

## Editorial

The declared goal of the US war on Iraq under the framework of the War on Terror to ensure stability and peace in the world has faced serious criticism in the last two years. Several analysts and activists believe that the US war has resulted in more conflicts than preventing them. Today terrorism is much bigger in scale and potential than what it has been before. On a global level, the war did actually very little to provide more peace or prevent any future conflicts. On the regional level, while countries of the Middle East continue to face terrorist attacks, neighboring countries are more concerned of possible expansion of terrorist threats depending on these countries' positions from US foreign policy. Bush declared to the world 'if you are not with us, you are against us.' In this way he divided the world. Today, those with the US face terrorist attacks, those against the US face terrorist attacks and US pressures.

In Iraq, Middle East stability is also threatened because various regional actors have found an outlet in Iraq to fight their enemies. The enemy can be the US, the Bath party, Arab governments, or just any other group. Meanwhile the human cost of the war is high and victims are falling from all sides. Coalition forces are facing serious losses in the field and serious criticism at home. The end result is the world is not safer; the Middle East is far from being stable.

It is for these reasons that a review of US policy in Iraq three years after the beginning of the war is necessary if we are to draw some lessons about US foreign policy and about conflict management or conflict prevention in the New World Order. This issue of ConflictINFOCUS hopes to provide a review of US policies in Iraq from a conflict management angle. In the section International Developments and Conflict Prevention, Ms. Jemima Mackenzie highlights several facts about Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), their training, working dynamics, and allocated budgets. These are discussed in light of the recently released U.S. Administration's 'Fact Sheet' for 'Defeating the Terrorists and Training Iraqi Security Forces'.

This issue then proceeds with three articles. Dr. Ian Dougal's 'Misreading Iraq: Blame American Nationalism' analyses the concept of American nationalism as a key concept in understanding US foreign policy in general and its failures in Vietnam and Iraq. Dougal argues that the US fails to understand other countries' nationalism and that other nations have no wish to be 'Americanized' as the US assumes.

The Arab view is presented by Dr. Mohamed Abd Elsalam's article 'War Generates Another: The Successive Problems of US policy in Iraq.' In this article, Abd Elsalam divides the history in Iraq in last three years into three wars. He then reviews US policies and failures that lead to these wars and discusses their implications for conflict management purposes. ■

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### THE IRAQI SECURITY FORCES, CIVIL WAR AND U.S. POLICY

Jemima Mackenzie\*

The U.S. Administration's 'Fact Sheet for 'Defeating the Terrorists and Training Iraqi Security Forces' released this March<sup>(1)</sup>, acts as an update for the U.S. policy on the 'Iraq Security Track'<sup>(2)</sup>. The document saw the U.S. Administration take a diminutive step forward with the admission<sup>(3)</sup> of infiltration and sectarianism, but reveals the dramatic extent to which U.S. policy needs to be improved.

Establishing a cohesive, transparent security force is essential to the U.S. should it wish to pullout of a secure and stable Iraq. Yet despite pouring billions of dollars<sup>(4)</sup> into training and equipping the Iraq Security Forces (ISF) over the past three years, the pre-conditions necessary for a handover of security responsibility and secure pullout are still a long way off.

The urgent need for the U.S. to re-establish a security force in Iraq has resulted in major setbacks within training programs that should have lasted for years and not months. Currently there are around 130,000<sup>(5)</sup> Iraqi armed forces personnel. The composition of the ISF sees the combination of new recruits and re-hired recruits from the ousted regime. Typically, the re-hired recruits<sup>(6)</sup> go through a 'transition' program lasting from 10 days to 3 weeks in addition to 22 hours each year of human rights training<sup>(7)</sup>. Naturally, the program proved to be insufficient to train out old practices and establish new ones. It is of little surprise that the ISF subsequently suffers from infiltration, sectarianism and the continuation of human rights abuses.

Interestingly the U.S. Government is not recording or not making public a database on the ethnic and religious composition of the ISF<sup>(8)</sup>. Taking into consideration the increasingly undeniable fact that some ISF units are turning towards militia activity<sup>(9)</sup> and bearing in mind substantial anecdotal evidence making accusations of kidnappings, torture cases and killings by armed forces personnel indisputable<sup>(10)</sup>, it seems beyond reckless that such databases are not kept. A statement made by al-Basrah Police Chief General Hassan al-Sade, exemplifies such evidence, claiming 'the militias are the real power [in Al-Basrah]...To defeat them I would need to use 75% of my forces, but I can only rely on a quarter'<sup>(11)</sup>.

