POST WAR IRAQ: UNDERSTANDING AND SHAPING THE FORCES OF POSITIVE CHANGES

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Abstract

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 has triggered international condemnations and a worldwide fear. The speed at which the regime of Saddam Hussein crumbled has left the people in the Middle East in great astonishment, disbelief, deep suspicions and dismay. Initially, the Iraqi people displayed intense hope for a better future. Gradually, however, the Iraqis have witnessed increasing violence, chaos and insecurity under a lingering foreign occupation. The paper discusses the role of Iraq in the Arab and Islamic World, the major political players in Iraq, and the policy options for Washington. Three policy options are identified: exiting Iraq, monopolizing power, and working with moderate Iraqi leaders for building sound institutions and free direct elections. These options are discussed and their strengths and shortcomings are identified.

Post War Iraq: Understanding and Shaping the Forces of Positive Change

The US presidential election debate has disproportionably situated the Iraqi question in the collective memory of the American public. It has, therefore, drawn ordinary people into a foreign policy arena and made it

impossible to the Bush administration to escape public scrutiny. Solving the Iraqi question satisfactory has become pivotal for President Bush's aspiration for constructing reputable legacy. Indeed, the prominence of Iraq in the presidential debate imposes certain limitations on the Bush administration. These constraints narrow the maneuvering arena for the administration and its prospects for devising justifications incompatible with the promise for building a unified democratic Iraq. In light of the fact that the administration constantly has changed its reasons for invading Iraq, failure to deliver on its promise in Iraq may adversely impact Bush legacy.

President Bush's characterization of the invasion of Iraq as a "catastrophic success" depicts a unique reality: a relative ease in invading a country but difficulty in governing it. Indeed, the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 is similar in many aspects to the Mongol invasion of Iraq in 1258. While the Mongols were effective in ending the Abbasids regime, they had to forcefully suppress the Iraqis into submission. Years later, the Mongols exited Iraq but left it in ruins. It differs, however, from the British invasion of Iraq during the First World War. The British faced fierce resistance from the Ottomans and the Iraqis alike (Alkatry, 2003). The majority of the Iraqis did not accept the British domination. Consequently, the British government had to rely heavily on the minority in what is called today the Mousel –Samara- Ramady triangle. By alienating the majority, the British were distrusted by the Iraqis. Ultimately, the British's domination of Iraq came to an end after the 1958 revolution which ended the British installed monarchy.

The unrest in Iraq and the ongoing violence since March 2003 has been costly to both Iraqis and Americans. They demonstrate that Washington was either indifferent to the consequences of unbridled foreign ventures or its foreign policy toward Iraq and the Middle East in general lacks foresight and discipline. In either case, a reconsideration of the preemptive policy and post war plan becomes prudent. Speculations about what might happen in Iraq immediately after the invasion are abundant. Experts and politicians have longed warned about what could happen and the steps needed to avoid troubles and minimize threats. Two of the most authoritative sources that warned about aftermath of the invasion are the CIA and the Royal Institute for International Affairs. The CIA's National Intelligence Council in 2002 and January 2003 provided an assessment of the situation in Iraq. Its assessment was highly pessimistic. The worse case

scenario was that Iraq would have a civil war. The most favorable scenario described the outcome of the invasion of Iraq as a country whose stability remain tenuous in terms of security, political, and economy (Jehl, 2004). The British Royal Institute of International Affairs (2004) provided three scenarios for post war Iraq: fragmentation, holding together, and regional remake. The first scenario predicts that Iraq will experience chaos and fragmentation. Under the prospect of "holding together," the Iraqi interim government may be able to keep most of the major Iraqi players engaged politically but no one will be happy. The third assessment revolves around the prospect of chaotic instability that would induce the neighboring states (Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iran, Israel, etc.) to interfere resulting in the unraveling of the state system in the region.

These assessments, even among the most favorable, are intolerable and have grave consequences for the welfare and security of the Iraqi people. Indeed, the unfolding events in Iraq threaten to undo rather than remake the Middle East. The unrest and disappointment in Iraq could well result in creating conditions in the region hospitable for extremism and thus initiate a new phase of cultural clash (Ali, 2004). Developing policies and strategies to contain the downfall of Iraq, therefore, should become an utmost priority for policy makers in Washington and the international community. This paper is designed to map the complexity of the Iraqi political scene and its major political stakeholders. The centrality of the Iraqi question in the Arab and Muslim World is briefly discussed. Moreover, the paper will suggest policy options essential for minimizing the threat to Iraq and its existence.

Iraq and the Middle East

Many Western scholarly and media commentators view Iraq in the context of the Saddam's regime. Therefore, vital issues are ignored, priorities are confused and thoughtful dialogue is squandered. Long before Islam, Iraq was the land of thriving civilizations. There were the Assyrians and the Chaldean. These civilizations had enriched the world and contributed to the advancement of knowledge, culture, and economic evolution. Since the inception of Islam in Arabia around 610, Iraq became an integral part and arguably the most vital member of the Arab and Islamic culture. Omer Ibn Al-kutab, the second Caliph, (634-44) considered Iraq as a public land and used it in his expedition eastward. Recognizing the

importance of Iraq to the emerging Muslim state, Imam Ali, the fourth Caliph, (656-661) moved the capital from Arabia, to Kufa, Iraq. The Ommayed dynasty (661-750) was resented by the Iraqis and thus moved the capital to Damascus. The Ommayed caliphs appointed *walis* (governors) on Iraq who were known for their loyalty and brutality.

