hope to avert another disaster fifteen years in the future? To be sure, Washington is paying more attention now than it did in the 1980’s, but it would be impossible to pay less.

159 The full text of these hearings are made available by The New York Times at http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/11/politics/11WEBATEX.html?ex=1090814400&en=978df35a1f22260d&ei=5070&pagewanted=1
8.4 Haiti

Even though the tiny island country of Haiti has a detailed history with the Clinton and first Bush administrations, its most recent episode with the U.S. occurred in 2004 when the second Bush administration intervened in an all too familiar fashion. The timing of this crisis was particularly bad for the Bush administration if one were to examine and compare administration rhetoric towards Iraq with actions taken simultaneously in regard to Haiti. But before looking at the 2004 crisis, a brief look back at what occurred during the 1990’s is necessary.

For Haiti, the nineties began as a decade of optimism. An extremely well organized popular movement called *Lavalas*, meaning the flood, swept Roman Catholic priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide into the presidency. This came as enormous surprise to Washington, who fully expected the candidate with U.S. backing, a former World Bank official named Marc Bazin, to win. Even with the backing of the U.S., Bazin received roughly 14% of the vote, with Aristide at 67%.\(^{160}\)

Even though Haiti is a very poor country, Aristide started to make signs of progress. International lending institutions even began offering Haiti loans because Aristide was able to cut back governmental corruption and drug trafficking. The flow of refugees from Haiti to the U.S. virtually halted.

This was apparently unacceptable to Washington. In a drastic change of heart, the U.S. suddenly started to care about centralization of power inside the country, something that, as noted above, is never an issue in any country as long as the government is willing

to bend to Washington’s will. The U.S. began to shift its aid to Haiti to opposition
groups. Less than a year after being elected in what were widely described as free and
fair elections, Aristide was removed from office in a U.S.-sponsored military coup on
September 30, 1991.\footnote{Ibid.}

What were the reasons offered by Washington for its support? The Bush
administration made mention of Aristide’s alleged human rights abuses. That
justification can be immediately discredited due to Washington’s continual support for
other human rights abusers in the region whose crimes make anything Aristide may have
done look like a pebble next to a mountain.

This brings us to 2004. The end result is that Aristide was removed from power
by way of a military coup. At this point there are two ways to interpret how this major
event happened in Haiti. The more cynical version is that Aristide was kidnapped with
the help of the U.S., and put on a plane to forced exile in Africa. This version of the story
is what happened according to Aristide, but is vehemently denied by the U.S.\footnote{The
details of which are described in depth in a collection of transcripts from the Amy Goodman
hosted Radio Pacifica program Democracy Now titled \textit{Getting Haiti Right this Time: The U.S. and the Coup},
Common Courage Press, 2004.} In the
interest of fairness, as there is no rock solid proof of this in the form of declassified U.S.
documents for example, we are left with the only one other interpretation of the events.
This remaining interpretation tells us that the U.S. stood by and took no action while a
democratically elected President was overthrown by a group of former paramilitary
leaders.

As it relates to potential Iraqi democracy, it actually does not matter whether or
not Aristide is telling the truth. If he is, the U.S. is clearly guilty of a horrendous
violation of international law. No matter what the actual U.S. role, amidst all the talk of how important and vital democracy is that has emulated from the Bush administration since September 11, it was presented with an opportunity to make sure that democracy survived in Haiti. At best, the U.S. is guilty of indifference and hypocrisy; at worst it is guilty of the same type of aggressive behavior the U.S. condemns so many others for, Saddam Hussein the most obvious and ironic example.