Moreover, statements from military personnel, both from the coalition forces and from the Iraqi officials give evidence to the sectarian nature of the armed forces. On describing the New Iraqi Army, Nabil Younis, a senior lecturer at Baghdad University claimed, 'If you go to Army headquarters you will find one section for the

Kurds, a second for the Shiites and a third for Sunni Arabs'<sup>(12)</sup>. It is essential that this kind of segregation amongst officials is stemmed if units are to become less sectarian in nature.

The Ministry of Interior, though currently in denial, is a prime example of how detrimental infiltration (at all levels) can be to society as a whole. Currently run by the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), the MOI controls the Iraqi Police Service (IPS), the Special Police Commando Battalions and the Public Order Brigades. On taking over the Ministry of Interior, SCIRI allowed the infiltration of the dubious Badr Organisation into the security forces. Even with the best of intentions,

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- (1) Fact Sheet: Strategy for Victory: Defeating the Terrorists and Training Iraqi Security Forces. Hard copy of Presidential speech - March 13 2006 (office of the Press Secretary). <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/03/20060313-6.html>
- (2) Initial 'Security Track' policies stated in 'National Strategy for Victory in Iraq' - National Security Council 2003. The National Strategy for Victory focused the Security track on a 'Clear, Hold, Build' strategy; clear Iraq from 'the enemy', hold the influence of the Iraqi Government, build new local institutions advancing civil society and the rule of law. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/iraq\\_strategy\\_nov2005.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/iraq_strategy_nov2005.html)
- (3) Only the infiltration of the National Police is mentioned. The sectarianism of the army and many ministries is omitted.
- (4) A news article reviewing US budget by the U.S. Department of Defence claims the U.S. administration intends to 'designate \$3.7 billion for the Iraqi Security Forces Fund' in this year alone. [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Apr2006/20060407\\_4754.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Apr2006/20060407_4754.html)
- (5) The figure given by the 2005 updated version of the 'National Strategy for Victory in Iraq' is 212,000. A far higher figure than is internationally recognised to be accurate. The above figure is for personnel who have completed training programs and are in operation.
- (6) i.e. members of the security forces originally disbanded following the fall of the ousted regime. Although cautious in doing so, the U.S. does allow the re-hiring of officials who served with the Ba'athist party.
- (7) 'Country Report' on Iraq by 'Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour for 2005, released on March 8 2006 <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61689.htm>
- (8) American Enterprise Institute article by Vance Serchuk: [http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.foreign,pubID.24027/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.foreign,pubID.24027/pub_detail.asp)
- (9) Mainly due to the individual's loyalty to his religious cleric and not his authority.
- (10) One well referenced source of such information is the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor country report on Iraq (see 7), released on March 8 2006. The document provides many eyewitness accounts of 'police kidnappings' in addition to cases of revealed corruption within institutions.
- (11) Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty: 4 November 2005 Vol.8 No. 37
- (12) Nabil Younis, original source of interview; International Crisis Group 2005. Quote from International Crisis Group report 'The Next Iraqi War? Sectarianism and Civil Conflict': <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3980&t=1>

it is not possible to integrate a militia organisation, with preexisting loyalties successfully into a 'national unity' police force. The consequence of such actions resulted in the 'steep rise in killings of Sunnis that could not be explained by the fight against insurgents alone'<sup>(13)</sup>.

Furthermore, corrupt officials within the MOI also allowed the functioning of various poorly run detention centers which were accused of systematically torturing and abusing detainees. The discovery of the Jadiriyah Bunker<sup>(14)</sup> which contained 169 tortured, malnourished and predominantly Sunni detainees demonstrated the severity of such corruptly run centers. The brutality of the human rights violations<sup>(15)</sup> in detention centers run by the MOI reinforces the need for a more realistic approach to re-establishing transparent security forces loyal to the government and not corrupt institutions. It is important also to remember that the Iraqi peoples suffered, or practiced such human rights violations for decades. A three-week 'transition course' will not remove these practices, nor will it end corruption.

Publicised scandals giving evidence to the corruption of such ministries and the everyday experience of the Iraqi peoples has naturally undermined the trust in the ISF. Subsequently the public have turned to militias or established 'neighbourhood watch' groups to provide the security they feel the ISF cannot.

The U.S. on its part, has established three 'corrective measures' in both training and recruiting of the Iraqi National Police to help resolve some of these problems<sup>(16)</sup>. These are to teach new recruits the role of the police force in a non-discriminative, democratic society, to diversify the ranks of the police forces and to remove those 'Leaders in the National Police'<sup>(17)</sup> who show any loyalty to militias. This strategy, however, may be a case of too little, too late. The ISF personnel operating in Iraq, whether military or police are those who have been subject to the poor training programs, corruption, infiltration and sectarianism. It is these forces that will operate during this uneasy era, not the forces undergoing the corrective training. What U.S. policy must now focus on is avoiding further segregation of the ISF. If the U.S. Administration truly believes that 'Failure is Not an Option', then it must at all costs prevent the division of units along sectarian lines which will result in the subsequent collapse of the ISF.

