

Comparative Politics

Domestic Responses to Global Challenges

Sixth Edition

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Search for Common Ground



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CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Before We Begin
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*Tasting the blood of collaborators is better
than that of occupiers.*

STATEMENT BY AN UNIDENTIFIED
GROUP OF INSURGENTS, JUNE 2004

14

CHAPTER

Iraq

THE BASICS

Iraq

Size	437,009 sq. km. Roughly twice the size of Idaho
Population	27,500,000 with at least 2,000,000 in exile
Ethnic groups	Arabs 75–80%, Kurds 15–20%, Others 5%
Religious groups	Muslims 97%, Others 3%
GDP per capita	\$1,900
Currency	1,466 new Iraqi dinars = US\$1
Capital	Baghdad
Prime Minister	Nuri al-Maliki (2006–)
President	Jalal Talabani (2005–)

BEFORE WE BEGIN

This will be the most inconclusive and controversial chapter in *Comparative Politics*.

It will be inconclusive because the war is still being fought, and the transition to a new government that might bring stability let alone democracy to this troubled country will not be completed soon. It will be controversial because people inside Iraq and abroad still disagree strongly about the proper path that should be followed.

That said, this chapter may not be quite as controversial as you might think. Because its focus is on the domestic politics of Iraq, I will not spend a lot of time discussing the more controversial aspects of the American-led invasion of 2003. Instead, I will focus on the domestic politics of Iraq and how they led to the confrontation that destroyed Saddam Hussein's regime and so much of the country he ruled for a quarter century.

FIASCO

Nevertheless, we cannot start without putting Iraq's difficulties in the context of the three wars it has fought since the 1980s, most notably the one initiated by the

Saddam Hussein is led into a courtroom on Thursday, 1 July 2004, at Camp Victory, a former Saddam palace on the outskirts of Baghdad.



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United States and its allies in 2003. That third war led to the collapse of **Saddam Hussein** (1936–2006), his regime, and eventually his arrest and execution.

While few people shed a tear for one of the most despotic leaders of our time, the speedy American victory on the battlefield led to a prolonged insurgency that left 160,000 American troops in the country four years after President Bush declared that major combat operations had ended. Almost 4,000 American troops had been killed since then. No one really knows how many Iraqis have died, but most estimates start at ten times that number.

Supporters and opponents of the war alike are troubled by what the *Washington Post* reporter Thomas Ricks calls a Fiasco.¹ Indeed, as I write in September 2007, both the United States and Iraq are trying to forge policies that can provide that elusive stability there and allow American and other allied troops to return home.

In Iraq, there have been some positive steps, including the first reasonably free election ever held in that country. However, the bottom line is that the country was in the middle of a civil war. More than 2 million people had fled the country as a result. Particularly dangerous were neighborhoods in which Sunni and Shiites (see the section on the basics below) had lived together for genera-

tions, but now experienced ethnic cleansing which meant that members of whichever group was in the minority was forced out of the neighborhood and often killed. On most days, suicide bombers blew up their cars and killed dozens of people in Baghdad and other cities in central and southern Iraq. Many Iraqis had electricity for no more than four hours a day. The overall infrastructure of roads, utilities, schools, hospitals, and more was in far worse shape than it was before the war began. In short, the country was in shambles.

The war was also controversial in the United States, the United Kingdom, and other countries that joined what Bush called the “coalition of the willing.” The growing opposition to the war in Britain was the main reason Prime Minister Tony Blair had to resign in summer 2007. In the United States, dissatisfaction with the war had turned George Bush into one of the most unpopular presidents ever.

On the day I started this chapter, General **David Petraeus** (1952–) began his testimony before congressional committees that were trying to determine when or if American troops should be withdrawn. Petraeus is widely seen to be an expert on counter insurgency tactics *and* on strategies that could have built support from average Iraqis who were caught up in the fighting. Oddly enough, people who both supported and opposed the war are now convinced that things would have been dramatically different had Petraeus been in charge of postwar reconstruction from

¹ Ricks, Thomas, *Fiasco*. New York: Penguin, 2006.

Greg Mathieson/MAT/landov



Petraeus testifying to the House of Representatives on 10 September 2007.

the beginning. Unfortunately, Petraeus was put in charge of the **surge** of troops that many felt was the Bush administration's last hope of rescuing the United States and Iraq from Ricks's fiasco.

In short, this chapter is going to be the most controversial in the book because politics in Iraq has divided and disrupted so many countries. But, as noted earlier, our focus will be on Iraq in two main respects. First, how did Iraq get to the point that it fought those three destructive wars that all but destroyed what could well have become the wealthiest and most democratic country in the Middle East? Second, why have Iraq and the international community had so much trouble restoring order there since the overthrow of Saddam?

Because of these two questions, this chapter has to be organized differently from most of the others. That is to say, we will have to work our way twice through Iraqi politics, treating the regimes before and after the fall of Saddam separately.

THINKING ABOUT IRAQ

If we could go back in time and conduct a poll in July 1990, we would undoubtedly learn that most Westerners did not know who Saddam Hussein was, let alone where Iraq was located. That was the case even though Iran and Iraq had just ended an eight-year war that killed at least half a million people in each country.

Ever since, Saddam Hussein and his country have been on center stage. The sudden upsurge of interest in this hitherto little-known country began because of Iraq's invasion of its small, oil-rich neighbor Kuwait on 2 August 1990. In an unprecedented display of cooperation, most of

the international community, including both superpowers and several Arab states, denounced Iraq's actions and demanded its withdrawal. After Iraq refused to do so and the United Nations approved an international military response, President George H. W. Bush ordered the international coalition he led into the Gulf War, which resulted in the defeat of Iraq on the battlefield but not the overthrow of Saddam's regime.

Twelve years later, President Bush's son, George W. Bush, led a much smaller coalition of states into another war with Iraq. It seemed to end just as quickly and just as decisively. But, as we already saw, while the United States succeeded in toppling Saddam Hussein's regime, it unleashed an Iraqi resistance that bogged down American and other occupying troops and reminded many observers of American involvement in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Basics

Any discussion of Iraqi politics must begin with the legacy of more than thirty years of brutal rule by the **Baath Party** and the man who was its undisputed leader from 1979 until 2003, Saddam Hussein. As in Stalin's Soviet Union, a totalitarian regime was established by a narrowly based party that claimed to speak for the masses but that, in fact, represented little more than a tiny group of activists who were never able to develop much genuine popular support.

Individual and minority rights were subordinated to the "needs" of the state, which the party claimed it represented. Dissenters were systematically denounced as "traitors" and "enemies of the state," and the most prominent of them were executed after a series of well-publicized show trials that succeeded in instilling massive fear of the regime.

However, as in any country, we cannot understand Iraq's politics without first considering some of the country's social and economic features because those characteristics give rise to many of the political issues Iraq faced during Saddam Hussein's years in power and the difficulties it confronts today.

Economic Potential

One of the tragedies of Iraqi politics is that its current plight was by no means inevitable. Different policy choices could have led to a very different outcome, including prosperity for most Iraqis.

By third world standards, Iraq has tremendous resources. There are over 100 billion barrels of oil (one barrel holds forty-two gallons) under its soil, which represents 15 percent of all known Middle Eastern reserves. Only Saudi Arabia has more. Many geologists believe that Iraq has more undiscovered oil than any other country in the region. Thus, in 1987, it was estimated that Iraq would not run out

of oil for another 140 years at production levels prevailing at the time.

Iraq also has significant agricultural potential, despite a southwestern region that is a desert and the high salt content of the soil elsewhere. There are surprisingly fertile areas in the Kurdish regions of the north and along the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which provide ample water for irrigation and the generation of electricity.

Iraq's other major resource is its population. With more than twenty-five million people, it is relatively large, especially when compared with Saudi Arabia and the smaller Gulf states, and can therefore support a diversified and integrated economy. Moreover, Iraq's labor force is relatively skilled and well educated by regional standards.

As a result, Iraq could easily be an economically successful country. In fact, in the mid-1970s, following the worldwide quadrupling of oil prices, many observers predicted that it would soon emerge as the economic powerhouse of the Arab world.

Although some of this newfound wealth was used to modernize the country's infrastructure and provide Iraqis with an enhanced standard of living, the staggering increase in oil revenues mostly enabled the regime to buy sophisticated weapons to both strengthen its political control and to build up the military.

Diversity

Iraq's population is more than 95 percent Muslim. Behind this apparent homogeneity, however, lies a sharp distinction between Sunni and Shiite Muslims and Arabs and Kurds.

Iraqi population figures are notoriously inaccurate. Nonetheless, the best guess is that approximately 60 percent of the population is Shiite and approximately 35 percent is **Sunni**, with the majority of them being **Kurds**.

The origins of the Sunni-Shiite rivalry dates back to the dawn of Islamic history. The prophet Muhammad died in 632 without naming a successor to head the rapidly expanding Muslim empire he had created. Almost immediately, his followers split into two camps. The one that became Sunnis believed that the most prominent members of the community should select the new leader, or caliph, on the basis of personal attributes such as piety, wisdom, morality, leadership ability, and general competence. Others, however, contended that the leadership of the Islamic community should stay in the prophet's family. They believed that Muhammed had designated his cousin, son in law, and close companion, Ali, to be his successor. They were called Shiites, a word derived from *Shi'at Ali* which means "the partisans of Ali" (www.arches.uga.edu/~godlas/home.html).

Although the soon-to-be Sunnis won the argument, Ali was eventually elected to the caliphate in 656 after the death

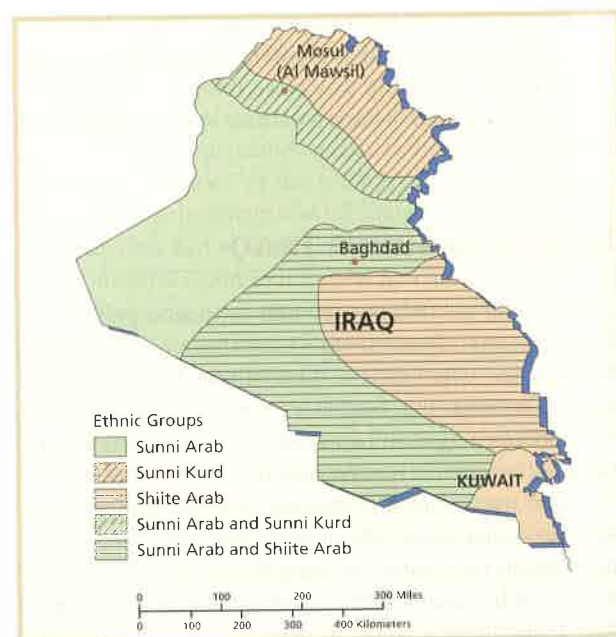
of Uthman, the third caliph. However, Muawiyah, Uthman's nephew and governor of Syria, refused to accept this decision. Eventually, Muawiyah prevailed and established the Damascus-based Umayyad dynasty (661–750).

The Shiites never recognized Umayyad rule and continued to claim that only the descendants of Ali had the right to govern the Islamic community. In 680 Ali's second son, Hussein, led a group of his followers in an armed uprising against the Umayyad dynasty. Despite his bravery and courage, Hussein was defeated and killed at Kerbala in what is now southern Iraq.

The story of Hussein's defeat lies at the heart of Shiite culture, especially its emphasis on martyrdom. To the Shiites, who rapidly became the most important minority sect within Islam, the battle of Kerbala symbolizes worldly injustice and the triumph of the forces of evil over the forces of good. More significantly, the defeat widened the gulf between the two main Islamic sects. In the following centuries, what initially had been limited to a disagreement over who should succeed the prophet became a full-fledged religious and political schism that continues to be felt throughout the Muslim world.