The demise of the Ommayeds and ascendancy of Abbasids Empire (750-1258) situated Iraq as the central for Arab/Muslim Empire. The Abbasids moved the capital back to Iraq and Baghdad became the cultural and the economic hub of a vast empire. Since then, Arabs and Muslims instantaneously call Baghdad the "City of Peace" or the "City of Al-Rashed" (caliph, 786-809) and Iraq the land of civilizations. After the Mongol invasion, subsequent dynasties controlled Iraq but all had failed to win the hearts and minds of Iraqis. The British colonial power established a monarchy in Iraq in 1920 and brought Fasil bin Hussein of Arabia to be the King. During British domination which lasted until 1958, there were many Iraqi uprisings; the most notable were in 1920, 1941, 1956, and 1958. It was during that era that progressive organizations were established in Iraq (e.g., the Communist Party, National Democratic Party, People Party, etc.). The July 14, 1958 Revolution was a turning point in Iraq history. During this period as the Communist Party assumed vital posts in the government, Iraq also played a central role in Arab politics. Iraq also provided assistance to Algerian Revolution ending the French colonization. Furthermore, the new government initiated the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Army. Most importantly, the Iraqi progressive movements energetically cooperated with Arab progressive movements and the Soviet Union to change the political landscape in the Arab World and the Middle East. These developments altered the political environment in the region, challenged the existing Arab autocratic political regimes, and alarmed the U.S. and Britain. .

In 1963, the U.S. organized a bloody coup d'etat which brought the Baath Party to power. The *USA Today* captured this fact in its editorial on April 2, 2003, stating, "In 1963, the CIA intervened in Iraqi politics to help Saddam's branch of the Baath Party seize power. A violent purge followed." The Baathists opposed progressive policies. For example, the Baathists revised Law No 80 which restricted the operations of foreign oil companies in Iraq. The Baathists also revoked all progressive policies enacted by the previous government administrations. However their

ruthlessness and brutality in suppressing the Iraqi people induced the military to interfere and remove them from power. The governments that followed were the victim of internal power struggles which allowed the progressive movements to capture the loyalty of most of the people. Furthermore, in their foreign policies, these governments maintained an Arab nationalistic view, with a superficial progressive message. So, the Baath Party, in cooperation, with the Saudi Government (and with the subtle approval of British and U.S. intelligences) reclaimed power on July 17, 1968.

Initially, the Baath government distanced itself from its earlier brutal image and sought to obtain legitimacy. Thus, it pursued Arab national policies, invested heavily in education and health systems, and supported progressive issues abroad. After Saddam Hussein monopolized power in 1978, the U.S. supported his policies. The support reached its peak as Saddam showed exceptional brutality in dealing with the communists and the new Mullah regime in Iran. As the U.S. supported Hussein in his war with Iran his national image became emboldened. However when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, the U.S. - Iraq relationship turned confrontational. This included: the use of force to evict Iraq from Kuwait; U.S. economic sanctions against Iraq; and U.S. air strikes into Iraq after the Desert Storm war.

As they advanced in their quest to control Iraq, successive Baathist governments (with a few exceptions) actively sought to develop human skills and invested heavily in education relative to neighboring countries. This occurred in spite of Baathist engagement in regional politics. Consequently, Iraq is gifted with a relatively highly educated and skilled workforce. Arab experts depict Iraqis as spirited and proud people (Wardi, 1966). Indeed, Iraq has historically served as an intellectual leader and a center for humanistic and radical movements in the Arab World (Ali, 1989). For this particular reason, some experts argued, Iraq had to be invaded. For example, Margolis (2004) states for the elite in Washington the "primary objective was to destroy Iraq, not to rebuild it; for Iraq, once the Arab World's best educated, most industrialized nation, had to be expunged as a potential military and strategic challenge." Since there were several groups in Washington that supported the invasion of Iraq, it is doubtful that all share the same objective. This is especially true, as many of theses groups have some forms of relationships with different political forces in Iraq.

Mapping Iraqi Political Forces

Contemporary political organizations in Iraq were established at the end of the nineteenth century. Marxist organizations evolved (from European influence) in the port city of Basra and the capital Baghdad. Soon other national and intellectual groups were organized.

Initially, the aims of these groups focused on ending British occupation of Iraq and changing the nature of the British imposed regime. By the end of the 1930s, the Iraqi political scene witnessed the evolution and the emergence of highly sophisticated secular groups. These groups shaped the political priorities for successive government. More importantly, they motivated, energized and organized a large segment of the population, especially trade, professional, and student unions. Some of these organizations, both liberal and nationalist in their orientation, withered away before or during the turbulent 1960s (e.g., the National Party, People Party, Independence Party, Constitutional Union Party, The Renascence Party etc.). Other organizations manage to survive, but dramatically lost prominence (e.g., the Communist Party). Following the Baath's Party's second coming to power in 1968, many political organizations were forced to go underground. The leadership of these groups, along with their members went into exile. Political and economic oppression profoundly changed the political orientation and outlook of the nation. Out of this oppressive climate Iraqis shifted their political thinking from liberal/progressivism to religious thinking. The Iran-Iraq War and the UN led economic sanctions and the Post- Kuwait U.S. military actions against Iraq intensified religious thinking and reinforced attachment to tribal and smaller primary groups. A few months after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the initial hopes for freedom and independence suddenly eclipsed; reinforcing religious tendencies and sectarian and ethnic inclination loyalty.