Consequentially, this three-point plan needs essentially to be far more meticulous and most importantly should be applied (with immediate effect) to the ISF as a whole, not just the National Police. Databases of the ISF personnel's ethnicity and religion must be recorded. Such data could help to create a far more effective deployment system, which could ultimately reduce sectarian tensions felt between units and the public. Specifically, deployment of

units of predominately Shia ethnicity into predominately-Sunni areas<sup>(18)</sup> (and vice-versa) must be reduced. With failing trust in the ISF, it is important to deploy units that evenly reflect the ethnic and religious make-up of the district.

Those with misplaced loyalties or suspected of disloyalty must be removed from both the ISF and the ministries. In addition death squads run by government officials must be disbanded and the officials responsible publicly recognised and charged. Furthermore, it is important to increase funding and resources and continue to initiate Iraqi departments created to stem corruption<sup>(19)</sup>.

Simply diversifying the Iraq Security Forces will not help to control Iraq's ominous situation. Corruption stems from within the Ministries and trickles down to the individual recruit. Once national policies are established to tackle the security dilemma from all fronts, the ISF will start to behave as an independent homogenous institution. Then can the secure reduction in coalition forces commence.

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(13) Ibid

(14) One of first government run bunkers found in 2005 under an Interior Ministry building. The discovery of the bunker led to further searches.

(15) Similar to torture methods used under the ousted regime, the detention centers carried out such practices as beatings, electric shocks, food and water deprivation and overcrowding.

(16) 'Fact Sheet: Strategy for Victory: Defeating the Terrorists and Training the Iraqi Security Forces'

(17) Ibid

(18) The case of Tel Afar, well documented in International Crisis Group report 'The Next Iraqi War? Sectarianism and Civil Conflict', shows the importance of deploying diverse units.

(19) A successful example of an anti-corruption organisation was the 'Interagency Inspection Team' set up by previous Prime Minister Ibrahim Al-Jaafari.

### MISREADING IRAQ: BLAME AMERICAN NATIONALISM

Dr. Ian Dougal\*

More than three years into the US campaign in Iraq, the situation on the ground is becoming more and more unstable. Political stability, fragile from the beginning, appears to be unravelling rather than tightening. Assuming the US stays the course in Iraq (as it assures us it will do in its recently published 2006 National Security Strategy and its 2005 National Strategy for Victory in Iraq), it faces a long and perilous occupation of a country that is edging its way ever closer to civil war between its Shia and Sunni populations. While long-term sectarian violence is far from inevitable, an important question that Washington ought to ask itself is how it managed to misread the sentiments, loyalties, and ambitions of the various constituents of the Iraqi population.

The answer lies in the inability of the United States to appreciate the strength of sectarian 'nationalism' among Iraq's Shias, Sunnis, or Kurds, and the passion that such sentiment inspires. It is not the first time that the United States has failed to see the power of foreign nationalism, as it has been a blind spot in American foreign policy for decades. Whether Vietnam in the 1960s or Iran in 2006, the US has repeatedly failed to appreciate that other peoples have their own political ideals and political pride, quite independent of what the US believes is 'best' for them.

Nationalism is a nebulous term in its own right, and has been hotly debated within international relations<sup>(1)</sup>. Broadly, nationalism is an expression of group identity, rooted in variations of territorial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or historical pride, and fuelled by national stories and myths. Akin to romantic attachment, nationalism can be both positive and negative, in that it can unite populations and inspire creativity and enterprise, while at the same time it can also justify oppressive and destructive policy towards 'outsiders'. Nationalism, in short, is a catchall term used to describe forms of group-identity bonding, which creates a sense of belonging and, importantly, a desire for political organisation along nationalist lines.

The United States has its own very distinct form of nationalism, wrapped in American values and political principles, sometimes labelled American 'exceptionalism'<sup>(2)</sup>. The problem lies in the assumption in the US that its own brand of nationalism can, indeed should, be transplanted across the globe. Hence a naïve yet crusading foreign policy that pushes America's values on the rest of the world with a missionary zeal not unlike the 'white man's burden' of the British Empire. The irony is that the United States, despite its own reified

exceptionalism, is remarkably ignorant and dismissive of anyone else's deeply held political values. As Minxin Pei suggests in a 2003 Foreign Policy article, 'despite the high level of nationalism in American society, US policymakers have a remarkably poor appreciation of the power of nationalism in other societies and have demonstrated neither skill nor sensitivity in dealing with its manifestations abroad.'<sup>(3)</sup>

The US has consistently misread, ignored, or dismissed foreign nationalist signals, and this helps explain the relative lack of success of its 'nation-building' interventionism in recent decades. Misreading the sectarian 'nationalisms' bubbling throughout Iraq is the latest in a historical cycle of cases where the US has fundamentally misunderstood the motives and passions of foreign populations. Viewing the conflict in Iraq through the lens of its own exceptionalism, the US has misread the complex and fragmented ethno-nationalistic dynamics of Iraqi society, resulting in oversimplified and inadequate US policy.