In addition to the Sunni-Shiite split, Iraqis are also divided into two main ethnic groups—Arabs and Kurds. (See figure 14.1.) About 75 percent of Iraq's population is Arab—that is, people who speak Arabic and identify with Arab culture. The Kurds, who represent 20 percent of the

FIGURE 14.1 Distribution of Ethnic Groups in Iraq



population, speak Kurdish, which has nothing in common with Arabic. Kurds also have their own history and modes of social and political organization. Indeed, they have less in common with Iraq's Arab majority than they do with other Kurdish communities in Turkey, Iran, Syria, and the former Soviet Union. In fact, Kurds are the largest ethnic group in the world without their own state.

Key Questions

As noted in Chapter 11, most less developed countries struggle with three related problems—economic development, ethnic tensions, and limited prospects for democratization. These are key issues in Iraqi politics as well. However, given the discussion so far, it should be clear that we need to focus on other questions as well. In particular:

- How were Saddam Hussein and the men around him able to create such a powerful regime?
- How were they able to sustain it despite all the setbacks of the two decades before the 2003 war?
- What are the likely outcomes following the war that began in 2003 and the tumult that followed it?

The Evolution of the Iraqi State

In European liberal democracies, the development of the state was mostly an indigenous process that spanned hundreds of years. Consequently, when the twentieth century began, most Europeans already thought of themselves as belonging to a “nation”—a group of people bound together by a common history, a shared culture, a sense of collective identity, and a willingness to live together.

By contrast, few third world countries are more than a half-century old in their current form, and imperialist powers often arbitrarily imposed their boundaries. As a result, countries like Iraq have had to simultaneously address both state and nation building under less than auspicious circumstances.

Urban civilization began some six thousand years ago in the city-state of Sumer in what is now southern Iraq (www.al-bab.com/arab/countries/iraq/history.htm). The Sumerians were the first to invent writing by drawing pictures on clay tablets, and they invented irrigation, literature, mathematics, architecture, metal working, transportation (they built the first wheeled chariot), and astronomy (they produced the first reasonably accurate calendars). Their successors added to those accomplishments—most notably, the Babylonians, who produced the Code of Hammurabi, the first complete legal framework. After their region of Mesopotamia was incorporated into the Muslim empire during the seventh century, its fame and prosperity reached new heights. Baghdad was the seat of the Abbassid dynasty

(750–1258), during which time Islamic civilization reached its peak while Europe still lived in the Dark Ages.

Given its strategic location on the eastern flank of the Arab world and its defenseless border, Iraq was always coveted by foreign powers that sought to dominate the region. Its period as one of the leading cultural centers in the world came to an end when the Mongols invaded and destroyed Baghdad in 1258 and slaughtered 100,000 Iraqis. A century and a half later, in 1394, the invading Tatars reportedly built a pyramid with the skulls of their unfortunate victims in the small provincial town of Tikrit, where Saddam Hussein was born 543 years later.

Even this brief overview should illuminate the distinguished history of the area that is now Iraq. Yet Iraq as a distinct political unit is barely eighty years old. Until World War I broke out, “Iraq” was nothing more than an ill-defined region of the **Ottoman Empire**.

In 1914, the already weakened Ottoman authorities made what turned out to be a disastrous choice when they entered World War I, siding with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire against France, Britain, and Russia. During the war, the Ottoman Empire collapsed, which gave Britain and France the opportunity to divide its former Arab provinces between themselves. They created entirely new countries, the borders of which were drawn to fit Britain's and France's colonial ambitions and did not reflect the distribution of religious, ethnic, and linguistic groups or the wishes of the populations involved. Iraq was one of these new countries. (See table 14.1.)

In 1916, when most of the Arab world was still under Ottoman control, British officials struck a deal with a group of local leaders. In an attempt to facilitate the allied war effort, they promised to support the creation of one large Arab state after the war if the Arabs rose up against the Ottomans. The Arabs lived up to their side of the bargain, but the British did not. By 1920, Arabs found themselves living in separate countries under regimes installed and controlled by either France or Britain. Understandably, the Arabs felt bitter and betrayed. To complicate matters for the future, no Kurdish state was created.

TABLE 14.1 Key Events in Iraqi History

YEAR	EVENT
1919	Treaty of Versailles, giving Britain mandate over Iraq
1932	Nominal independence
1958	Overthrow of monarchy
1963	First, short-lived seizure of power by Baath Party
1968	Definitive seizure of power by Baath Party
1979	Saddam Hussein takes control

The British imposed a constitutional monarchy on Iraq, a political system entirely alien to the area's customs and traditions. They then added insult to injury by selecting a foreigner to be Iraq's first king. Faisal I was a member of the prestigious and pro-British Hashemite family, whose roots lay not in Iraq but in the western part of what is now Saudi Arabia.

From the beginning, therefore, the Iraqi government lacked legitimacy. It also had to contend with the heterogeneity of Iraq's population. When the British created Iraq, they brought together disparate ethnic, religious, and tribal groups, none of whom considered themselves "Iraqi" nor wanted to become part of the new country. In fact, some of the groups artificially stitched together by the British had a long history of mutual distrust and hostility. Thus, it was not easy to forge a cohesive political community out of a patchwork of rival groups that shared neither a common heritage nor a willingness to live together.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the task of the new regime was made even more difficult by the presence of rebellious Kurdish and Shiite tribes and by traditional feelings of distrust toward any central authority.

In 1932, Iraq became formally independent, although British advisers continued to exert tremendous influence over the kingdom. The minority Sunni Arabs controlled every regime since Iraq gained its independence until the defeat of Saddam. Their domination grew out of a legacy of the Sunni-ruled Ottoman Empire, which systematically discriminated against Shiites. It continued under the monarchy, when Shiites and Kurds were forced into the new state against their will.

After twenty-six years under the monarchy, a group of military officers overthrew the regime but retained Sunni domination. In retrospect, the demise of the monarchy seemed all but inevitable, considering its consistently narrow base of support, the poor quality of the men at the helm, its perceived subservience to British interests, and its unwillingness or inability to reduce glaring social inequalities and to reach out to a rapidly growing and politicized middle class.

The decisive moment in the downfall of the monarchy came after the spread of pan-Arab, socialist ideologies in the army's ranks. Riding a wave of popular discontent, Arab nationalist officers, led by General Qasim, organized a successful coup and in 1958 established the first republican regime in the country's short history. It proved to be a republic in name only. The country was ruled by heavy-handed army officers for most of the first decade after the overthrow of the monarchy. In 1963, the Baath Party overthrew the officers then in power, but was itself forced out in a matter of months.

In July 1968, the Baath came back to power. This time, the Baathists were determined to stay in control, and they rapidly moved to eliminate everyone else from positions

TABLE 14.2 Key Events in Iraq since the Baath Took Power

YEAR	EVENT
1968	Baath Party seizes power
1970	Government signs autonomy agreement with Kurds
1972	Kurdish autonomy agreement collapses; war breaks out in north between Baghdad and Kurdish separatists
1975	Iran and Iraq agree on Kurds and Shatt al-Arab waterway Kurdish uprising collapses Deportation and resettlement of Kurds
1979	Saddam Hussein becomes president
1980–88	Iran-Iraq War, including use of chemical weapons against Kurdish civilians
1990	Invasion of Kuwait, Operation Desert Shield
1991	Gulf War
1995	Saddam's son-in-law and former minister of industry, Hussein Kamel al-Majid, defects to Jordan Referendum gives Saddam Hussein another term
1996	Hussein Kamel al-Majid is pardoned, returns to Iraq, is killed Saddam launches attack on Kurdish enclave in north
1998	Assassination attempt on Saddam's son, Uday Crisis between Iraq and the West over UN weapons inspections Four-day bombing campaign of Iraq by American and British forces
1999	Continued U.S. and U.K. bombing in response to Iraqi violations of 1991 cease-fire terms
2003	U.S.-led invasion topples Baath regime

of influence. (See table 14.2.) Eleven years later, Saddam Hussein forced his predecessor, **Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr**, into retirement. He announced his ascension to the presidency at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Baath party, after which almost a third of its members were summarily executed.

Afterward, he consolidated his own power along with that of the party to the point that it was all but impossible to separate the two, as we will see in the rest of this section. The dictatorship of the Baath Party gave way to personal rule by Saddam Hussein. Indeed, the state became little more than a tool Saddam, his family, and the rest of his entourage used to reinforce their hold on the country.

Iraq under Saddam

During the third of a century that Saddam Hussein and his Baath colleagues ruled Iraq, they built a regime that had a lot in common with the Soviet Union under Stalin and Germany under Hitler (See Chapters 9 and 6 respectively). Understanding what turned out to be a suicidal as well as a tyrannical regime is vital to seeing why the country is in such trouble today.

Cultural Pluralism

Iraq's history produced a culture that political scientists believe hinders the development of a stable, effective, and popular regime, let alone a democracy. Even without the years of repression under the Baath, Iraq would have had a hard time creating any sense of national unity, let alone a commitment to democracy.

As in most of the third world, religious and ethnic divisions acted as a brake on the development of an Iraqi national identity. Instead, older, parochial identities thwarted government efforts to promote any sense of Iraqi nationalism. After all, Iraq originally was little more than an artificial conglomerate of tribes, clans, and religious and ethnic groups that lived in isolation from one another for centuries, had no tradition of political cooperation, and shared a long history of mutual distrust and hostility. Some would argue that that still is the case today.

The sharply differentiated religious and ethnic communities were reluctant to give up their distinctive character for an Iraqi identity mostly concocted by British colonial officers. Although religious and ethnic cleavages did not always preclude cooperation between Sunnis and Shiites or between Arabs and Kurds, they did make nation building more difficult than in any of the other less developed countries considered in this book.

The Baath regime understood the need to defuse tensions among Iraq's ethnic and religious communities. Accordingly, it tried to convince Iraqis that a common identity rooted in the country's Mesopotamian heritage transcends its religious and ethnic divisions. Its propaganda portrayed modern-day Iraqis as direct descendants of the ancient Sumerians, Akkadians, and Babylonians. In addition, it invested huge sums of money in the rebuilding of Babylon and in archaeological excavations intended to showcase the country's pre-Islamic past.

However, these efforts failed because many Iraqis continued to identify primarily with their clan, ethnic, and religious groups. This is by no means uncommon in the third world, but in Iraq, the way in which parochialism has played itself out at both the mass and elite levels put exceptional burdens on the former regime and seem likely to do so for whatever government finally takes hold.

That means that the differences between Kurds and Arabs and Shiites and Sunnis are a central element in Iraqi political culture. Those differences surged to the surface in the months after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, but have been part of the country's political landscape for many generations.

The inability of Arabs and Kurds to coexist peacefully has always been a major problem for Iraqi leaders. Given the development of a Kurdish nationalist movement at the turn of the twentieth century and the lip service paid by the Great Powers to the principle of self-determination after World



A group of Kurdish rebels showing off a captured Iraqi airplane after the first Gulf War.

War I, the Kurds had hoped that the postwar settlement would see the establishment of a Kurdish state. Instead, as noted above, the Kurds found themselves scattered in five countries, none of which they could call their own.