Since the U.S. action to remove Sadaam Hussein from power we have witnessed a gradual deterioration of the political climate in Iraq with the wave of insurgent bombings and political assassinations. Practical solutions in this very complex political environment are needed to endure a peaceful and democratic Iraq. Because the situation in Iraq has deteriorated, practical policies are needed to ensure a peaceful and democratic Iraq.

In this short period of time many small political organizations have emerged. These organizations have unclear and or conflicting agendas. Many have coalesced around charismatic individuals. Their leaders possess strong intellects with passionate religious beliefs. Some derive their power from tribal origins.

The challenge for today's Iraq is to create a unifying national political process and culture that will bring these groups together and avoid further violence and disintegration. These complex realities require simple strategies that can integrate the complex web of Iraqi political stakeholders to shape Iraq's future. Developing such strategies requires a better understanding of the nature of these groups, their political agenda and eventual cooperation is needed to build a viable and effective political environment. The next section of this paper examines these groups, their history and issues surrounding their role in present day Iraq.

The Iraqi Communist Party

The Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) was the oldest and the most organized political organization in Iraq. The ICP was established on March 31, 1934 after several Marxist Iraqi groups merged together. The founding leader, Yousef Salman Yousef (Fahid) was a charismatic person with foresight and a practical vision. Before his execution in February 1949, Fahid was able to build a strong organization that attracted students, workers, peasants, intellectuals, and soldiers. Members of the Party were known for their discipline, knowledge and patriotism. By the 1959, ICP membership totaled approximately 800,000 (11% of the population). As the object of political suppression, the ICP helped create alternative public organizations such as the Peoples Party.

On February 8, 1963, the CIA engineered coup d'etat inflicted a major blow to the Party. Thousands of ICP members were executed and many were jailed or escaped the country. The second coup d'etat (July 17, 1968), engineered by the Baath Party, and furthered the ICP's demise. In the first four years of Baath rule, the ICP leadership cooperated with the new government. However many of its members were forced to renounce their allegiance to the party and join the Baathists. By 1978 the ICP's role in Iraqi politics ended; influential members were executed. Any remaining leaders or influential members took refuge in the Soviet Union and East Europe.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ICP virtually became an organization in exile. When the U.S. planned to invade Iraq, the ICP reluctantly collaborated with Western sponsored ex-Iraqi patriots in conferences and meetings in Northern Iraq. However their position on an invasion was clear; they believed that a war would be followed by a dictatorship. Nevertheless, after the invasion, ICP joined the government that was established by American Administrator, Paul Bremer. The ICP agreed to serve on the governing council and the transitional government which was created in June, 2004.

Notwithstanding its role in the transitional government, the Party continues to call for an end to the U.S. occupation. However as with other Iraqi stakeholder groups, they desire to see continued presence of U.S. peace keeping troops.

This contradiction is partially supported on the need for political survival. Upon their return to Iraq after the U.S. invasion, ICP leaders were astonished to see Iraqi streets dominated by religious fundamental groups. These groups were beginning to build support among the ICP original base, the working and peasant populations. Thus, the leadership soon concluded that without a foreign peace-keeping presence, the ICP would be losers in a new political Iraq.

Religious Organizations

The Al-Dawa (Call) Party

The Al-Dawa (Call) Party is considered the oldest religious organization In Iraq. Founded in the late 1950s, its current political leader is Ibrahim al-Jafari.

Al-Dawa was encouraged by senior religious leaders in the cities of Najaf and Karbala. Lead by the Grand Ayatollah Muhsen al-Hakim and other liked minded religious leaders, they feared the Iraq Communist Party (ICP) growing influence among their people.

During its early years, the Party found it difficult to draw intellectual elements of Iraq's society to its cause. In 1964 Al-Dawa benefited from the

fallout of the Baathist crackdown of the ICP. Under its founding spiritual leader, Ayatollah Mohamed Baqer Al-Sader, many intellectuals, government employees and business people became rank and file members of Al-Dawa during the 1960s.

When Al-Dawa initiated several violent acts against the Baath regime, hundreds of its leaders and members were executed. Once Saddam Hussein wrested control of the government, the Baathist regime systematically eliminated Al-Dawa. Thousands of its members escaped to Iran and Syria.

In 2002, Al-Dawa joined with the other exiled organizations which were to plan for the removal of Hussein and his government. After the invasion, Al-Dawa joined the Governing Council and post-war transitional government. Its influence among religious oriented intellectuals and urban communities has grown remarkably since March 2003. The Party currently seeks an end to the occupation, open elections, and rules of law.

The Supreme Council for the Islamic Republic of Iraq (SCIRI)

The Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution also known as SCIRI is lead by Abdul Aziz al-Hakim. SCIRI is a long time rival of the Al-Dawa party.

Established in early 1980s after Hussein had forced hundred of thousands of Iraqis out of Iraq, SCIRI has made a noticeable presence and progress in its short history.

Two factors explain this progress: First, the actions of its charismatic leader (Mohamed Bager al-Hakim who was assassinated in 2003). The second factor involved neighboring Iran's initial support to accept Iraq's refugees.

Most of these refuges joined SCIRI and became able members of the Bader Brigade. The Bader Brigade participated in the war against the Saddam's regime during Iraq-Iran War (1980-88). Under al-Hakim's leadership, SCIRI gained legitimacy and recognition.

Al-Hakim comes from a prestigious Iraqi family. His father was recognized as a Grand Ayatollah by Muslims both inside and outside Iraq. In Iraq, SCIRI has support among Iraqis who were refugees and among merchants and landlords. As one of the top religious Shia leaders in Iraq, Al-Hakim and the other leaders like Sistani, al-Jafari and Yacoubi hold collective power via the principle of "marjaiya". They believe this principle should shape Iraqi's permanent constitution. Further, they will press that Islam be the foundation for all Iraqi legislation (Wong, 2005).