#### Defining American Nationalism

Nationalism is something of a dirty word in the United States, associated with 'old Europe' and imperialist visions of grandeur. Nonetheless, the United States is a remarkably nationalistic country, exhibiting the hallmarks of rampant national pride. At home, there is patriotic symbolism across American society: examples include the overabundant flags on public and private buildings, a penchant for the national anthem, the 'pledge of allegiance' recited at the beginning of every school day, and the label 'un-American' for those who would criticise US foreign policy. In the US these dynamics are usually referred to as 'patriotism' or 'exceptionalism', more palatable terms that do not inspire the negative connotations associated with nationalism. Nonetheless, whatever the label, themes of American nationalism provide the US with its self-image and worldview, which forms the basis of its foreign policy.

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(1) A good introductory text is Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 1983).

(2) For more detailed discussion of the characteristics of American exceptionalism see Ian Dougal, 'Defining American Exceptionalism', APG Conference Paper, 2001. Available online at <http://www.huron.ac.uk/Docs/IR/APGPaperDefiningExceptionalism.doc>

(3) Minxin Pei, 'The Paradoxes of American Nationalism', *Foreign Policy* 136, May/June 2003, p. 31.

To describe briefly its chief characteristics, American exceptionalism is a celebration of the uniqueness and special virtue of the United States relative to all other countries. It assumes a global leadership role for the US, universalises American values, and tends toward a crusade motif in US foreign policy. Its nationalism elevates America to a higher moral plane, and underscores the narcissism that runs through US foreign policy. The self-perceived 'logic' of its own exceptionalism reduces the ability of the US to empathise with alternative perspectives on international relations, especially other forms of nationalism.

Representations of American nationalism usually carry, either explicitly or implicitly, the suggestion that other states or societies would be better off following the American model. Moreover, it carries with it the assumption that citizens of other states or societies are themselves equally committed to American values. As Loren Baritz, an observer of American nationalism notes, 'a whisper runs throughout our history that the people of the world really want to be like us, regardless of what they or their political leaders say.'<sup>(4)</sup> Whatever the US may believe, this is simply not the case. Non-Americans do not follow the call of American nationalism. They aspire to their own nationalisms, drawn from their own cultural identities.

So America's own representation of nationalism blinds the United States to the subtleties of international relations, including the fact that other peoples have alternative nationalist narratives. American exceptionalism reduces the world to a simple dynamic: that the 'good' people of the world agree with America's ideals, and therefore the US should set about constructing such a world. Those who resist America's design are defined as the enemy not only of the US but also of 'freedom' everywhere. This is both the fallacy and the tragedy of what the US has attempted to achieve in Iraq.

### The US in Iraq

The 2003 invasion of Iraq was inspired and motivated by several parallel interests that have been well documented elsewhere, hence there is no need to repeat them. Whatever its motivation (whether WMD, oil, or democracy), what the US singularly failed to predict was the strength of Iraq's own home grown nationalisms. Iraq is of course an historic amalgam of at least three 'nationalist' groupings - Shias, Sunnis, and Kurds - each with their respective (perhaps incompatible) visions of what post-Saddam Iraq should look like. Independent analysts suggested that the main challenge for the US, and the litmus test for its success in Iraq, would be whether it could provide a stable and peaceful environment in which to reconcile the sectarian divide between these three groups. Moreover, it was argued that this process would be fraught with

danger, because historical enmities and resurgent nationalism could ignite sectarian instability, even 'civil war across Iraq.

The United States, however, was less prepared for such eventualities than it ought to have been, largely because its own exceptionalism screened out such pessimistic realities. Initially the United States expected Iraqis universally to celebrate their 'liberation' from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein. Consistent with its own nationalist myths, the US assumed that all Iraqis wanted to follow America's example, that they shared the same basic worldview, with the same priorities and underlying sense of justice. This was a naïve and fundamentally flawed assumption, and sowed the seeds of much of the confusion and turmoil that has followed.