Most Kurds never accepted the crushing of their nationalist aspirations. Consequently, their relationship with successive Iraqi governments has been stormy. Kurdish uprisings have punctuated Iraqi political life since the mid-1920s. In turn, the Iraqi central authorities have always seen Kurdish aspirations for autonomy as a threat to the country's very existence. The fact that Kurdish insurgents were supported by Iran, the United States, and other outsiders did little to ease the tension between them and Iraq's Arab majority. Thus, at the height of the Iran-Iraq War, one of the two main Iraqi Kurdish organizations, the **Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)**, cooperated with the Iranian army and helped it seize a number of villages in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Much of the blame for Arab-Kurdish hostility also lies with a succession of Iraqi governments that never made a sincere effort to meet even limited Kurdish demands. In 1970, for instance, Kurdish leaders and Saddam Hussein reached an agreement granting administrative autonomy to Iraqi Kurdistan, the teaching of Kurdish in schools, the use of Kurdish as the official language in the north, and the increased representation of the Kurds in state institutions. Within a year of signing the agreement, however, it had become clear that the Baath leadership had no intention of living up to its provisions. And, as many Westerners learned for the first time in the run up to the invasion of Iraq, the authorities in Baghdad used chemical and biological weapons against its own Kurdish citizens during the war with Iran. In postwar Iraq, the Kurdish-Arab split remains important. Many Kurds are unwilling to live under a government dominated by Arabs and want at least autonomy over their own region if not outright independence. Meeting Kurdish demands for more freedom from Baghdad while maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq will be a major challenge for the new regime, especially since the Kurds have been outside Baghdad's control since the Gulf War of 1991.

The split between the Arab Shiite and Sunni communities is likely to prove even more intense as the United States and Iraqi authorities try to reconstruct the country. Their antagonism stems more from political, social, and economic differences than from theological disagreements. There are differences of faith, as there are between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. However, religion has become more a symbol of communal identity, and a way for Shiites to express their grievances over the inequalities in wealth and power that have characterized Iraq since its formation.

In the late 1960s, there was not a single Shiite on the **Revolutionary Command Council (RCC)**, which officially sat atop the Baath Party. By the late 1980s, however, more than 25 percent of the RCC members and close to 30 percent of all party leaders were Shiites. They were represented

Key Concepts in Iraq

The first and most obvious conceptual question to ask is why Iraq ended up with a totalitarian regime in the first place.

Second, readers have to ask themselves how much of Iraq's political culture is an outgrowth of its own history or of the impact of outsiders.

Finally, in one sense, Iraq is the best example we have of the impact of globalization. To be sure, we think of globalization primarily in economic or cultural terms, but it is also geopolitical and reflects the might the United States exercises throughout the world.



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Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr leads Friday prayers in the town of Kufa, some 160 km south of Baghdad on 16 April 2004 at the height of Shiite resistance to the U.S.-led occupation.

in numbers roughly proportional to their share of the population at lower levels of the bureaucracy. Yet Shiites' sense that they were discriminated against erupted in the first months after Saddam's overthrow in one phase of the insurgency led by the cleric, **Muqtada al-Sadr** (1973–).

The Shiites' sense of deprivation has also been fueled by the perception that their community has been discriminated against economically. Living conditions in the predominantly Shiite south were so miserable in the 1940s and 1950s that tens of thousands of Shiite peasants migrated to Baghdad every year, where they formed the nucleus of a rapidly developing urban proletariat in what used to be known as Saddam City and is now Sadr City. It is not surprisingly a neighborhood that has been beset with intercommunal violence since 2003.

The Baath regime worsened the already deep division between the two sects. Initially this occurred because of the party's militantly secular orientation, which antagonized religious minded Shiites, and by its long-standing rivalry with the Communist Party, which traditionally had recruited heavily in the Shiite community. Tensions deepened following the creation of a distinctly Shiite underground movement, al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Call), which called for the establishment of an Islamic regime in the country.

The Baath government responded to this challenge in a particularly brutal manner in order to break the hold of religious leaders in the Shiite holy cities of Kerbala and Najaf. Clerics and theology students suspected of being affiliated with al-Da'wa were arrested and as many as forty thousand of them were deported to Iran.

The outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, however, forced the regime to reconsider its strategy toward the Shiites. The fear

that they might defect and support their coreligionists to the east led Saddam Hussein to temper his repression with various measures designed to win them over, including bringing a large number of them into the nominally governing RCC.

But, the moderation was not to last. When Shiites finally rose up in the wake of the first Gulf War, the authorities' brutal response only heightened Shiite antagonism toward Baghdad. In order to flee the government, many Shiite rebels took refuge in the southern marshes, which were a vital part of the regional economy. Saddam had the marshes drained in order to flush out the rebels and thus only reinforced the hatred many in the region felt toward the Sunni-led regime.

A Culture of Secrecy and Fear

Iraq has also often been described as having an inward looking and secretive culture, which stems in part from the centuries of isolation after the Mongol and subsequent invasions. Mass and elite concerns about foreigners include not only the West, but their relations with two of their neighbors, Turkey and Iran. Neither is an Arab country. Both have vastly larger populations. In past centuries, empires based in those countries invaded and occupied at least parts of modern day Iraq long before the British arrived.

That means that today's Iraqis inherited reasonable worries about their security, some of which are centuries old. For instance, many Kurds still believe that Britain's decision to cede the Mosul region to Iraq in the early 1920s was illegal. Eighty percent of Iraq's water supply comes from Turkey and Syria, where both the Tigris and Euphrates have their origins. Turkey's pro-Western government allowed allied bombers to launch attacks from bases there during the first Gulf War. Saddam's regime had similar worries about Iran, epitomized by the dispute over the Shatt al-Arab River in southeastern Iraq, which we will see in more detail later in the chapter as we consider the events that gave rise to the Iran-Iraq War.

Some Iraqis, too, are concerned with what they see as the Western desire to dominate the region. They have not forgotten Britain's broken promises to Arab nationalists after World War I and continue to resent the way British colonial officials drew the country's borders. They remember, too, that Britain was the real power behind the monarchy and that it manipulated Iraqi affairs to further its colonial interests.

The bitterness toward Britain in particular and the West in general was compounded by the decisive role that Western countries played in the creation of Israel. To this day, many Iraqis regard Israel as an artificial entity imposed by the colonial powers to divide and weaken the Arab world.

CONFLICT

In Iraq

CONFLICT IS THE name of the game in Iraqi politics. Under Saddam Hussein, conflict from below was largely suppressed. However, as the insurgencies since the end of major combat operations in April 2003 have shown, conflict among and within the three main religious and ethnic communities discussed in this section is likely to haunt Iraqi politics for years to come.

Very little is being done to address the root causes of the conflict. Those of us in the conflict resolution community think it will be decades before the generations of Kurdish versus Arab and Sunni versus Shiite disputes can be overcome, even if Iraqi and American forces can put down the insurrection that broke out within days of the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime.

After the Baath secured power, it actively encouraged distrust of the West. Saddam Hussein and his colleagues sought to limit the access of foreign visitors to Iraq, and those who were allowed in could not travel freely or easily come into contact with average Iraqis. Any Iraqis who did were likely to have a "visit" from one of the security forces that could put their careers—and even their lives—in jeopardy.

A Tradition of Political Violence

The last aspect of Iraqi popular culture is a propensity for violence. As early as the seventh century, the area was known for its turbulent nature, which coexists uneasily with its tradition of authoritarian rule.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the uneven distribution of wealth and the politicization of a new generation of Iraqis dissatisfied with the authoritarian nature of the monarchy resulted in social and political upheaval. In July 1958, widespread popular discontent with the monarchy exploded in a particularly bloody fashion that led to its destruction.

The aftermath of the revolution was no more peaceful. In March 1959, local army commanders rose up against the government of General Qasim in the northern city of Mosul. For three days, the city was engulfed in violence and bloodshed. Old personal grudges and family feuds were settled. Qasim's supporters were summarily executed. When it became clear that the coup had failed, the government allowed the Communist Party to go on a rampage and avenge the earlier killings.

When the Baath Party finally overthrew Qasim in 1963, his downfall turned into a particularly gruesome spectacle.

His bullet-ridden corpse was shown for several days on Iraqi television.

When the Baath Party finally solidified their power in 1968, the government was able to put a lid on most public forms of violence—other than those it carried out itself. Nonetheless, when they fell, the conflict burst back into the open again and, along with the Kurdish/Arab divide, could well imperil the future of Iraq as a country for decades to come.

Political Participation under the Baath

Public involvement in political life under Saddam Hussein was much like that in the Soviet Union before Mikhail Gorbachev opened up the system. There were no opportunities for Iraqi citizens to express their opinions, especially those that were at odds with the regime.

Instead, to the degree that members of the mass public were engaged in political life, they were mobilized to do so by the Baathist authorities. For instance, massive demonstrations were held in favor of the three wars the government fought before it was toppled. However, Western observers were convinced that most people participated in them because they were all but coerced into doing so by the party and the state.

We can see the lack of real democratic political participation in the last two presidential elections under Saddam's reign. In 1995, 99.47 percent of the population went to the polls, and, of them, 99.96 percent voted for Saddam Hussein. In other words, no more than three thousand people did not vote and no more than another three thousand cast a ballot against Saddam. The regime outdid itself seven years later when it reported a 100 percent turnout and 100 percent of the voters casting ballots for Saddam. That may not have been terribly surprising since participation was mandatory and voters had to show their votes to poll watchers before depositing them in the ballot boxes.

The limits on "demanding" public participation were also evident in the extreme weakness of the Iraqi opposition. It had no open support inside the country and given the repressive power of the regime (see the next section) it was forced to operate from abroad. Many of those groups were funded by the United States, Iran, and other opponents of the Baath Party that further undercut their potential support at home, something we saw in the difficulties Iraqi governments have had establishing themselves since 2003.

The little opposition that existed was highly fragmented. Some of these divisions reflect the country's ethnic and religious cleavages. Thus, the most outspoken critics of the regime were mostly Kurds or Shiites. The one exception was the Iraqi Communist Party, which protested the regime in all parts of Iraq, but like the Tudeh in Iran, it had been all but completely destroyed by the 1990s.

After the first Gulf War, there was a Western-led attempt to create a broadly based opposition coalition—the **Iraqi National Congress (INC)**, which was headed by Adnan Chalabi and all but completely funded by the United States. Chalabi, a Shiite, has since been accused of secretly passing information to the Iranian government and is all but completely discredited in the United States and Iraq. The second-largest group was the Iraqi National Accord, led by Ayad Alawi, who became the interim prime minister as the United States began the transfer of power to Iraq in 2004.

The State under Saddam

Most less developed countries have governmental institutions that are elaborately laid out in their constitutions. In some cases, such as India, those provisions define political life roughly to the degree that they do in industrialized democracies. In many others, however, power rests primarily with a single leader or a small group that is not constrained by constitutional language or conventional laws. That was particularly true in Iraq, which was dominated by one man and his entourage for a quarter century.

A Party State

As in the Soviet Union, we have to start any discussion of Saddam's state with the single party that controlled everything. The Baath Party was founded in the early 1940s by two French-educated Syrian teachers—Michel Aflaq, a Greek Orthodox Christian, and Salah al-Din al-Bitar, a Sunni Muslim. Soon afterward, the party established branches in Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon.

Its ideology was always an ill-defined mixture of pan-Arabism and non-Marxist socialism. The key to its political philosophy was the premise that nation-states in the Arab world were artificial entities created by colonial powers who wanted to divide and weaken the region. Therefore, the party's founders argued that only the unification of the various Arab states would enable them to overcome underdevelopment and foreign domination, something they believed the British and French had promised them during World War I. Their goals were reflected in the very name of their party, since the word *Baath* in Arabic means "resurgence" or "renaissance."

Because Baathist leaders saw Arab countries as no more than parts of a wider Arab nation, the party's highest decision-making body, the National Command, was a supranational institution. Subordinated to it were the party's Regional Commands, which made up the leadership of the Baath in each Arab country.