The SCIRI participated in the early efforts of the Bush administration to remove Saddam from power. During the U.S. sponsored meeting of Iraqi opposition groups in December, 2002, SCIRI won the exclusive rights to veto Shia representatives to the 65 -member opposition council. Even though SCIRI participated in the transitional government and the Governing Council, it has called for an end to the U.S./Allied occupation. They believe that Iraqis should be responsible for their own security. Despite U.S. support for the SCIRI, it lacks popular support outside the Najaf and Karbala. Because of its cooperation with the U.S. and its alliance with Iran large segments of Iraq's population resent the SCIRI.

The Alhawza, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani and the United Iraqi Alliance

Alhawza is a community of intellectual religious leaders. Currently its leader is the Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani. Sistani is regarded by the majority of Shia (which includes Al-Dawa and SCIRI) as Iraq's Islamic Spiritual leader. The Shia make up mere than 60 percent of Iraq's population.

The origin of Alhawza's dates to 656 A.D. when the fourth Caliph, Ali established informal schools to teach the science of religion in Kufa, Iraq. Years later, the schools became formalized specializing in logic, law, philosophy, and Quranic knowledge. During this time two primary schools of thought evolved in Iraq: Kufa and Basra.

During the eleventh century, Mohamed Ben Hassan Tossi established a formal community that would formally recognize individuals considered "enlightened" religious students. In the year 1057 (approximately), Tossi moved the community from Baghdad to Najaf

(Awad, 2004). Tossi is said to have given this community an official structure and issues various religious edicts. The community took the name of *Alhawza.* Soon many of its leaders and followers relocated to Najaf.

Throughout the centuries, *Alhawza* has been an instrumental and motivating force for Iraqis. Alhawza also spread to communities outside Iraq. Soon it was associated with causes that resist political oppression and cultural invasions. In particular Alhawza called for the removal of the Shah of Iran in 1906. It also led the 1920 Revolution against British colonial rule in Iraq.

In terms of politics, *Alhawza* is represented by two competing views. One view advocates direct influence on government and the political process. This view opposes non sectarian positions which separate "religion" and "state". The other view believes that political involvement is limited to informal consultation; interference only occurs when the fate of the country is at stake. Ironically both of these views have lived in peaceful coexistence for centuries.

In present day Iraq, Alhawza is dominated by four senior ayatollahs (Ali Sistani; Basher Al –Najafi, Isahq Al-Faid, and Mohamed Saed Al-Hakim). The Grand Ayatollah is Ali Sistani. All other religious leaders, with a few exceptions, defer to his judgment. Sistani adheres to the second view of separation between "religion" and "state". Sistani avoids direct involvement in the politics of the nation. However he has crossed to the other side in Alhawza. He often will issue an edict that is of urgency to his followers. These edicts are concise, brief, and authoritative in nature. For example after the U.S./Allied invasion of Iraq Sistani issued a neutrality edict for his followers. He also issued an edict prior to the 2005 elections that all Iraqis had a national obligation to vote. Like many of his religious counterparts Sistani desires an end to the occupation. Sistani seeks direct elections, with a democratic secular government.

As much as Sistani desires to stay out of the political arena, he finds himself at the center of it. For example in anticipation of the 2005 elections, a majority of Shia groups (including the rival Al-Dawa and SCIRI parties) formed the "United Iraqi Alliance" list. This coalition was formed with the blessings of Sistani. After the Jnuary 2005 elections, Sistani finds himself trying to hold this coalition together to ensure Shia control of the

country (Filkens, 2005A). The result of the election, as it certified by the Independent Election Commission, gave this group 140 seats in the constitutional assembly of 275.

The Al-Sader Movement.

The Al-Sader Movement derives its name from its founding father the Ayatollah Mohamed Sadiq al-Sader. The Al-Sader movement is a grassroots organization with no real national structure or apparatus and is led by a junior religious student (Muqtada Al-Sader) - the son of the late Ayatollah Mohamed Sadiq al-Sader. Under its founding leader the movement had cultivated relationships with ordinary Iraqis.

Saddam Hussein saw Al-Sader as a major threat to his regime. He had Al-Sader and two of his sons assassinated in 1999. Following the collapse of the Hussein regime, chaos and looting took place in several Iraqi cities. Soon the movement, under the leadership of Al-Sader's youngest son, Muqtada al-Sader set up vigilante's squads to maintain law and order. The younger Al-Sader denounced the destruction of private and public properties by the looters. This show of organizational discipline and willingness to help the poor improved Al-Sader's stock among Iraqis. The movement has currently gained the support of the working class, the poor and uneducated in some of Iraq's major urban cities.

Currently Al-Sader's growing popularity has created a power struggle with two legendary religious families in Najaf: Al-Hakim vs. Al-Sader. The popularity of Al-Sader movement and its strength in major cities have alarmed Iraqi religious and secular organizations which for three decades resided outside Iraq.

The Movement rejected the U.S. caucus proposal finding it non-transparent and insufficiently democratic. The movement has also demanded an end to the occupation and direct open general elections in a free Iraq. Despite various military actions to weaken the Movement al-Sader position appears resilient. The movement continues to maintain its credibility with Iraq's working and poor working classes.

The Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP).