The initial insurgency across Iraq was labelled in Washington as the work of either Saddam loyalists or al Qaeda terrorists. While there was some validity to these claims, it was an oversimplification, as is so often the case when the US labels its opponents. Those who opposed the US occupation of Iraq were 'enemies of freedom', thoughtless rogues devoid of legitimate political claims or goals. While some of the insurgents fit this label, the United States did not recognise that there was a growing tide of resistance that reflected much more complex dynamics bubbling within Iraq. These were the dynamics of Iraq's sectarian nationalisms, resurfacing in the domestic power vacuum that the US invasion had precipitated.

Having failed to properly identify the ethnic-nationalist landscape (and rivalries) in Iraq, US policy remained stuck in a wrong-faced direction. The US waged war on supposedly anarchic 'terrorists', while Sunnis and Shias mounted their own sectarian campaigns against each other, with increasing levels of violence. What we have witnessed is an ever-increasing chasm across Iraq, which has fractured the foundation of Iraqi civil society. The United States has been impotent to prevent the escalation of Sunni versus Shia violence, and this is at least partly due to its inability to come to terms with the sectarian nationalisms that underpin the conflict. Iraq is not a country waiting to be 'Americanised' (either politically, economically, or socially) as the US naively continues to believe. This is a myth born of and perpetuated by American exceptionalism, which blinkers Washington from reality. Instead, Iraq is a country torn by its own sectarian nationalisms, a country on the brink of civil war, and until Washington removes its own nationalist blindfold, then US policy in Iraq is decidedly unhelpful.

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(4) Loren Baritz, *Backfire: A History of How American Culture Led Us Into Vietnam and Made Us Fight the Way We Did* (New York: William and Morrow Company, 1985), 30.

We should not be optimistic about America's ability to shed its own nationalist blindfold. It has failed to do so in previous cases where it has met foreign nationalisms that it misread or ignored. Perhaps the most tragic of these was Vietnam, where the US waged a war to 'Americanise' a country that had no desire to be 'Americanised'. The Vietnamese people were proud and vociferous in their nationalism, having fought tirelessly to throw off colonial oppression. The United States, however, blinded by its own exceptionalism, viewed the conflict as one in which it was 'saving' the Vietnamese people from the 'enemies of freedom'. The resultant US campaign in Vietnam had tragic consequences, mostly for the people of Vietnam.<sup>(5)</sup>

Recent events in Iran have triggered another round of political rhetoric inspired by American nationalism. Here, if we are to believe speculation about US military action against Iran, the United States will once again misread foreign nationalism by wrapping itself in its own unique worldview. Seymour Hersh has claimed the Bush White House plans to bomb Iran in order to 'save' the people of Iran from their own government.<sup>(6)</sup> If so, then the assumptions are familiarly naïve: that the people of Iran really want to be 'Americanised', hence they will side with the United States once the bombs begin to fall and turn against their own government. If this is Washington's plan then it shows complete disregard for Iranian nationalism, the very nationalism that has inspired Iranians to rally against their 'axis of evil' label and to stand united against recent American threats. If the US uses military force against the supposed 'enemies of freedom' in Iran it will only strengthen Iranian nationalism, and in turn strengthen resistance to the US - precisely the opposite of what Washington hopes to accomplish.

America's exceptionalist worldview blinkers it from the reality that other countries or sub-state groups have their own nationalist traditions, which the United States would be wise to respect. All too often, the United States promotes its own worldview as if it were universal, ignoring or disrespecting alternative narratives, and thus contributing to the general level of resentment toward American foreign policy. In Iraq today, as in Vietnam in the past, and perhaps Iran in the future, the US needs to look inside itself, to recognise its own nationalism, and learn to mute it where it does not fit. Only then can the US begin to offer effective hegemonic leadership. In addressing Iraq's future, it must look not to its own American exceptionalism, but rather into the complex maze of Iraq's own sectarian nationalisms. Because if it does not learn to do so, then we will witness not only further meltdown in Iraq, but potentially wider conflict across the Middle East and elsewhere. ■

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(5) For an account of American nationalism and the Vietnam War see Loren Baritz, *Backfire*.

(6) Seymour M. Hersh, 'The Iran Plans', *The New Yorker*, April 17, 2006.

### WAR GENERATES ANOTHER: THE SUCCESSIVE PROBLEMS OF US POLICY IN IRAQ

Dr. Mohamed Abd Elsalam\*

The events in Iraq that took place between 2003 and 2006 represent a real test field in which all arguments about conflict prevention can be tested and specific results can be reached. The Iraqi scene has witnessed three wars since April 2003; between the US British forces and the Iraqi army, immediately followed by guerilla warfare between Iraqi insurgents and Al-Qaeda elements against US troops and the New Iraqi Army, and finally Iraq verging towards 'civil war' between the Shiites and Sunnis of Iraq. 'A war generates another', as put by Saad Al-Bazaz in his famous book. All of these wars were deemed inevitable and legal by all involved parties. However, the concept of 'victory' in war or ending it with minimum gains by those who waged it is not clear.