However, the notion that the Baath was a party that transcended existing state boundaries soon became a fiction, as country-based organizations asserted their independence

from the National Command. In 1966, an important split took place between the Syrian and Iraqi branches. From then on Syria and Iraq each had their own "National Command" that put national interests well above those of the "Arab nation."

After the Baath Party seized control in Baghdad in 1968, anyone who posed a potential threat to its monopoly of power was retired, jailed, executed, dismissed, or reassigned to less-influential positions. All strategic positions in the state machinery were given to trusted or long-standing party members.

Saddam Hussein, then head of the party's security apparatus, orchestrated and directed this thorough "Baathization" of the state. At the same time, he revamped the Baath itself, transforming it from a small, underground party into a mass-based organization. Full membership was reserved for individuals who, after years of service, finally proved their dedication to the regime. Membership in the party was for life, and defection was punishable by death.

Like other totalitarian parties, the Baath relied on indoctrination to foster a sense of Iraqi nationalism and unconditional loyalty. The party tightly controlled the media, the curriculum at schools at all educational levels, and entry into the teaching profession.

Thus, in the mid-1980s, when Iraq's leadership was courting U.S. support in its war with Iran, teachers in Baghdad's schools taught their students that Americans were friends of the Iraqi people and that American visitors deserved a particularly warm welcome. During the 1990–91 Gulf crisis, the same teachers taught children that Americans were imperialists bent on dominating the Middle East and destroying Iraq.

The Baath also helped the authorities control the population. It could do so because it literally was everywhere—from small "cells" in neighborhoods and villages all the way up to its national authorities. Party units were called "divisions," at the level of towns or urban neighborhoods, "sections," which combined several divisions in a large city or a region, and "branches" for the eighteen provinces plus three for Baghdad.

The party had units in factories, universities, and government offices. It monitored the activities of journalists, lawyers, doctors, peasants, and workers through unions and professional organizations that the party controlled. Party members reported on their colleagues' and superiors' performance and loyalty.

Therefore, there were really two distinct chains of authority in the Iraqi state: the official, bureaucratic one and the one associated with the Baath Party. State and party were often played off against one another in an attempt to weaken both and to diminish the possibility that either could provide potential enemies of the regime with a power

base. The confusion and delays that this generated are consequences of a system that valued political control over bureaucratic efficiency.

As such, two parts of the former Iraqi state—the Council of Ministers (or cabinet) and the National Assembly—might seem familiar at first glance, because they have the same names as institutions frequently found in democratic political systems. In fact, they had little in common with their Western counterparts because they had next to no influence over policy making.

The cabinet did little more than implement policies that had already been adopted by the president and the RCC, which will be discussed shortly. The National Assembly's 250 members were only allowed to run for election after being handpicked by a committee controlled by Saddam Hussein. In practice, all power was concentrated in the hands of the Baath party leadership. Also, once Saddam took control, the distinction between the party and his personal power all but disappeared.

The Cult of Personality

As was also the case in most totalitarian regimes, power was concentrated in the hands of a single leader in what is referred to as a cult of personality. When Elaine Sciolino arrived to cover Iraqi politics after the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, she asked her taxicab driver what he thought about Saddam Hussein. His answer was short but to the point. He tapped the dashboard of his car and said, "this is car, but if Saddam Hussein says it is bicycle, it is bicycle." In October 1991, Izzat Ibrahim, then vice chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council, summed it up more briefly: "Saddam Hussein is Iraq, and Iraq is Saddam Hussein."

Huge billboards throughout the country portrayed him in different guises—Saddam in a military uniform, Saddam in a tailor-made Italian suit, Saddam praying, Saddam wearing a Bedouin headdress and robe, Saddam as a shepherd tending his flock, or Saddam wearing the green fatigues favored by Baath leaders. His portrait was everywhere—in taxicabs, in stores, in government buildings, in homes (especially those of government employees), and on bus windows. There were Saddam t-shirts, watches with his face on the dial, and notebooks and calendars adorned with his image. Throughout the country, one found placards with quotes attributed to Saddam and others praising the president.

In the mid-1980s one of the jokes making the rounds about the regime went like this:

"What is the population of Iraq?"

"Twenty-eight million."

"Fourteen million Iraqis and fourteen million pictures of Saddam Hussein."

PROFILES

Saddam Hussein



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A best-selling watch during the 1991 war, with Saddam Hussein pictured on the dial. Many wrist- and pocket-watches, as well as a wide selection of Saddam t-shirts, were available.

Saddam Hussein was born in 1937 and grew up in Tikrit, a poor city one hundred miles north of Baghdad. His mother was a widow, and there are rumors that he was abused by several of the relatives who helped raise him. Saddam Hussein moved to Baghdad in 1955 and quickly became active in politics. He was wounded in the Baathists' attempt to assassinate Qasim in 1959 and fled to Cairo, where he studied law but never earned a degree. He returned to Iraq when the Baath Party first came to power in 1963.

After the Baath seized power for good in July 1968, he served as second-in-command to the new president, Major General Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr. In practice, however, he quickly became the driving force behind the new regime, and by the mid-1970s he had emerged as the *de facto* leader of Iraq. In July 1979 he forced al-Bakr to resign and assumed the presidency himself. Through repeated purges of the ruling elite, he rapidly turned Iraqi politics into one-man rule. He has been aptly described by *New York Times* journalist Thomas Friedman as a thirteenth-century tyrant whose unrelenting desire to acquire weapons of mass destruction make him the archetypal twenty-first-century threat (www.emergency.com/hussein1.htm). He was captured by American troops on 12 December 2003 and hung on 30 December 2006.

Saddam Hussein's birthday was a national holiday. Schoolchildren memorized his sayings as well as poems and songs exalting him. News broadcasts focused on his activities. Television anchors read the dozens of congratulatory telegrams sent to him every day by government officials, artists, and leaders of professional, women's, and youth associations.

The most striking example of the personality cult is probably the set of two monuments called "Victory Arches" that he had built to celebrate Iraq's "victory" over Iran. These identical monuments are at opposite ends of a huge field in Baghdad. Each consists of two enormous, twenty-ton bronze forearms, which are giant replicas of Saddam's. The arms burst from the ground, each holding a giant sword. When they meet, the swords and the arms form an arch. Next to the base of the arches are some five thousand battle-scarred helmets of dead Iranian soldiers. The symbolism is obvious: Iraq's victory was achieved through the military genius and valiant leadership of Saddam, who will continue to lead his nation to ever greater successes.

The cult of personality reinforced two opposing images of Saddam Hussein: as benefactor and as ruthless leader. Thus, welfare programs and development projects were

portrayed as personal gifts that Saddam showered on his people. In the 1970s and 1980s, for instance, he frequently handed out television sets while visiting Kurdish or Shiite villages. But, if Saddam was the one who handed out benefits, he also was the one who handed out the punishment. After the village of Dujayl, known to be a hotbed of Shiite fundamentalism, was the site of an assassination attempt against Saddam, he ordered it razed. Almost immediately afterward, the government rebuilt it.

Through such displays, Saddam Hussein projected the image of a leader who was omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. The message sent through such dramatic and seemingly contradictory actions was simple: Saddam Hussein alone decided who would live and who would die. And, although many of the stories circulating in Iraq and in the Arab world about his brutality were true, many more were fabricated and spread by the regime to add to his aura of invincibility.

The Informal Chain of Command

Saddam's ability to stay in power rested largely on his personal control over a vast network of subordinates who managed the party and state. Trusted aides who reported

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The famous giant arches made up of swords held in replicas of Saddam Hussein's hands.

directly to him and who were kept relatively uninformed of each other's activities headed every institution that mattered.

In so doing, Saddam Hussein made it unlikely that he would ever face a serious challenge from inside the government. The concentration of power in Saddam's hands had two essential implications for the exercise of political power in Iraq.

First, the influence of any member of the political elite was primarily a function of his personal access to the leader. Thus, men who did not belong to any of the official government bodies but who were close to Saddam often exerted more power than those in formal positions of authority. Second, the real chain of authority was exercised through a series of concentric circles emanating from Saddam. Such personalization of power, and the fluidity of institutional arrangements it implies, makes it all but impossible to present the kind of diagram of decision making included in the other chapters of this book.

The inner circle made up of Saddam Hussein's relatives largely ran Iraq from behind the scenes. In 1990, this group included eight of his family members: his two sons, **Uday** and **Qusay**, (both of whom were killed by American forces in 2003), three cousins on his father's side (two of whom were also his sons-in-law); and three half brothers.

However, the number of reliable family members declined significantly afterward as a result of all but completely open disputes among them. Although there are several such examples, one stands out. In August 1995

Saddam Hussein's two sons-in-law, who had been number two in the regime and head of Saddam's personal security guard, respectively, defected to Jordan, where they called for the overthrow of their father-in-law. When they finally returned to Baghdad after being granted a presidential pardon, they were killed along with all those who had shared their brief exile (except for Saddam's two daughters, who, with their mother, were placed under house arrest).

A second circle consisted of a handful of Saddam Hussein's close associates, who had been connected to him since the Baath's underground days. Although these men had some real influence, they lacked any kind of independent power base and owed everything to Saddam. This circle included Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan, Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, and others who were not as visible to observers in the West.

A third circle was composed of Saddam Hussein's relatives and others who hailed from his hometown, Tikrit. It used to be customary for last names to refer to a person's place of origin, as in "Saddam Hussein al-Tikriti" (that is, "from Tikrit"). In 1976, the Baath Party suddenly abolished this practice on the grounds that it encouraged people to think of themselves not as Iraqis but as members of the parochial groups discussed earlier. Many observers believe that the real reason behind the decision was that the leadership did not want to call attention to the fact that an embarrassingly large proportion of the political establishment had roots in Tikrit and were related to Saddam.

Saddam Hussein and his family during happier times. The photo includes his two brothers-in-law, who defected in 1995 and then were killed the following February.

© AP Photo



Other Institutions

Early in the Baath regime, one institution did matter—the Revolutionary Command Council. Like a Communist country's central committee, the RCC was the highest de facto authority. It was chaired by Saddam Hussein who was also president of the republic, commander in chief of the armed forces, and secretary general of the Baath Party.

The RCC functioned as a collective decision-making body during much of the decade after the Baath Party seized power. The situation changed dramatically in July 1979 when al-Bakr was replaced by Saddam Hussein. By 1982, the new president had forced out all RCC members with an independent base of support and replaced them with people who were personally loyal to him. During the next twenty years, he reduced the size and influence of the RCC.

One of the most important challenges facing the RCC and the party as a whole was control over the military. Considering the military's tradition of intervention in Iraqi politics, the leadership's suspicion of it was not unjustified.

The importance of the military was reflected in the composition of the first RCC, the five members of which were all career officers, and in the domination of the initial Baathist cabinet by individuals closely associated with prominent military figures. From the very moment the new regime assumed power, therefore, civilian party activists were fearful of the power that senior military commanders wielded in

the state bureaucracy. Turf battles between the civilian and the military wings of the party were compounded by ideological differences between the two groups, with the professional soldiers tending to be more moderate and pragmatic than the more doctrinaire and ideologically oriented Baathists. Only days after the 1968 coup, the civilian wing of the party, led by Saddam Hussein, moved to neutralize the most prominent military figures. Within a few years, most senior officers were removed from positions of influence in the government and were replaced by party functionaries. Significantly, the proportion of army officers in the RCC declined from 100 percent in the immediate aftermath of the 1968 coup to 40 percent in the second RCC established in November 1969. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, it fell to about 20 percent.