Originally, most of the members of this Party are considered intellectuals with strong religious orientations. Many played some role in government during Saddam Hussein's rule. In the recent months and because of the growing sectarian climate, the Sunnis joined the IIP. The IIP has participated in the Governing Council and with the transitional government. IIP espoused support of the US sponsored caucus system and voiced reservations on having open general elections. Its agenda is limited to ending the occupation while it attempts to maintain some power in any future Iraqi government.

The Association of Muslim Scholars.

The Association of Muslim Scholars is a network of religious figures left behind after the collapse of the Hussein regime. It was established in 2003 to protect and champion the interests of a politically powerful community before the U.S./Allied invasion. Resistance forces in what is called the "Triangle of Death" heeded to its instruction. The association calls for ending the occupation by any available means. The association however has voiced serious concerns on having a popular election. Several members of the association were detained by the occupational Authority and the transitional government. These detentions have brought Arab media coverage and attention to this group. The association has transformed itself from an obscure organization to one that now represents Sunni interests.

Other Political Entities

The National Accord.

The National Accord was founded by a former Baathist Ayad Allawi, who served as the transitional Prime Minister. Formed by Iraqi exiles residing in Europe, who had backgrounds as military, security, or senior members of the Baath Party but opposed the policies of Saddam Hussein. After the 1991 Gulf War the National Accord built strong relationships with intelligence agencies from Great Britain, The U.S., Saudi Arabia and Jordan. During that time the National Accord received funds from the U.S. to recruit Iraqi exiles, develop media outlets, and forge cooperation with influential Hussein opposition groups. The Accord played an active role in planning the U.S./Allied invasion. However, the National Accord lacks any credible constituency inside Iraq. It continues to have the backing of the U.S. and Great Britain.

Following the invasion, the National Accord participated in the Governing Council, and has led the transitional government. Initially it supported the U.S. early call for political caucuses' in 2003. Due to general Iraqi opposition to the caucus system, the National Accord supported the position of general elections. The Accord participated in the 2005 elections as the "Iraqi List." Despite aggressive promotion and the utilization of the government infrastructure in the election campaign, the List won only 40 seats in the constitutional Assembly.

The National Congress.

The National Congress was established by Ahmed Chalabi early in 1990s. Originally sponsored by the U.S., the National Congress sought to remove Saddam Hussein from power. They reached out to all Iraqi opposition groups to join in this effort.

Chalabi, a banker, turned politician, received substantial monies from the Defense Department and CIA to recruit hundreds of Iraqis (both internal and external to participate in the invasion). These recruits were to collect information, organize sabotage activities, and organize meetings. Chalabi's networking and financial/fund raising skills also reaped influential alliances with U.S. and Great Britain's leaders. This gave the Congress the opportunity to play a pivotal role in the pre-invasion planning activities. It also opened the door for the Congress to play a major leadership role in Iraq's transitional government. However, there were rumors that Chalabi engaged in talks with Iranian government. This led the U.S. to marginalize Chalabi and his organization.

A few months after the collapse of Saddam's regime, Chalabi realized that his organization needed to gain the support of every day Iraqis. This led him to abandon his support of the caucus system proposed by the U.S. In addition Chalabi has entered into a pre-election alliance with The United Iraqi Alliance and has maintained a friendly relationship with the Al-Sader Movement.

The Arab Socialist Movement (ASM).

The Arab Socialist Movement (ASM).was an off spring of the Arab Nationalist Movement. This latter group held tremendous influence in the

Arab Gulf States and Lebanon. ASM is a Marxist organization led by Abdulalah al.-Nasrawi. Most of its members are intellectuals. Its popular influence is limited among the populace. Nevertheless, because other political groups respect its leaders, the Movement gained substantial recognition despite its lack of popular support. The ASM was an integral part of the Iraqi coalition forces to overthrow Saddam's regime. It refused, however, to participate in the Governing Council or the transitional government due to its anti-occupation stand.

Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) is one of the oldest ethnic political groups representing Iraq's Kurdish minority. It was established with the cooperation of the ICP and was led by Mustaf Barazani.

The Party led violent insurgencies against the Hussein regime, demanding more autonomy and political power for its citizenry. After the death of Mustaf Barazani, his son Massoud, assumed the leadership. Even though, the KDP is primarily a tribal organization, it has drawn both intellectuals and militia ("Peshmerqa") to its cause.

During Hussein's regime, the U.S., Turkey, Syria, and Iran provided substantial financial and logistic support for KDP. After the 1991 war, the U.S. and Britain protected the Kurdish area. It also provided military supplies to the KDP. KDP has always harbored separatist sentiments; at the same time it has played a significant role in the transitional government. It ardently supports the U.S./allied occupation. The KDP initially supported the US sponsored caucus system. When the caucus system lost faith with the Iraqi people, the Party has called to open elections, but not until late in 2004.

Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

In 1964, Marxist and liberal oriented individuals within KDP became dissatisfied with the tribal procedures of the KDP governing leadership. A growing right –wing ideological group decided to spilt from the KDP and organize the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Since then the PUK has been led by Jalal Talabani. The PUK has engaged in frequent fighting with the KDP over control of the Kurdish region. Furthermore, the Party managed to fence strong alliances with Iran, Syria and the U.S. Like

KDP, the Party espouses a separatist ideology. It has actively participated with the U.S. in efforts to remove the Hussein government. It also supports proportional representation in the transitional government. The PUK supports a continuation of the U.S./Allied occupation. This will allow the PUK to maintain and reinforce its power in the Sulamanya governorate in the north east of Iraq. Like the KDP, the PUK supported the U.S. caucus proposal. Like the PUK it called to postponing general elections but changed its stand and participated in the election in January 2005. In fact, KDP and PUK along with other smaller groups organized the Kurdish Alliance List to run in the election. The List won 75 of 275 seats in the constitutional assembly

Policy Options

The *US Today* warned in its editorial that the Iraqi people were suspicious of President Bush's promises of Iraqi freedom. This is not because the Iraqi people do not trust President Bush. Rather, it is because Iraqi history has taught its people to not trust the West. For example The *US Today* editorial described how following the British government's invasion of Iraq in 1917 a puppet monarchy was installed. The editorial also spoke of how the U.S. engineered a military coup in 1963 to violently remove a patriotic government from power. Also how following 1992 Desert Storm War George H. Bush encouraged Iraqis to over throw Saddam Hussein's regime; only to go back on his promise to help the Iraqis.

The editorial, however, overlooks a significant period in the US – Iraq relationships; 1968-1990. During this time Washington was instrumental in bringing the Baath Party to power (Abood, 2004; Dara, 2004). It also omitted that during 1980-1988 period, Washington provided the Hussein regime with military aid during the Iran-Iraq war (Awo Study Center, 20004). By supporting Hussein, the U.S. inadvertently helped him fortify his revolutionary guard which led to the numerous atrocities against Iraq's various ethnic groups.

From a policy making perspective one must ask how the U.S. and the West could engage in policies that would ultimately alienate the Iraqi people. Perhaps this is best explained by Hastedt's definition of "foreign policy". According to Hastedt foreign policy is solely about making "choices". Choices often result in policies designed to preserve American

hegemony or maintain a favorable balance of power. One could argue that Iraqi policy might have been the by-product of the former; only history will tell.

Now the U.S. is faced with a new set of "choices" relating to its policy in Iraq and in the Middle East. In meeting these challenges Washington's policy makers must overcome a vast array of negative Iraqi perceptions. At the same time the U.S. must persuade a skeptical international community to support its plan for Iraq. On both tracks, the Bush administration must proceed with a coordinated, integrated practical vision for Iraq. Writing in the *New York Times*, Thomas Friedman (2004) succinctly captures the reality of this position:

"I confess that as I cover this story and it has never been clear to me who was our chief strategist for Iraq . . . who was really orchestrating the intelligence and public affairs, with the politics, diplomacy and military operations, around a coherent plan that was being communicated to Iraqis and the world. Indeed, I have never understood how an administration that wanted a war so badly and will be judged on it by history so profoundly, could manage it so sloppily. Right now we need an 'intelligence czar' for Iraq much more than we need an 'intelligence czar' for America."

Following the U.S./Allied 2003 invasion General Jay Garner was appointed the first occupational administrator in Iraq. Garner acted quickly in concert with President Bush's public pronouncement that Iraq would be governed by Iraqis and, that a democratic transformation would be immediate. According to Garner, however, once he announced that Iraqis would soon be in control via elections, "Rumsfeld called me and told me he was appointing Paul Bremer as the presidential envoy" (Leigh, 2004).

In his first actions as the new occupational administrator, Bremer dismissed the military, secret police, regular police, and border police. He then formed a governing council comprised of ethnic and sectarian representatives. He also replaced Garner's plan to hold open elections with a plan to hold caucus elections. This latter approach was seen by many as a means to solidify Kurdish power while suppressing the majority Shia population from gaining immediate control. The caucus proposal ultimately

offended many Iraqis who soon lost faith in the American administration. Shortly thereafter (in August 2003) violent insurgencies began against the occupational authority. Indeed, within a few months after Bremer's arrival, Iraq was transformed into a war zone, jeopardizing the safety and security of many ordinary Iraqis.

Experts claim that Washington's fatal mistake was in its refusal to hold open elections in 2004. At the time of the liberation from the Hussein regime a majority Iraqis was elated with his removal and held a positive view of the Bush administration and its actions in Iraq. However day by day following the invasion and liberation the actions of the U.S. occupational administration hardened into bitterness and contempt. Within months violent Sunni and Shia insurgencies were made against the U.S.'s presence. Klein (2004) argues that the widespread violence in Iraq was the direct result of the administration failure to keep its "promise to hold elections in Iraq". According to Klein "'elections would be delayed for more than a year, and in the meantime, Iraq's first "sovereign" government would be hand-picked." Compounding Iraqi discontent with these actions was a perception that the U.S. was somehow behind the terrorism and violence (see Abied, 2004; Al-atabie, 2004; Albasri, 2004; Al-basri, 2004; Al-khazmawi, 2004). Although these perceptions appear illogical, their very existence point to a public policy and relations failure of the current administration. As Senator Byrd of West Virginia stated:

"Today, America is increasingly seen by the Iraqi people in the same light [as Saddam], relying on intimidation and control from our military and dismissing those who see events from a different perspective. Perhaps Iraq is not yet ready for self-rule, but its people are certainly not learning the joys of democracy from the American occupation."

These unfolding events brought tragic human and economic costs to Iraq and the U.S. In looking towards the immediate future, U.S. policy cannot be left to trial and error, confusion of purpose, contradictory directions, and ideologues.

Accordingly, the U.S. has three policy options in Iraq: exit; monopolize its power; or engage in collaborative leadership. The vitality of these options rests with the intention and goals of policymakers and their plans for Iraq and in the greater Middle East. Each option brings both

regional and world-wide consequences. We will evaluate each option relative to the strategic values they bring.