The responsibility of the situation can simply be placed on what is considered to be the 'first sin' by public opinion circles in the region. This 'first sin' is the decision of the Bush administration to invade Iraq. This decision is largely considered a moral not practical judgment and can be applied to the first war. However, the period following the downfall of Baghdad saw the constant complication of conflict situations as new parties, both Iraqi and non-Iraqi emerged as main actors. With time, the US administration was losing control whilst vainly trying to regain it. In the end, this presented a unique Iraqi pattern, yielding different lessons on how to manage the conflicts in the region. Many of these lessons bring back the obvious theoretical opinions established previously with armed conflicts. Those who disregard these opinions will suffer from great losses.

#### Army against Army

From the point of view of most countries in the region, the first war was not necessary. Saddam Hussein's regime had posed, for a long time, a fundamental threat to the neighboring countries' security, as was shown by the long ideological dispute with Syria's Ba'ath party, Iraq's eight year war with the Islamic revolution's regime in Tehran and in 1990 when Iraq's forces invaded and occupied Kuwait. Added to these are the various threats imposed by its strength and orientation on Saudi Arabia's security, Egypt's standing and Jordan's balances. However, despite Kuwait's declared support and Iran's veiled support, most countries in the region were overly against Iraq's invasion. Regardless of US aims, most of these countries have their special reasons, such as;

1) It was impossible to resist the pressures of the public opinion, which opposed the invasion due to memories of the 'imperialism era' that the invasion evokes. Also the invaded country is an Arab country, its people have

close relations with other nations, and the prevalence of Islamic nationalist inclination in the street as well as high sensitivities towards the US policy.

2) Arab political regimes were disturbed by the idea of invading a country and toppling its political regime by an armed force. The concern was that this might lead to the establishment of a general principle, which would threaten other countries. Arab leaders were also aware of complications in 'Iraq's landscape' and the consequences the invasion could have on the security and subsequently the balance of countries in the region.

However, most Arab countries provided the necessary military facilities for mobilization and fighting. This was calculated to the effect that once the Arab countries knew the decision to invade was final; they offered their full support to the US. No one wanted to be out of the game.

The justifications announced by the US administration to launch the war were not convincing. They did not present conclusive proof that Iraq had reactivated its nuclear program in post 1998. It has been proved that Iraq did not do that. Also, all that has been said regarding the ties of Saddam Hussein's regime with Al-Qaeda were baseless. Thus, it was not possible to accept the invasion of Iraq in the context of the war against terrorism. Even the idea of Iraq threatening its neighbors was incoherent. The economic sanctions and political siege had debilitated the Iraqi regime so much that it was no longer able to even hope for survival. There were even indications that the Iraqi president was ready to come to an understanding with the US, and perhaps he was thinking of leaving power. War was launched by a decision, which seems absolute and very necessary to the US Administration.

Today this mistake is still haunting the US Administration. Its officials have come under severe criticism due to what has been proved to be dubious 'war reasons' and what has generally been said to be a wrong war, in the wrong direction and in the wrong time. The US Administration says it has achieved an important objective by freeing Iraqis from a tyrant like Saddam Hussein and that it would be a better place, though currently it is not. There are widespread theories about alternative objectives for the war connected to control over Iraqi oil, or the regaining of American credibility of deterrence, or fighting Al-Qaeda in an external theatre. But this does not solve the problem. Developments have proved the war did not end by the cessation of regular military operations

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and that the cost of invasion was too severe materially and humanly. The final result after the three years is destruction, not control of 'the target'. The lessons here in regard to conflict management are clear;

- 1) It is not possible to disregard the established idea, which states that using armed force to solve conflicts remains the last resort. Using armed force as an easy way out, without it being necessity, could lead to real catastrophes, regardless of how military power is balanced.
- 2) Toppling a political regime is considered a totally uncalculated objective in conflicts amongst countries. It could produce a state of chaos leading to the breakdown of the state. There are so many complex entanglements between the regime and the state in the Arab world, that it is impossible to imagine the idea of surgical separation. The belief that there will only be 'collateral damages' is unthinkable.

There are some indications that the US has realized these points clearly in regard to this kind of war. There is no longer talk about the next target following Iraq. Armed forces or waging war is no longer an immediate option for the US Administration in its dealing with other targeted cases in the region, i.e. Iran and Syria, and it no longer thinks along the lines of simply 'toppling' political regimes or violently pressuring them in a way that leads to their eventual breakdown.