The armed forces were subjected to repeated purges as scores of officers were dismissed, forced to retire, and even executed. Political loyalty to the regime became a much more important consideration than professional competence in determining promotions. Only party members were allowed into the military academies. Soldiers were told that belonging to non-Baathist organizations was a crime punishable by death.

The outbreak of the war with Iran in 1980 revived latent tensions and animosities between the political and military leaderships. After Iraqi forces suffered serious defeats in 1982, senior army commanders were reported to be highly resentful of the excessive centralization of decision making

in Saddam Hussein's hands. After an aborted attempt to force him to step down in 1982, he launched a major purge of the military and executed scores of high-ranking officers whom he suspected of conspiring to remove him.

In an attempt to undermine the ability of army officers to develop their own power bases, the government accelerated their rotation from one branch of the military to another. In addition, officers blamed for defeats on the battlefield were executed for treason as a lesson to their colleagues. In several instances, successful officers were summoned to Baghdad after being told that they were going to be awarded medals for their performance at the front. Upon reaching the capital, they were arrested, and some were executed.

Saddam Hussein also tried to buy the officer corps' loyalty. Military spending was increased, and officers were given special benefits and privileges, including better housing, higher salaries, and access to government controlled stores filled with imported goods unavailable to most Iraqis.

This mixture of carrot and stick, combined with the frightening prospect of an Iranian victory, succeeded in ensuring the army's loyalty throughout the war. Yet after it ended in 1988, there were once again rumors of coup attempts, followed by the execution of scores of officers.

With Iraq's defeat in 1991, many analysts hoped that the military might finally topple the regime. Saddam understood the threat and took steps to foil possible coup attempts. He appointed a new army chief of staff, replaced the heads of the air force and the elite **Republican Guard**, and increased the rotation of senior military commanders.

Despite these and other precautionary measures, four officers in the Republican Guard attempted a coup in June 1992. Shortly afterward, two hundred officers were purged, many of whom were executed. During the course of the next decade, reports and rumors of attempted coups surfaced on a regular basis. The most serious, in mid-1995, was organized by a senior general who had been close to Saddam. Afterward, the general's mutilated body was delivered to his family—one of Saddam's favorite ways of publicizing the cost of "treason."

The last major component of the regime was its collection of intelligence agencies that rivaled those of any other totalitarian regime in terms of their reach and brutality. The secret police was made up of not one but four distinct organizations. The most powerful was the General Intelligence Apparatus, which developed out of the Baathist secret police created by Saddam Hussein when the party was still underground. It handled both internal security and overseas operations but focused on monitoring the army, the bureaucracy, the Baath Party, and the "popular organizations" affiliated to it. The General Security Directorate was primarily in charge of domestic operations. Military Intelligence

was set up to spy on the Iraqi armed forces, gather intelligence on foreign countries, monitor the activities of Iraqis living abroad, and arrange assassinations of Iraqi dissidents in exile. Finally, Special Security was directly attached to the presidential palace and provided Saddam Hussein with information on key government officials.

The fact that there were this many security agencies points to the leadership's obsession with political control. It also reflects Saddam Hussein's reliance on divide-and-rule tactics as a way of preventing any single institution from becoming a threat to his personal power. Thus, the various intelligence agencies were given overlapping responsibilities, and they were instructed to spy not only on the population, the bureaucracy, the party, the army, and foreign countries, but on one another.

Public Policy

Because of its oil, Iraq has a greater economic potential than most third world countries. Unfortunately, Iraq's resources were squandered by a leadership that chose to use them to try to establish Iraq as the most powerful country in the Arab world. To fulfill this ambition, Saddam Hussein led Iraq into three disastrous wars that ultimately destroyed his regime, devastated the country, and cost him his life. Thus, Iraqis have suffered not only defeat in war but also continued poverty, both of which could have been avoided if Saddam Hussein had been less intransigent.

Economic Reform

When the Baath Party seized power in 1968, its vaguely socialist rhetoric offered no strategy for stimulating economic growth. Yet the absence of a concrete economic agenda was not really disturbing to the new elite, whose first priority was neither economic nor social, but political.

During the Baath's first decade in power, the leadership used economic policy primarily as a tool to consolidate its power. It is in this light that we should examine the tremendous increase in the state's economic role before the wars eliminated any chance of reform in domestic policy.

By the late 1970s, about 25 percent of the economically active population worked in government-related jobs. The leadership used the public sector as an employer of last resort, in an attempt to bolster popular support. At the same time, the nationalization of many key businesses, the tightening of state regulations over industry and trade, and the extensive land reform measures of 1970 were also designed to increase the regime's control over the population.

The expansion of the public sector, however, was expensive. Financing it was made possible by the quadrupling of oil prices in 1973 and the nationalization of the oil industry the year before. The regime suddenly found itself the beneficiary

of unprecedented oil revenues, which it used not only to increase state control but also to modernize the country and to extend basic social services to most of the population.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the state's modernizing policies radically changed the face of Iraq. In two short decades the country's infrastructure was drastically upgraded and expanded. Modern highways, bridges, airports, and hotels were built. Irrigation systems were developed, and electricity and running water were provided in rural areas whose residents could only have dreamed of having such services just a few years before. Suddenly, people in the countryside had television sets and refrigerators, sometimes handed out by the government. The fact that much of the country's infrastructure was destroyed during the Gulf War and 2003 war should not keep us from seeing how much the Baath rulers were able to accomplish.

The increased oil revenues also enabled the Baath leadership to provide the population with an impressive array of social services. Poverty was reduced considerably. University graduates were guaranteed a job in the bureaucracy. The middle class grew. The state made large tracts of government-owned land available at low prices. Unemployment all but disappeared. Comprehensive social legislation was enacted to benefit workers. Rent controls were put into effect to guarantee access to housing. Basic commodities were heavily subsidized by the state.

The leadership also improved the condition of women in a country in which they traditionally have suffered fewer social constraints than in the rest of the Persian Gulf. Day care centers were built. Legislation was passed to prevent discrimination against women in the workplace and to provide for the same salaries men received and paid maternity leave. By the late 1970s these measures had yielded significant results, with more women employed in the professions and the civil service than ever before. Further, following the outbreak of the war with Iran, women joined the labor force to replace men sent to the front.

The state also sought to improve educational and health services, which it provided free of charge. The government spent an unprecedented amount of money to train nurses and physicians, and it expanded the number of clinics and hospitals in rural areas that had been neglected by earlier governments. These efforts produced significant improvements in public health. Iraqis born in 1984 could expect to live an average of eight to nine years longer than those born two decades earlier. Meanwhile, infant mortality rates decreased from 140 to 80 per 1,000 live births between 1960 and 1981. Similarly, schools, universities, and technical institutes were built or expanded. As a result, the number of graduates from primary schools doubled between 1973 and 1979. During the same period, the number of graduates from secondary schools tripled, and the number of gradu-

ates from universities and technical institutes jumped to eighteen thousand a year. The efforts made at the level of secondary education were particularly remarkable, because the percentage of the eligible Iraqis enrolled in secondary schools rose from 38 percent in 1976 to 67 percent in 1984.

Realizing that adult illiteracy remained high, the government also launched a literacy campaign in 1978. In its characteristically heavy-handed style, the regime forced all illiterates between the ages of fifteen and forty-five to participate. Public buildings were put at the disposal of the literacy campaign, and efforts were made to reach the most remote corners of the country. Marsh dwellers were forced to attend "floating schools," while nomads were assigned to "traveling schools" with special facilities that could be moved. To facilitate participation by mothers, hundreds of new nurseries were built. This massive effort paid off. Many women received their first formal education. Within just a few years, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis learned to read and write.

Thus, during its first decade in power, the Baath contributed substantially to the socioeconomic development of Iraq. Unfortunately, these results were achieved through rigid repression and systematic political indoctrination akin to that practiced by the Soviets under Stalin. Moreover, Saddam Hussein could have improved the living standards of his people even more had it not been for his diversion of Iraq's resources to the development of domestic agencies of repression and a massive arms buildup that consumed more than 40 percent of the budget from the 1980s onward.

Most importantly, the prosperity of the 1970s had been due not to an increase in productivity or to a diversification or expansion of the economy, but to the massive injection of oil revenues. Oil money, however, could not compensate indefinitely for the structural weaknesses of the economy that were increasingly apparent by the end of the decade.

In an effort to address these problems and improve economic performance, the authorities moved toward economic liberalization when Saddam Hussein became president. Many farms and state-owned service industries were sold. The government encouraged foreign investment and reduced the bureaucracy's cumbersome controls.

Unfortunately, economic liberalization mostly benefited a group of speculators and wheeler-dealers with connections to the regime. Industrial production stagnated, shortages of essential goods continued to plague the country, and black markets in consumer goods and currencies flourished.

Even more importantly, after the invasion of Kuwait, it was impossible to talk about any kind of coherent economic policy in Iraq. The country spent at least 40 percent of its total income on the military. It also had to endure the sanctions (to be discussed shortly) that largely kept it out of global markets and sharply limited the amount of oil it could sell. Last but by

no means least, Saddam and his entourage diverted as much as half of the income that was brought in through the United Nations oil for food program to the pocketbooks of the elite.

The Iran-Iraq War

The subordination of Iraq's welfare to Saddam's personal ambitions was not limited to domestic policy. Even more important were the decisions that took the country to war three times in fifteen years. (See table 14.3.) Because it is so important for politics in Iraq today, we will put off discussion of the U.S.-led invasion of 2003 until the next section.

Iran and Iraq have long been rivals. To some extent, this stems from the religious and ethnic differences discussed earlier. However, tensions between the two countries also exist because of their competition for power in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East as a whole.

Until the late 1960s, the British military presence in the Gulf had helped prevent the hostility between the two countries from degenerating into open warfare. However, when the British announced that they would withdraw their military forces east of Suez by 1971, the rivalry between Iran and Iraq was suddenly renewed.

TABLE 14.3 Iraq's First Two Wars under Saddam Hussein: A Chronology

22 September 1980	Iraq invades Iran.
June 1982	Iran drives Iraqi army back into Iraq. Saddam expresses willingness to end conflict, but Iran refuses.
July 1982	The war is now being waged in Iraqi territory, and develops into increasingly bloody stalemate.
26 November 1984	Desperate for improved relations with West, Iraq restores diplomatic relations with United States.
10 February 1986	Iranian troops capture Fao Peninsula.
April 1988	Iraqi forces push Iranian army back across border. The war finally turns in Iraq's favor.
20 August 1988	Cease-fire with Iran is signed.
2 August 1990	Iraq invades Kuwait.
29 November 1990	UN Security Council authorizes anti-Iraq coalition to drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait if Saddam has not pulled out by 15 January 1991.
17 January 1991	U.S.-led coalition forces launch massive air campaign against Iraq. Devastating raids continue for six weeks.
24 February 1991	Coalition forces begin ground war that lasts only one hundred hours. Iraqi army is routed.
27 February 1991	Ground offensive is halted after Kuwait is liberated.
3 March 1991	Baghdad accepts coalition's cease-fire terms.

By that time, Iran had emerged as the more powerful of the two. Its population was about three times and its area almost four times that of Iraq. It was also wealthier and more developed. Perhaps most importantly of all, the shah had benefited from military and economic support from a succession of American administrations that decided to use his regime as the pillar of its policy in the Gulf.

In the late 1960s, the shah rekindled a long-standing border dispute with Iraq. Since 1937, the internationally recognized border between the two countries had been the Iranian bank of the Shatt al Arab River, which gave Iraq exclusive control over it. In 1969, the shah unilaterally abrogated that treaty and announced that Iran would now recognize the border along the middle of the waterway's main channel, in effect claiming sovereignty over half the river.