**American Nation Building**

Iraq is not simply a case of American intervention; it is a combination of intervention and attempted nation building. Because it falls into this category, the following section will briefly look at America’s success at nation building. The following chart is an adapted version of what appeared in *Foreign Policy* magazine’s symposium titled “From Victory to Success: Afterwar Policy in Iraq.” The symposium included a broad range of opinions on what is to be done in Iraq now that Saddam Hussein’s regime has been demolished. While each contributor offers important insight, Minxin Pei’s article titled “Lessons of the Past” fits nicely within the overall framework of this chapter.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Country</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Multilateral or Unilateral</th>
<th>Interim Administration</th>
<th>Democracy After Ten Years?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>26.8 million</td>
<td>2001- present</td>
<td>Multilateral</td>
<td>UN Administration</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>7 million</td>
<td>1994-96</td>
<td>Multilateral</td>
<td>Local Administration</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>2.3 million</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Unilateral</td>
<td>Local Administration</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>92,000</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Unilateral</td>
<td>Local Administration</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>7 million</td>
<td>1970-73</td>
<td>Unilateral</td>
<td>U.S. Surrogate</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Vietnam</td>
<td>19 million</td>
<td>1964-73</td>
<td>Unilateral</td>
<td>U.S. Surrogate</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>3.8 million</td>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>Unilateral</td>
<td>U.S. Surrogate</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>72 million</td>
<td>1945-52</td>
<td>Multilateral</td>
<td>U.S. Administration</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Germany</td>
<td>46 million</td>
<td>1945-49</td>
<td>Multilateral</td>
<td>Multilateral Administration</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Republic</td>
<td>895,000</td>
<td>1916-24</td>
<td>Unilateral</td>
<td>U.S. Administration</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 8.1. U.S. Nation-Building, 1898-2005

What Pei’s chart shows us is that the U.S. has a long history of attempted nation building, and that if the actions were taken unilaterally Washington failed more often than not. Conversely, actions taken multilaterally were more likely to produce democracies in the long term. What the information in this chart tells us beyond these obvious truths is less clear however. Is the U.S. predestined to fail in Iraq because so many other unilateral actions taken by the country also failed? Not necessarily, but keeping in mind the title of the piece “Lessons of the Past,” it is clear that there is a definite pattern at work.

8.5 A Final Look

As stated above, this is by no means an exhaustive discussion of interventions in which the U.S. undermined or otherwise negatively affected democracy. But it does demonstrate with reasonable certainty that the U.S. operates out of its own perceived
interests, not out of goodwill and the belief that democracy should be spread throughout the world. The spread of democracy is only a goal for Washington up to a certain point. Haiti is a perfect example. Even though Aristide had become more corrupt than when he was first elected President, it is unreasonable to suggest that those now in power are even the slightest bit more democratic than Aristide. Also important is that the amount of effort needed to preserve democracy in that country would be a veritable drop in the bucket compared to what has been spent on democratizing Iraq.

Now that George W. Bush has won a second term, the case studies in this chapter carry even more weight in the discussion of Iraq’s democratic future. Looking at several recent examples of the foreign policy choices made by members of this administration, and also those made twenty years ago does not present an optimistic future for Iraq.

The Foreign Policy symposium also established that when the U.S. attempts to “go it alone,” it usually fails. The case studies and evidence presented here make a strong argument that what Washington does and how it goes about doing it will have a substantial effect on the country in question. Even if the examples mentioned in this chapter did not exist, Chapters Four through Seven demonstrated that Washington’s policy towards Iraq specifically has been marred by a considerable lack of knowledge towards the internal workings of the country, and also a willingness to blatantly undermine democracy at several points in time.

The point mentioned earlier about intervening in Afghanistan as a response to being attacked, rather than an altruistic attempt at nation building illustrates another important point here. Recalling the 2000 Presidential campaign, then candidate Bush spoke often of having a “modest” foreign policy and withdrawing troops from places like
Kosovo. Bush seemed quite skeptical of anything that looked like Clintonian nation building. The first nine months of Bush’s presidency reflect this stance. There was no major shift in U.S. foreign policy. September 11 changed that.

After being attacked, the administration viewed spreading democracy as a way of protecting the United States, not because of the moral position that people should not have to suffer under repressive, unelected regimes. This certainly sheds a more cynical light on U.S. actions, but it is not a debatable point. Whether or not these somewhat selfish goals will color the results of these policies is unknown, but it is an interesting hypothesis nonetheless.
Chapter Nine

Conclusion

The question that this research attempts to answer is whether or not Iraq will eventually blossom into a democracy. There are many ways that one could go about answering such a question. One such attempt could be to pay very close attention to the actions being taken at the state level as it relates to the formation of the new government and the writing of a new constitution. In most instances this would be a perfectly legitimate method for answering such a question. However, Iraq is a special case and while state structure and constitutional issues are certainly important in Iraq, it is my argument that they alone are not enough to answer the question that I have asked.