### Units against Groups

The second war was not historically inevitable. There are more cases of countries, which have witnessed severe resistance and violent rebellions after foreign invasions than those which have not. Many armies managed to settle in 'the occupied counties' for decades before historical factors demanded their pullout. There are some indications that the American planner from this perspective is thinking in terms of cases such as Japan and Germany. Also the limited resistance in Afghanistan following the toppling of the Taliban regime encouraged this approach. Many reports issued by the US research centers before the invasion were talking about 'pockets' of resistance that could be dealt with using limited forces. There was no mainstream in the American assessments referring to a second war in Iraq. It was an unexpected issue, and the US Administration took much time to admit that there is a problem and that it is waging another war.

It cannot be argued that what happened in Iraq and what will continue for years, was inevitable or not. But what occurred afterwards illustrates that the US administration did not think deeply into the post-war stage, nor did it plan for it. It has depended on a set of presumptions that were successively proved totally wrong. Toppling the regime didn't mean the end of the war. The defeat of Iraqi

forces has taken the form of vanishing not surrendering. The non-Sunni Iraqis adopted 'neutral' positions towards US troops. The state 'vacuum' which emerged as a result of the Baghdad downfall has led to the emergence of 'the clerics' and not 'opponents coming from exile'. The scene of the American soldier watching in total surprise, chaos and looting which followed the Capital downfall, summarized the entire situation, uncontrollability if not handled with sensitivity. It seemed that there was no prepared 'scenario' to manage the situation in detail. There was just a conviction that the US will be the larger power in Iraq, and it will be able to impose these assumptions regardless of the situations that could emerge as a result of the war.

What happened afterward is known. There are acceptable assessments of it. Big mistakes were made. Most important of these is the decision taken by the first Administrator of the Coalition Provision Authority in Iraq to disband the Iraqi army and dissolve the party and security organs without any compensation, alternatives or calculations. Thus, Sunnis have found themselves in the streets outside the new regime, despite American early plans, which considered this scenario. (It was made sure that the 'lay off' would be limited to senior officers and officials with ties to the Ba'athist regime and left the main blocs of the state's institutions intact). The 'Iraqi factor,' however, began to affect US policy. Reprisal directions began to appear against the Arab Sunnis from the Iraqi Shiite factions who spoke for themselves through policies such as 'de-Ba'athification'. It did not take much time for the direction towards clash to begin and in turn a development to 'state of war', especially under the following factors:

- 1) The Sunni bloc in Iraq has failed to accommodate with the new situation, and started to launch its operations against the US troops and all institutions and symbols of the new regime. It was joined by members of Saddam's army which survived the war almost intact, and a wide range insurgency began in the middle regions of Iraq.
- 2) The declared and undeclared violent clashes between semi-military Shiite militias with Sunni elements have led to the escalation of vengeful inclination, with the suspected presence of 'death squads' inside Iraq, along with Iranian support to some of these militias' operations.
- 3) All radical elements in the region have joined the frontline, as the Sunni triangle attracted the violent elements of the Iraqi religious groups and Arab volunteers. The most violent cells of Al-Qaeda have moved to 'Mesopotamia', in addition to organized crime elements, making a diverse range of sources of fire in Iraq.
- 4) The intervention of neighboring countries in the violent interactions in Iraq to affect the US policy and internal balances in Iraq, especially by Syria and Iran.

The lessons of US policy on this level were specific. They are more perplexing than what has been learnt during the first war. The US policy has less ability to manage this war or to avoid its escalation. In this regard the following can be mentioned;

- 1) Any party can start the war, but he cannot guarantee to end it in the time it wants and with the outcome it assumes. This is one of the undisputed facts which emphasizes also that using force must always be considered in the 'no-option state.' There is no alternative but to use force, this is especially important when considering the outcome of the war when victory and defeat are no longer clear.
- 2) The post-'regular war' stage has become an integral part of military operations in itself. The end of the main military operations does not mean the end of 'the state of war', especially when the matter relates to wars of intervention in states' territories and internal affairs, and not wars on borders aiming only to thrust troops or defeating armies.

The American political dilemma in this stage appeared that all options faced were difficult and no solution could be found. Troops staying in Iraq would not lead to the resolving of the problem and the pullout of troops would not lead to a cessation of violence. On the contrary, the war was imposing its own logic, which shed off prospects of escalation whatsoever the American behavior.