Tensions continued to build. In 1970, an Iranian-sponsored coup was foiled in Baghdad. Meanwhile, with direct encouragement from the United States, the shah began to project himself as the strongman of the Gulf. In November 1971, Iran occupied three islands strategically located at the entrance of the Strait of Hormuz, off the coast of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In retaliation, Iraq cut off diplomatic relations with Tehran.

Much more threatening to Baghdad, however, was Iranian support for a Kurdish uprising in Iraq. The rebellion threatened the new Baathist government, which led it to make a major concession to Iran. At an **Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** meeting in Algiers in March 1975, Saddam Hussein negotiated an agreement with the shah that called for an end to Iranian support for the Iraqi Kurds in exchange for Baghdad's recognition of Iran's claim to half of the Shatt al Arab.

In 1979, however, Iranian-Iraqi relations took a turn for the worse. The overthrow of the shah and the establishment of the Islamic Republic headed by Ayatollah Khomeini created an entirely new situation in the Persian Gulf (see Chapter 13). Soon, Iraqi authorities were accusing the Islamic Republic of interference in its political life—claims that were not unfounded. Meddling by Tehran was more threatening to the Baath because Iraqi Shiites were increasingly alienated from the government in Baghdad. Yet despite clear evidence of Iranian involvement, it is hard to accept Iraq's claim that it started the Iran-Iraq War in self-defense, because the war was also a bid for regional hegemony by Saddam Hussein.

The 1979 Camp David Accords and Egyptian president Anwar Sadat's peace treaty with Israel had left Egypt—traditionally the most influential country in Arab politics—ostracized by the rest of the Arab world. Saddam Hussein, who had led the opposition to the normalization of relations between Israel and Egypt, must have realized that oil-rich

A scene of devastation from the Iran-Iraq War.



AP Photo

Iraq now had a unique opportunity to establish itself as the leading Arab power. He also had to have noticed the effects of the ongoing revolutionary turmoil in Tehran. The Iranian officer corps had been decimated in the wave of purges and executions that followed the shah's downfall. Given reports about the declining morale in the Iranian military, Saddam must have assumed that a sudden Iraqi attack could provoke the fall of the Iranian government. Whatever the exact set of motivations, the Iraqi army did invade Iran in September 1980. Unfortunately for Iraq, the Iranian army did not disintegrate, and the Islamic Republic in Tehran survived by gaining the enthusiastic support of most Iranians who rallied around the regime. Far from being the short campaign that Saddam envisioned, the war turned into a protracted and bloody stalemate.

The war lasted almost eight years. It was the deadliest conflict in the history of the modern Middle East and the most devastating military confrontation to date between two third world nations. As many as a million Iraqis and Iranians died. Hundreds of thousands more were disabled for life. Virtually no Iraqi family was spared, and all too many parents had several children die at the front.

It was also one of the most futile conflicts in history. It was largely caused by the personal hatred between two tyrants, each aspiring for regional leadership and imbued with a messianic conception of himself. Saddam Hussein saw Khomeini's revolutionary zeal and mixture of religion

and politics as a dangerous threat that could be eliminated only through the annihilation of the man and the regime he had created. Khomeini, in turn, perceived Saddam as the archetypical modernizing, secular leader who had betrayed Islam and who had to be eradicated. Khomeini also had personal accounts to settle with Saddam. At the shah's request, the Ayatollah had expelled him from the Shiite holy city of Najaf in 1978, where Khomeini had lived and taught for fourteen years. By 1981, Khomeini had made the ouster of Saddam from power one of the preconditions for a cease-fire. His refusal to compromise on that point, combined with Saddam's equally adamant refusal to step down, largely explains why the war lasted so long.

To justify this senseless and increasingly bloody war, both regimes engaged in extravagant and self-serving rhetoric. Thus, Baghdad described the war as a valiant defense of the "Arab homeland" against the "fanatic Persians," the "Persian racists," or the "fire-eating Persians." For its part, Tehran depicted it as a jihad against "Baathist infidels" who had betrayed Islam and were oppressing Iran's Shiite brethren in Iraq.

After eight years of fighting, Iranian and Iraqi forces were stuck almost exactly where they had been when the war started. Neither country had achieved its aims. Exhausted and lacking viable alternatives, the Islamic Republic finally agreed to sign the cease-fire for which Iraq had long been pleading.

The First Gulf War

Upon seizing power, the Baath immediately launched a propaganda campaign against Israel and the United States. Then, in 1972, feeling increasingly threatened by the pro-Western regime of the shah, Iraq signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union. This development caused alarm in Washington, where it was interpreted as a sign that Iraq had become a Soviet puppet, giving it a foothold in the strategically important and oil-rich Gulf region. Meanwhile, Baghdad also offered support to extremist Palestinian factions and adopted a confrontational stance toward the moderate, pro-Western Arab states in the Gulf.

From the mid-1970s onward, however, Iraq's relations with the Arab Gulf states improved because Iraq distanced itself from the Soviet Union after the latter's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. It also developed closer ties with a few Western European countries—in particular, France, which became its major arms supplier.

The outbreak of the war changed things even more. Desperate for financial, political, and military support from Arab and Western states, Iraq toned down its militant rhetoric and began portraying itself as a bulwark against Iran's attempt to export its fundamentalist revolution to the Arab world. Within a few months, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the smaller Gulf states cast their lot with Iraq. Weapons, spare parts, munitions, military advisers, and migrant workers began to flow in. Even more decisive was the \$40 billion in aid for Iraq's war effort sent by the Gulf states.

Even relations with the United States improved. The Reagan administration was interested in bettering relations with Baghdad out of fear that an Iranian victory would result in the spread of Khomeini's brand of Islamic fundamentalism throughout the Arab world. In one of history's many ironies, the man who was most responsible for smoothing American-Iraqi relations was Donald Rumsfeld, who would spearhead the third war almost exactly twenty years later. The United States provided a limited amount of ostensibly nonmilitary aid, although the computers it sent, for instance, could be used for military as well as civilian purposes. By 1987 Baghdad had become the world's largest recipient of U.S. agricultural loans, the biggest single overseas buyer of American rice, and one of the largest importers of American wheat and corn. Washington also supplied intelligence data on the movement of Iranian troops.

When hostilities between Iran and Iraq came to an end in summer 1988, the prevailing view was that Iraq was now led by a reformed, moderate, and pragmatic regime. Further, from Washington's perspective, Iraq was seen as a necessary counterweight to Iran. For the next two years, Western governments were willing to turn a blind eye to the continuing repression and human rights violations in Iraq

and the mounting indications that the country was still governed by a dangerous and expansionist regime.

But only for two years. The beginning of 1990 was marked by a return to the sort of belligerent rhetoric that had not been used since the early 1970s. Iraq seemed to be launching a new bid for leadership of the Arab world. As in the past, this was most evident in the upsurge in anti-Western and anti-Israeli rhetoric.

At a meeting of Arab states that February, Saddam Hussein gave his most virulent anti-American speech in more than a decade. He pointed out that the end of the cold war, the collapse of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, and the weakening of the Soviet Union had left the United States in an unprecedented position of influence in the Arab world. He then predicted that the U.S. government would use that power to try to impose American hegemony over the Gulf and to encourage Israeli aggression against Arab states.

Barely a month later, an Iranian-born journalist working for a British magazine was arrested by Iraqi authorities while investigating an explosion at a missile plant near Baghdad. Accused of spying for Israel and forced into making a confession, he was tried, convicted, and hanged within a week, despite pleas from the British government and the international community as a whole.

Throughout the spring of 1990, there was mounting evidence of Iraqi efforts to smuggle in nuclear weapons technology from the West, accelerate the development of biological and chemical weapons facilities, and build a long-range artillery piece dubbed the "Supergun." On 1 April, fearful that the Israeli government was planning strikes against Iraqi nuclear or chemical operations as it had done ten years earlier, Saddam Hussein made a fiery speech in which he declared that, should Israel attack Iraq, Baghdad would retaliate with a chemical attack that would "burn half of Israel."

Afterwards, Saddam Hussein reserved his sharpest attacks for the Arab states in the Gulf. For eight years, he argued, Iraq had shed "rivers of blood" to protect the Gulf dynasties and the "Arab homeland" against Khomeini's revolutionary zeal. Yet, despite Baghdad's repeated requests, the oil-rich Arab states remained unwilling to cancel Iraq's war debt or provide it with additional funds to rebuild its economy. Such intransigence, Saddam contended, was an insult to Iraq and its war dead.

Meanwhile, Kuwait and the UAE continued to exceed their oil production quotas, driving down prices and depriving Iraq of much-needed revenues. Saddam claimed that excess pumping by the Gulf states had already cost Iraq \$84 billion, which he took to be evidence that the small Gulf states were engaged in a plot against Iraq hatched by "imperialist and Zionist forces." In June and July, infuriated by what he saw as the arrogance of the Gulf rulers, Saddam

GLOBALIZATION *And Iraq*

IRAQ IS ONE of the few countries where the impact of globalization has been felt more as a result of political than economic forces.

Of course, globalization has had an economic impact. The United Nations imposed sanctions before the first Gulf war that continued for the most part until the 2003 defeat, which meant that most Iraqis did not have access, for instance, to adequate medical care. Many, too, had at most marginally acceptable diets. Estimates vary, but somewhere between a hundred thousand and a million Iraqis died because of easily treatable diseases and malnutrition during that twelve-year period.

pressed them even further, asking for \$30 billion in additional grants.

He also charged Kuwait with stealing Iraq's oil by pumping excessive quantities from the Rumaila oil field, which lies mostly beneath Iraqi territory but stretches just across the border into Kuwait. Finally, Iraq revived its old demand to be given or leased the two Kuwaiti islands of Warbah and Bubiyan to give Iraq a deep-water port in the Gulf. The Kuwaiti emir failed to take Iraq's threats seriously and worded his refusal of Saddam's demands in language that was highly critical of Iraq. This, combined with Saddam's belief that the United States would not be able to

reverse an Iraqi takeover of Kuwait, sealed the tiny nation's fate. Saddam appears to have believed that Saudi Arabia would never allow U.S. troops on Saudi soil, leaving the United States with no way of forcing Iraq out of Kuwait.

On 2 August 1990, 100,000 Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait and occupied the country in a mere six hours. By seizing its neighbor, Iraq would not only automatically eliminate its debt to it but also suddenly control about 20 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, placing itself in a much better position to influence oil prices. Kuwait's wealth also would enable Iraq to repay its debt to Western European countries and to launch ambitious new development programs. Given the disastrous state of the Iraqi economy, Saddam Hussein may well have believed that his political future depended on his ability to gain access to Kuwait's resources. Saddam's regional position also would be greatly enhanced by the annexation of Kuwait, which he could present as an unsuccessful "reconquest" of lands that Iraq had long claimed were rightly its own. Finally, by providing Iraq with a major port on the Gulf, the takeover of Kuwait would reduce its economic and military vulnerability especially vis-à-vis Iran.

Yet, despite what Saddam may have expected, the international community responded with an unusual degree of unity by demanding the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. The United States, far from limiting itself to a verbal condemnation, took the lead in the international campaign. To Saddam's even greater surprise, the Soviet Union, Iraq's long-standing patron, joined Washington in condemning Baghdad. France, the European country closest to Iraq, also insisted on an Iraqi

A typical scene of the destruction in Baghdad during the first Gulf War.



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withdrawal. The Arabs were split. Saddam, who had hoped that the Arab world would rally behind him, suddenly faced an alliance that included several key Arab states, including Egypt and Syria. Over three-quarters of a million allied troops, including more than 500,000 Americans, were sent to the region as part of **Operation Desert Shield** in an attempt to convince Iraq to pull out of Kuwait.