As this research has demonstrated, the United States has played a bigger role in Iraq over the past twenty-five years than perhaps any other actor (save for the Iraqi government of course). It is because of this involvement that the international level of analysis has trumped the state level in Iraq. To be sure, the state level is vitally important, but the fact of the matter is that were the United States to pack up its military and leave Iraq tomorrow, the country’s newly created and extremely fragile government would not be able to survive on its own. If this were to happen, all the progress that has been made up to this point would be wiped out by foreign and domestic insurgents simply because of a decision made by the United States. This is perhaps a crude and unlikely example, but I believe it illustrates my point that there is more to Iraq’s success than what Iraqis alone can do.
From this perspective, an examination of Washington’s role in Iraq since 1980, and also its current role in other developing countries where democracy is a concern, paints a troubling picture. In Iraq specifically, the U.S. has moved from actively supporting Hussein, to not removing him when presented with the opportunity, and then maintaining a policy that effectively strengthened his grip over Iraq while immensely harming ordinary Iraqis. Currently outside of Iraq, the U.S. has been content to pay relatively little attention to Afghanistan (despite evidence that suggests inaction is detrimental to U.S. interests), and has also seen fit to either sit by and watch a neighboring democracy be taken over by death squad leaders, or has actively facilitated these events. Whatever the interpretation of these events may be, it is inescapable that Iraq’s democratic future is tied to the United States, at least for the time being.

With an unflattering picture of the United States having been painted here, the natural question arises as to why exactly is the U.S. still in Iraq since democracy has been so caustically tossed aside in many other instances. An unflattering possible answer to said question is that the U.S. is still in Iraq fighting for a democracy because it has no other choice. Of the main justifications given for the war (weapons of mass destruction, links to terror groups like al-Qaeda, and democracy a distant third), creation of a democracy was the only available option left for the Bush administration that could be used to justify continued involvement, and eventually victory. If Iraq had been perceived as being a failure, Bush would have not won a second term. Through these eyes it becomes clear that Bush was forced to navigate that long hard road to Iraqi democracy. Had WMD or Osama Bin Laden been found in Iraq, then victory could have been declared, a token replacement dictator installed, and the troops brought home. This may
seem like a cynical interpretation, but I do not think it is an altogether unlikely one. Bush managed to paint himself into a corner and ironically, this may have set in motion the extended U.S. involvement that will be necessary to eventually stabilize and democratize the country.

Now the U.S. has painted itself into this corner and demonstrated a level of commitment to Iraq that is unprecedented in nature. This is a good first step, but it must not be the only step. One of the lessons that can be learned from Washington’s relationship with Iraq since the 1980’s is that it is not in this country’s long-term interests to pursue short-term goals and it is indeed in our strategic/realist interest to pursue idealist/moral policies. What I mean by this is simple. The United States only makes bigger problems for itself by enacting policies such as support for leaders like Hussein and refusal to support Iraqi uprisings.

I am not suggesting that the U.S. adopt as policy a blind moralist approach. We must realize that there are dangerous leaders and regimes in the world that will not adhere to such standards. However, that is no excuse for the U.S. to engage in the same type of behavior. Yes, removing Saddam Hussein from power in 1991 would have been a difficult task, but by doing so the U.S. could have spared the Iraqi population another 15 years of suffering with the added benefit of removing a genocidal unelected dictator in the most volatile region on earth. The reasons George W. Bush gave for getting rid of Hussein are all correct and legitimate. Yes, he is a dangerous leader; yes, he gassed his own people. But until the U.S. starts walking a straight line, it will be doomed to forever repeat the same mistakes that lead to future problems much bigger than the ones it started with. I think the case can be made that there is a convergence of doing what is morally
right and what will ultimately benefit the U.S. in the long run. As soon as policymakers in Washington realize this, the world will be a better, safer place for places like Iraq and Haiti, but also for the United States.
References