### All against All

The first war was not inevitable, and the prospects of the second war were 'grey' but the third war seemed totally inevitable. At the beginning of the second year of the American operation in Iraq, there were worrying indications regarding the track of internal interactions in Iraq. US troops had begun to lose control over the security conditions with a state of ineffectiveness and lacking competence in managing operations. It appeared that all alternatives for moving operations to another context by transferring this mission to the international forces under the cover of the United Nations or large numbers of multi-national forces or Arab-Islamic forces, was an impractical alternative. Two points were fundamental;

- 1) That the current political process in Iraq did not affect the extent of violent operation. Forming governments, conducting elections and drafting constitutions and even arresting Saddam Hussein himself did not appear to have any impact on violence. The dominant logic of violent acts is totally separated from the dreamy framework of the political process. They are as 'two parallel Iraq'; they have no relation with each other.
- 2) The alternative that has always been assumed to solve the problem leading to the pullout of the US troops and ending of violence has been facing huge

problems. The process of rebuilding Iraqi security forces has been delayed and since proceeded at a very slow pace. The troops and volunteer centers have come under violent attacks launched by opposing elements, and those who were recruited have been subject to infiltration by Iraqi factions. Thus the last resort has been facing problems.

In the meantime, all military operations in Iraq were indicating escalation of war to unprecedented levels. The number of deaths among Iraqis was much higher than those of 'outsiders'. The number of Iraqi civilian deaths was also higher than Iraqi security forces deaths. The signs of civil war, thus, began to emerge. There was already failure in the ability to form an effective central government, bloody operations launched by Sunni elements against Shiite elements, attacks carried out by semi-military Shiite elements against Sunni elements and wide scale operations aimed at sensitive religious places. These operations could lead to the loss of control. The state of war has become no longer confined to two sides of internal and external, it now involves many more parties. Assessments have been made emphasizing already that Iraq has begun entering the stage of civil war. Its possible eruption was strongly refuted by the Iraqis using 'pretexts', all proven wrong. Warlords were much more powerful than politicians. The currents of deracination, revenge and separation, made the terrorists have the higher voice.

The American Administration has been trying to tackle all options to avoid this stage. It sent many committees to Iraq to assess the situation and prepare recommendation on what can be done. Important recommendations have been issued but they seemed always overdue. Attempts have been made to recall the veterans of the Iraqi army, and there were attempts to conclude a deal with Sunni Arabs. Contacts have been made with insurgents themselves and a continuing tug of war with Tehran and Damascus, to stop their intervention in Iraqi internal affairs. This coincided with regular violent military operations against elements when they tried to gain control over wide regions. The process of rebuilding the Iraqi army has accelerated in the hope that developing economic situations could help calm the situation in Iraq. But conflict in Iraq seems as if turning into an extended social conflict, similar to tribal war which always has no cool logic, making it impossible to rationally manage it. This drove Donald Rumsfeld, the US Secretary of Defense, to resort to history affirming that Iraq through its history was not stable 'and will not be stable now'. Finally another committee has been formed to prepare final assessment on how to exit from this stalemate.

As far as conflict management is concerned, lessons in this case are still forming. When conflict came to the verge of civil war, talk about 'conflict management' became difficult. This kind of war is the most complicated.

Depending on experience in the region, in cases of Lebanon, Sudan and Somalia and to some extent Algeria, these wars continue for a long period. These wars also inflict heavy losses. The external forces tend to get away immediately from these wars, maintaining intervention by indirect means. In this context, the Iraqi case, with all its complications, will cast its own shadow. Iraq has witnessed during its history all kinds of external wars and internal conflicts, but no civil war. This time it will be clear whether Iraq will head ultimately to 'the last battle'. Here the US policy seems unable to do much. America, as Winston Churchill once said, always does the right thing, but after testing all other options. The problem here is that it is not easy to see the right thing, despite the US Administration's desire to reach it. ■

#### About ConflictINFOCUS:

Conflict In Focus is a bi-monthly online bulletin designed to provide busy readers in the EMP policy community and interested general public with a concise and regular update on the current state-of-affairs of the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict in the Middle East. Conflict in Focus is compiled by RCCP/IAI, drawing on multiple sources including the resources of our software (CCP).

Conflict in Focus alerts readers to situations where, in the near future, there is a particular risk of new or significantly escalated conflict. In specific, the newsletter is divided into three sections. The first section includes accounts of

and comments on EU developments and policies during the previous two months in the field of conflict prevention.

In its second section, Conflict in Focus summarizes recent developments in a conflict analysis perspective, using our CCP model of analysis, where the overall situation in each case has significantly deteriorated.

The third and final section aims at providing experts and researchers from the Partnership with a forum for common work and collaboration. Toward this end, the newsletter will host, in each issue, two short articles, one by a European scholar and the other by a Middle Eastern one on conflict prevention in the Middle East, with the final aim of provoking a debate on such sensitive subject.



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