At this point, however, Saddam still could have backed down. Instead, he decided to leave his forces in Kuwait, confident that the United States would not go to war with Iraq over the emirate, that Arab states would never dare ally with the United States against "Brotherly Iraq," and that, if they did, the masses throughout the Arab world would rise up in Baghdad's support. He turned out to be wrong on all three counts.

Repeated attempts to reach a negotiated settlement failed in part because of Saddam Hussein's belief in the primacy of coercion and intimidation over diplomacy and negotiation. Unlike those who see the use of force as a last resort, the Baathist top leadership was composed of individuals who saw concessions as signs of weakness and who consequently believed that compromise should be resisted unless one has absolutely no other option.

The United States launched **Operation Desert Storm** on 17 January 1991. They were backed by a broad coalition of the world's most powerful nations, including many in the Gulf region. The Arab masses did not rise up in defense of Iraq. By early March, less than a year after Iraqi tanks had rolled into Kuwait and only forty days after the beginning of the war, Iraq had been transformed from a major regional power into a devastated country, subject to the dictates of the United Nations and the U.S.-led coalition.

After that, the Iraqi regime complied at best grudgingly with UN resolutions that compelled it to fully disclose its weapons of mass destruction programs and to dismantle them. It allegedly tried to assassinate former U.S. president George H. W. Bush during his visit to Kuwait in April 1993. It interfered repeatedly with the work of inspection teams sent to monitor Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions. And, it has continued to support terror as an instrument of state policy and failed to cease its brutal repression of the Iraqi people as required by UN Security Council Resolution 688.

All these issues would help lead to the third war, the regime's destruction, and the chaotic transition that followed in its wake.

THE THIRD WAR AND THE NEW IRAQ

Here we enter the most controversial part of the chapter both for politics and political science, which are not always the same. To begin with, the war the United States

and its reduced group of allies launched in 2003 started amid controversy and remains so in fall 2007. To complicate matters further, many of the problems ripping apart Iraq today have more to do with international relations than comparative politics. I've argued throughout the book that the distinction between the two parts of political science is making less and less sense in our globalizing world. There is no better way to see that than in the issues raised in the rest of this chapter.

As noted in the introduction, the goal here is not to cast judgment on whether the war ever made sense. Rather, we want to focus on Iraqi domestic politics, which simply can't be done without starting with the American decision to go to war with Iraq again.

The Legacy of the First Gulf War

The first Gulf War settled little more than restoring the independence of Kuwait. It would be another dozen years before the United States decided to end Baath Rule and embark on the transition to a new regime.

When Iraqi forces withdrew from Kuwait and surrendered several days later, the Allies were faced with a choice. They could suspend their own offensive operations, or they could push on to Baghdad and force Saddam Hussein from power.

The first President Bush and his colleagues chose the former option. There are three generally accepted reasons for their decision. First, the mandate given for the use of force by the coalition was limited to freeing Kuwait, and Bush, therefore, did not feel he had the legal authority to continue the fight. Second, Bush's advisors told him that a drive to reach and capture Baghdad would be far bloodier than the war had been so far, which had claimed fewer than two hundred American lives, many of them through accidents or friendly fire. From what we have seen since the end of major hostilities in May 2003, Bush's advisors were probably correct. Third and probably most important, the Bush administration expected Kurds and Shiites, if not Sunni Arabs, to rise up and topple the regime.

Bush's hoped-for rebellions did break out, but they did not have the result he wanted. Saddam's forces responded with the kind of brutality the world had come to expect of his government. Iraqi troops battled Kurdish insurgents and recovered large parts of their protected region until allied forces returned to create safe havens and turned the area into an autonomous region that largely remained beyond Baghdad's control for the rest of his rule. If anything, Saddam's troops were even crueler in the south. Among other things, they drained the swamps, which were a vital part of the ecology and economy on which millions of Shiites depended. Eventually, a bombing campaign forced the

regime's troops to leave the region. A no-fly zone was established over the Shiite and Kurdish regions where Iraqi military planes could no longer operate.

Nonetheless, Saddam remained in power. His military, of course, was much weaker. But, there seemed to be few signs that he could be overthrown, despite explicit attempts by the West to create a viable opposition in the exile community as we will see below.

A Decade of Tension

Again as we saw in the last chapter on Iran, sometimes the origins of a country's political difficulties lie outside its borders. That was also true for Iraq, especially after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the Bush administration's response to them. But, even in the decade before 9/11 when a full-blown war with Iraq was rarely on anyone's political agenda, pressures from Washington and elsewhere made economic and political life difficult in Iraq (see table 14.4).

The West pursued what international relations scholars call a policy of containment against the regime. Economic sanctions remained in place, denying Iraq the ability to sell oil or buy almost anything in global markets. Those rules were eased a bit in 1996 when Iraq was permitted to sell a limited amount of oil, ostensibly to buy food, medicine, and other humanitarian supplies.

Allied forces also flew hundreds of thousands of sorties over Iraqi airspace. Any time an Iraqi antiaircraft locked

onto an allied aircraft, the allied plane would launch tons of bombs, even though there was next to no chance that the Iraqi batteries could hit one of the planes. The bombing was particularly severe anytime the regime did something the West found unacceptable, such as the allegation that it planned to assassinate George H. W. Bush when he visited Kuwait shortly after he left office in 1993.

Of all the issues troubling Iraq's relations with the rest of the world, nothing was more important or more indicative of the cat-and-mouse game the regime played with the international community about its **weapons of mass destruction (WMD)** program. The **United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM)** was created in the wake of the first Gulf War to monitor Iraq's compliance with the cease-fire resolution that called for the elimination of its entire WMD program, including missiles and other delivery systems. According to the terms of this resolution, the embargo on Iraq would be lifted once UNSCOM certified that Iraq had been fully disarmed.

UNSCOM relied on spot inspections of sites suspected of being the location for the manufacturing or stockpiling of WMD. Once inspected, these sites would remain closely monitored through sophisticated surveillance equipment.

Between 1991 and 1998, UNSCOM proved quite effective. Tons of chemical and biological weapons were located and destroyed. Still, in late 1998, UNSCOM's job was far from over, as Iraq was still believed to be hiding biological and chemical stocks. That December, Baghdad suspended cooperation with UNSCOM. It claimed that some of UNSCOM's members were acting as spies for the United States and that the commission's leader, Australian diplomat Richard Butler, was an American agent (both of which could possibly have been true). In addition, the regime argued that, even if UNSCOM certified that all Iraqi WMD had been eliminated, the United States would still refuse to lift the sanctions on Iraq as long as Saddam Hussein remained in power.

The Iraqi government's refusal to allow UNSCOM to operate prompted a four-day bombing campaign of Iraq by American and British forces. Shortly thereafter, Baghdad announced that UNSCOM inspectors would never be allowed back into the country. UNSCOM was dead, and the UN Security Council and the Iraqi government were unable to agree on a new way of inspecting that either could accept (www.un.org/Depts/unscom).

When UNSCOM was forced out, many outside observers thought Iraq still possessed some chemical and biological weapons, had the capacity to make many more of them quickly, and that their ongoing nuclear program had led Iraq to be dangerously close to developing a bomb. Saddam Hussein said nothing to indicate otherwise, which, as we will see in a moment, contributed heavily to his ultimate defeat.

TABLE 14.4 Events in Iraq: 1990–2005

YEAR	EVENT
1990	Iraq occupies Kuwait
1991	First Gulf War
1992	Iraqis allegedly try to assassinate former U.S. President George H. W. Bush
1994	Iraq drains water from marshes in the south, endangering the livelihood of many Shiites
1996	Oil for food program authorized by the United Nations
1997–98	UNSCOM forced to leave, allowed back, finds Iraq in breach of UN agreements, forced to leave permanently
1999	Weekly and often daily bombings of Iraqi targets continue by primarily American and British air forces
2001	9/11 terrorist attacks
2002	George W. Bush implicates Iraq in his "axis of evil" State of the Union speech
2003	U.S.-led invasion topples Saddam Hussein's regime; insurgency breaks out almost immediately and continues
2005	Constitution drafted and first elections held. Al-Maliki becomes prime minister in early 2006
2007	American surge of additional troops



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UNSCOM inspectors examine suspected chemical and biological warheads.

But, it is safe to say that Iraq was not seen as one of the world's most dangerous places until 9/11. And, even then, the reaction that led to war came only from Washington and London, not the other major Western capitals.

It is also important to note that by 9/11, the coalition had already begun to unravel. Some of the allies thought the policy of containment was working well enough that Iraq was no longer a threat to its neighbors or anyone else. Others, most notably France and Russia, wanted to ease or even eliminate sanctions because of their economic ties to Iraq that had been interrupted following the invasion of Kuwait.

The Third War

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon changed everything as far as the new George W. Bush administration was concerned. They had already been critical of what they saw as the weakness of earlier policies, including the containment of Iraq. But, the day before the attacks, there was no reason to believe that major changes in policies toward Iraq were forthcoming.

Bush's response to the attacks was surprising, at least to his critics. After a few hours of uncertainty, his first public statements reflected a resolve and a firmness few thought he could provide. That was evident in the massive support given to the decision to go to war to topple the Taliban regime and undermine the al-Qaeda networks it harbored less than a month after 9/11.

There are also rumors that President Bush and Vice President Cheney decided on the night of 9/11 or the next

morning that war with Iraq was all but inevitable. As the stories go, neither looked forward to attacking Baghdad again, but it seems that both assumed that no war against terrorism could be won as long as Saddam Hussein and the Baath regime remained in power.

We may never know when the most critical decisions about Iraq were made. Nonetheless, it was clear by the time that Bush gave his 2002 State of the Union speech that Iraq was his next highest priority (www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html).

Bush certainly did not mince his words when discussing North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, which he labeled an "axis of evil." Regarding Iraq, he stated:

Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison to murder thousands of its own citizens—leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections—then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world.

States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States.



President Bush giving his "axis of evil" speech in 2002.

In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.

As Bush's speech indicated, American claims about Iraq revolved around three main themes.

- Iraq still had a stockpile of weapons of mass destruction. It may have had fewer than it did in 1991, but it not only had weapons but had the capacity to add new ones to its arsenal, possibly including primitive nuclear bombs.
- It had close ties to terrorist organizations that it had frequently supported over the years and to which it could supply such weapons.
- Therefore, Iraq was a threat not only to the existence of Israel and the stability of the Middle East but to global security as a whole.

Each of those claims was questioned by Bush's critics in the United States, Iraq, and beyond.

Even if Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, its stockpiles were but a shadow of what they had been in 1990 and 1991. It was also not clear that the material they had tried to buy illegally abroad were for these and other weapons programs. But, perhaps most importantly of all, there were no signs that Iraq had any plans to transfer those weapons to terrorist or other dangerous organizations.

There was no doubt that Iraq had supported and harbored some of the militant Palestinian terrorists who were committed to destroying the state of Israel. But, these were not the same individuals or organizations who were responsible for the 9/11 attacks. There were reports that one of the leaders of the hijackings had met with Iraqi intelligence officials in the Czech Republic, but that was never confirmed.

What's more, the kinds of people who joined al-Qaeda networks were highly critical of secular leaders like Saddam Hussein.

Few observers doubted that Saddam Hussein still harbored hopes that Iraq could become a regional power. However, most intelligence reports indicated that Iraq's military capacity had been seriously eroded by the 1991 war and its aftermath and probably did not pose a serious threat to its neighbors, let alone Israel and the rest of the world.