Advocates of the exit option suggest that the decision to remove Hussein was the wrong venture at the wrong time. Such an action would only deplete the U.S. economy and lead to thousands of American and Iraqi causalities. Although the proponents of "exit" acknowledge that the Iraqi war is different from the Vietnam War, they assert that international and Arab anti-American sentiments threaten U.S. national security and its role as a global leader.

Two different constituencies prefer an exit strategy. These are: liberals (both in the Congress and the world), and a majority of the Iraqis. The liberal groups in the U.S. believe that Iraq business should be settled by the United Nations. This is best stated by Senator Byrd:

"The United States should get out of the business of running Iraq. Additional military force from the United States, which is now widely viewed as an international bully by those in the region, will not ease the transition to a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq. A new approach is urgently needed. We should work with the community of nations. It is time to turn full authority over to the United Nations."

Kuttner (2004) argues that the U.S. military presence in Iraq has become the recruiting ground for every militant/terrorist group who oppose the U.S. and what it represents. Because of this Kuttner believes that that an early U.S. exit is "better" both for the economy and Middle East foreign policy.

Likewise a majority of Iraqis have voiced strong reservations on the presence of foreign troops in their country. The International Republican Institute (IRI) has conducted a number of Post-war surveys in Iraq. These surveys indicate that a majority Iraqis have negative attitudes toward the occupation. For example, in the October 2004 survey, the IRI reports that 66.7 percent of the population perceives the U.S. invasion as responsible for the insurgent's civil war. 32 percent of the population sees terrorist groups as responsible for the civil war. Another 60 percent think that the interim government does not represent their interests.

The exit strategy, however, has its shortcomings. Perhaps an exit strategy would have been feasible immediately after the invasion and collapse of Hussein's government. However, such a decision would have demonstrated both to the Iraqi and international community that the U.S.'s sole agenda was to remove Hussein. In light of the political and economic instability that followed the invasion, an early exit would have left the impression that the U.S. failed to create a unified and democratic Iraq. Furthermore an early exit will only deepen Iraqi and Arab mis-trust of the U.S. and the West. Opponents to the war would now say that the true U.S. intention was to fragment Iraq politically and economically.

The second option, the monopolization of power, would be characterized by a U.S. hand-picked government, circumvented elections, and the build-up of military bases in Iraq. One can say that the resounding re-election of President Bush confirmed U.S. public opinion to this approach.

This option is advocated by key decision makers in both the Pentagon and the National Security Council. Many of these individuals set the stage for the decision to invade Iraq. Daniel Pipes, a leading neoconservative and leading advocate of this option describes two precepts to monopolization: the need for a strong one-man ruler in Iraq, and U.S. military presence. Pipes states (2004):

"As for the coalition forces, after installing a strongman they should phase out their visible role and pull back to a few military bases away from population centers. From these, they can quietly serve as the military partner of the new government, guaranteeing its ultimate security and serving as a constructive influence for the entire region."

In contrast to this position Ottaway (2004) warned that the U.S. pushed for a "monster coalition" of members of the transitional government. She claims that the coalition was formed under noncompetitive conditions. According to Ottaway, Washington opted for a regime of marginal legitimacy which may "speak of liberty but is afraid of democracy."

The second option appeals to many for various reasons. However this option is at best very risky with far reaching consequences. The option

also ignores important historical lessons. For example when the British invaded Iraq in 1917 they soon abandoned its promise of Iraqi freedom and liberty. Instead, they used military force to suppress insurgencies and ensure acceptance of the appointed government. Britain both appointed an Arab dictator and relied on intimidation and force to enforce this agenda. The long term results of these actions resulted in widespread resentment towards the West in many parts of Iraq. Many Iraqi scholars recall the words of Wing Commander J A Chamier who stated,

"That the best way to suppress Iraqis is to concentrate bombing on the "most inaccessible village of the most prominent tribe which it is desired to punish. All available aircraft must be collected the attack with bombs and machine guns must be relentless and unremitting and carried on continuously by day and night, on houses, inhabitants, crops and cattle."

Likewise, Lieutenant –General Sir Aylmer Haldane reported saying that any Iraqi resistance fighters found "will be destroyed- pressure will be brought on the inhabitants by cutting off water power the area being cleared of the necessaries of life. … Burning a village properly takes a long time, an hour or more according to size." (Quoted in Glancey, 2003). We argue that these statements and policies remain buried in Iraq's history and psyche. Because of Britain's past role in Iraq, Iraqis harbor a deep resentment to the West.

Larry Diamond (2004, p. 43), a senior advisor to the American occupational authority, supported this long term sentiment when he stated, "Too many Iraqis viewed the invasion not as an international effort but as an occupation by Western, Christian, essentially Anglo-American powers, and this evoked powerful memories of previous subjection and of the nationalist struggles against Iraq 's former overlords."

This explains why the nature of the U.S. mission in Iraq is generally mis-understood. When asked "what went wrong in Iraq?" Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage (State Department, 2004) said "I think that clearly we underestimated the criminal nature of the society." Such a statement on Iraqi society again fuels Iraqi distain for the West.

Insensitivity to Iraq's past is further seen in an interview with an advisor to the occupation authority. In an interview with the *New* Yorker

(Hersh, 2003) the U.S. official declared, "We've got to scare the Iraqis into submission."

There are also key U.S. officials who view the Iraqi people as enemies. Writing on the second siege of Najaf in August 2004 in the *New York Times,* Marine Major Glen Butler acknowledged that:

"I have not shot one round without good cause. … This country is breeding and attracting militants who are all eager to grab box cutters, dirty bombs, suicide vests or biological weapons, and then come fight us in Chicago, Santa Monica or Long Island."

The view that Iraqis are seen as the enemy has policy consequences well beyond Iraq. It not only contradicts U.S. Iraqi policy but will confuse U.S. allies. It threatens whatever legitimacy will hold for the Iraqi transitional government. Espousing an option that monopolizes power both politically (via a strong man) and in the military serves only to increase the growing tension between Iraqis and the West.

The third and final option seeks to forge cooperation. Cooperation with moderate Iraqi leaders will build a sound institutional framework which will improve Iraq both economically and politically. Although very practical, many oppose such an approach, or are clueless on achieving collaboration (both within Iraq and the U.S.). Nufrio (2004) argues that effective U.S. policy must be one of engaging moderate Islamic representatives with close ties to Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani. Such relationships will only create fruitful ground for democratic transformation, stability, and eventual reduced hostilities between the Muslim World and the West.

Experts and enlightened politicians inside Iraq see little risk to this option, while bringing desirable long-term results. The Defense Science Board's publication *Strategic Communication* (2004) underlines the core premise of this option. The Report states that:

"In the eyes of Muslims, American occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq has not led to democracy there, but only more chaos and suffering. … If we really want to see the Muslim world as a whole and the Arab-speaking world in particular move more toward our understanding of 'moderation'

and 'tolerance', we must reassure Muslims that this does not mean they must submit to the American way."

The Report clearly warns of the growing widespread mis-trust between Muslim societies and the West. By adopting a policy of collaborative leadership a new page of diplomacy and economic cooperation may open between these Muslim nations and the West.

This third option would be a welcome development for the majority of the Iraqis. Iraqis have seen their country, society and economy damaged by the ruthless Hussein regime. The post-war reconstruction is moving too slowly. Restoring Iraq requires an openness and transparency. Rebuilding trust is not possible without working with legitimate leaders and moderate religious and cultural authorities. In this respect Ayatollah Sistani's role is critical to achieve a peaceful democratic transformation in Iraq.

Sistani is the ultimate spiritual and moral authority for over 60% of Iraq's population, the Shia. His judgment is sought and his edicts are honored. His presence and cooperation is certain to give legitimacy to any government. Sistani's influence extends beyond the Shia since other ethnic and religious minorities have sought his advice and assistance on matters of national interest. If history has taught the world anything it is this; reasoned and wise leadership can bring societies out of war and tragedy.

In the first few months of the occupation, the occupational authority under the leadership of Paul Bremer misunderstood the depth of Sistani's influence and his commitment to open and free elections. Diamond (2004) believes that this misunderstanding further deepened Iraqi mistrust of the U.S. According to Diamond while Sistani called for immediate open elections, Bremer , "counseled strongly against a rapid move to national elections". Bremer felt that the fate of Iraq could not be determined by one person; Sistani. Bremer failed to open up a critical door of opportunity to build collaboration with 60% of Iraq's population. His actions intensified a growing tension between the general Iraqi population and the occupational authority. Violence soon followed in many cities. Let us hope that the U.S. learns from this miscalculation as Iraq begins to form a new government and constitution following the January 2005 elections.

Conclusion

Across the centuries, Iraq has been the object of several occupations orchestrated by outsiders. All have left their marks, good or bad, on Iraqi society. Although each of these foreign interventions had a distinct purpose, their long term impact on the Iraqi people has been devastating in terms of the human and material costs. The U.S./Allied invasion of 2003 present both opportunities and perils for Iraq. Diamond (2004) believes that the mistakes of U.S. occupational authority ultimately alienated many Iraqis towards the U.S. Filkens (2005B) reports similar discontent by the Sunni and Shia populations. Notwithstanding these negatives there are positives. Among these are Iraqi insistence on need for an open society and a democratic transformation. In his field report following he recent February 2005 national elections Filkens also reports an astonishing development after millions of Iraqis streamed to the polls. ("Iraqis by and large stopping talking negatively about Americans"). If we were to accept Diamond and Filkens' positions, the U.S. finds itself at another important window of opportunity. Making the right choices will either make or break the future of Iraq.

In this paper we have detailed the role of Iraq in the Arab World and its centrality to the Islamic and Arab culture. Iraq can (and will) play a political role in the region. Iraq has the potential to be a vital actor in a region characterized by turmoil and intense relationships both with its Muslim neighbors and the West. The nature of Iraqi politics, and the role and perceptions that each of Iraq's major groups holds will determine its future.

This paper presents three options to deal with these challenges. We have examined each both on their merit and shortcomings. We have attempted to place a focus on the positive trends in the Iraqi society. Among these include the willingness of the majority of Iraqis to choose the democratic path and the role that Iraq's moderate and spiritual leader can play in shaping Iraq's future and freedom for Iraqis. These dynamics offer opportunities for policymakers in Washington to ensure a democratic transformation and a representative government.

The option of working collaboratively with important Muslim majorities, such as the United Iraqi Alliance may be the most practical and

desired by the Iraqi people. In doing this the U.S. must learn from its early mistakes in Iraq. The U.S. must patiently encourage the development of a national consensus both with respect to forming the national assembly and a permanent constitution. We are confident that this argument is likely to secure the support of the international community to achieve democratic self rule in Iraq. It also can support the U.S. effort in Iraq as well as bring together a real international coalition. Ultimately it can serve to facilitate a democratic transformation and bring stability and peace to the region.

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