It is beyond the scope of this book to speculate on why the Bush administration continued to rely on the worst possible estimates of Iraqi capabilities and intentions (though see any of the books listed in the Further Reading section at the end of the chapter). Neither the Bush administration nor the authorities in Baghdad showed any serious interest in cooperation or even negotiation.

Tensions continued to mount. In May 2002, the United States prevented the transfer of \$5 billion of goods from entering Iraq. Four months later, Bush used his address to the General Assembly of the United Nations to attack what he called the "grave and gathering danger" of Iraq. He charged that if the United Nations did not do so, it would become "irrelevant."

A month later, the U.S. Congress overwhelmingly voted to authorize the use of force if need be. In November, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1441, which found Iraq to be in "material breach" of its resolutions on WMD, and inspectors were allowed into the country once again. In early December, Iraq submitted an all but indecipherable report that claimed it had no such weapons.

Just before Christmas, President Bush approved deploying troops to the region, a deployment that was expected to reach 200,000 by March 2003. But, this time, the coalition was not holding. France, Germany, Russia, China, and others refused to cooperate on sending troops at that time. Furthermore, the three powers with vetoes on the Security Council made it clear that they would block any authorization of the use of force until and unless it was completely clear that inspectors could not defuse the crisis.

Bush would not wait (nor would President Saddam Hussein). In early 2003, the United States was leading a much smaller coalition than it had twelve years earlier. The only other major power willing to commit a significant number of troops was the United Kingdom.

During late February and the first half of March, the United States and Great Britain lobbied for a new United Nations resolution allowing the use of force. In order for the resolution to pass, they needed nine of the fifteen members of the Security Council to vote in favor of using force, and they would also have to convince every permanent member of the Security Council not to veto the action. When it became clear that they would not come close to getting the



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On 2 December 2003, U.S. helicopters flew over the area as workers dismantle one of the four giant bronze busts of Saddam Hussein that long dominated Baghdad's skyline, in yet another move aimed at eradicating the former leader's influence in Baghdad.

necessary votes, the United States abandoned its efforts at the UN on 14 March. Three days later, the British ambassador declared diplomatic efforts had failed. Bush gave Saddam and his family forty-eight hours to leave the country. They did not.

Two days later, the military offensive dubbed **Operation Iraqi Freedom** began without UN authorization. It started with three days of air attacks on Baghdad and other high priority targets aimed at "decapitating" the Iraqi leadership. Unlike the first Gulf War, the air-only phase of this struggle was very brief. On 21 March, troops began to move toward Baghdad, which fell on 9 April. On 1 May, after flying a plane onto an aircraft carrier himself, Bush declared the end of major combat operations.

Little did he know. . . .

Occupation and Insurgency

The end of the formal war did not turn out the way the Bush administration had expected. They assumed that American and allied troops would be cheered as liberators and that they could all but immediately begin the transition to a new and more democratic Iraq.

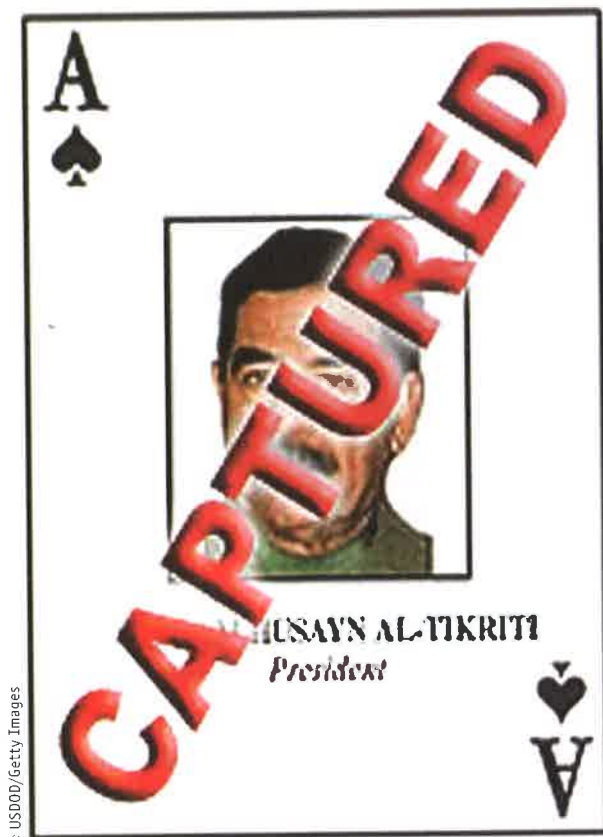
In fact, the coalition accomplished only one of the coalition's major goals for the war: Saddam Hussein was ousted from power. Otherwise, the administration found itself in a political and military quagmire that at least some observers likened to Vietnam. Saddam and most of his colleagues were still on the loose. Less than ten days after

the fall of Baghdad, the first demonstration against the presence of coalition (but really American) troops occurred. It was already becoming clear that while most Iraqis were glad to be rid of Saddam Hussein, they were not happy about the prospect of having nearly 150,000 American troops on their soil for the indefinite future.

None of this surprised the NGOs who had been warning the administration about what might happen after victory on the battlefield. Many senior military planners also realized how much trouble the United States might be in for. For whatever reason, the administration chose not to listen not only to the NGO community but also ignored the advice of some senior officers and diplomats who had doubts about the ease with which the coalition would manage the postwar transition.

It did not start out all that badly. After a few missteps, the United States appointed a veteran diplomat, Paul Bremer, to head the civil administration in Iraq. Ironically, the headquarters of Bremer's operation was in one of Saddam's lavish palaces.

From the beginning, it was clear that the occupation forces were in for a hard time. At first, they faced widespread lawlessness that included looting of banks and even of historical treasures from Baghdad's museums. British and other troops in the Shiite south faced less widespread, but still serious, discontent. Only in the Kurdish-dominated north were things reasonably calm. The occupation forces also tried to track down, capture, or kill the remaining leaders from the old regime. After Baghdad fell, the U.S.



Saddam Hussein's "card" from the "deck" of leading Baathists. This version was issued shortly after his capture.

Department of Defense issued its "deck of cards" that listed the top fifty-two leaders still at large. Saddam Hussein, of course, was the ace of spades (www.defenselink.mil/news/Apr2003/pipc10042003.html).

The cards were not just a publicity stunt. They were given to American troops in the field so that they would have a reasonable chance of identifying Baathists on the run. This was the one area where the occupation forces were reasonably successful, although the hunt absorbed tremendous amounts of time and energy.

The toll taken on the Baath regime truly was enormous. All but six of the "cards" were captured; many have been executed. To cite but the most obvious examples, Saddam's two sons were surrounded on 22 July 2003 and killed. Saddam was captured in an underground hideout that December. It took three years before he was tried, convicted, and hung at the end of December 2006.

On the three other fronts, the occupation forces and civil administrators had an even harder time.

First, in part because of the civil unrest and in part because of the extent of the destruction, it took much longer

The Three Block and Long War

The American military began worrying about protracted conflicts in places like Iraq in the 1990s.

Toward the end of the decade, General Charles Krulak, commandant of the Marine Corps began writing about a three block war in which marines and soldiers would confront armed resistance, peace keeping operations, and reconstruction challenges in the same neighborhood at the same time. A few years later, the Defense Science Board issued a report suggesting that any such set of operations was likely to take at least a decade to finish.

Iraq was the first test case.

than expected to rebuild even the most basic components of Iraq's infrastructure. In late 2004, when Baghdad's main electrical generation plant was returned to Iraqi control, the city still did not have a reliable electrical supply for the entire city. It didn't have it as well in summer 2007. Equipment destined for rebuilding the power plants and the grid either disappeared or was destroyed.

Second, the United States was never able to find any weapons of mass destruction or even any evidence that the government had been working on them in the months before the invasion. At the end of 2004, the State Department announced that the search was over. One of the consequences of that finding was that the United States and the occupation lost ever more credibility in world opinion.

The third and most vexing problem facing the occupation and the new government was the insurrection, which was been more violent and far more disruptive than even the strongest critics of the Bush administration had expected. To cite but two of the most obvious statistics: First, of the nearly 4,000 Americans who had died in Iraq by the end of September 2007, more than 3,000 had been killed after Bush declared that major combat was over. Second, tens of thousands have been wounded, many who are permanently disabled for either physical or mental health reasons. No official figures have been kept on the number of Iraqis killed, but the best guess is between 30,000 and 300,000, most of whom were civilians.

Before seeing the impact of the overthrow of Saddam and the insurrection on Iraq, we should consider how what Thomas Ricks properly calls a fiasco has affected politics in the United States, especially as far as the role of and morale in the military is concerned. To start off, the war undermined support for President Bush. After 9/11 he became one of the most popular presidents ever. By 2007, he had

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Masked Iraqi insurgents wield rocket-propelled grenade launchers near a burning U.S. Humvee vehicle in the embattled town of Falluja.

become one of the least popular chief executives ever. Most Americans had come to oppose the war and wanted to bring the troops home. The problem was that few people (including this author) had a coherent plan for doing so.

The stalemate in Washington reached a peak following the Democratic victory in the mid-term elections of 2006 which gave them control of both houses of Congress but did not give them enough votes to force the administration to change. That led to the "surge" of troops in early 2007 and the requirement that General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker report to Congress that September.

Nothing had been resolved. The administration and its critics both spun the news to fit their own purposes. For the one, there had been major accomplishments; for the other, the war was long lost. The real assessment undoubtedly lay somewhere between the two extremes, but who knew exactly where?

Iraq as a Failed State?

The real victims, of course, are the Iraqis. Whatever the number of casualties, Iraqis have suffered terribly. Also, they face years before any responsibly effective state can assume control.

Within days of the invasion, opposition against the United States and its Iraqi allies broke out. Part of the

violence reflected the historical hostilities among Iraqis. Part of it, too, reflected opposition to foreign occupation. As we will see in a moment, the Bush administration has claimed that Iraq has regained its sovereignty. Polls, including those conducted by the American government, show that most Iraqis think that Washington still calls the shots and want American troops to leave as soon as possible.

American policy undoubtedly contributed to some of the most spectacular events in the insurgency. Authority broke down in much of the country. While many Americans enjoyed watching statues of Saddam come down, Iraqi looters stole everything from relics stored in museums to dollars the occupation authorities had brought into the country, not to mention many of the weapons used by the insurgents ever since. Occupation officials magnified the problem by disbanding both the army and the police force. That made some sense since both had been under total Baath control. However, removing anyone connected with the Baath from positions of power meant removing almost everyone inside the country who had administrative experience.

The first phase of the insurgency erupted among Shiites in the south among supporters of the Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr who had long been a critic of the United States as well as of Saddam. Al-Sadr's father had been one of the four leading Shiite clerics in Iraq and had been killed in 1980. Although he was no supporter of the Baath regime, the

Vietnam and Iraq

Many critics of the war in the United States drew parallels between our involvement in Iraq and Vietnam forty years earlier.

The two are similar in that massive numbers of American troops were engaged.

However, there was one important difference. The United States "inherited" the Vietnam conflict from the French after their defeat in 1954.

By contrast, the war in Iraq and the insurgency that followed would not have happened without the American decision to invade.

For at least some critics of the war, that means that the United States had an added responsibility, not just to leave but to do so in a way that does not make conditions in Iraq worse.

To echo the Hippocratic oath that all physicians sign, Americans have to try to find a way to "do no harm."

younger al-Sadr opposed the presence of coalition forces in the south and in the holy cities of Karbala and Najaf from the beginning. In summer 2003, he announced plans to create a shadow government whose goal would be turn postwar Iraq into a Muslim state. In so doing, he gathered a loose organization, the Imam Al-Mahdi Army, which engaged in anti-American protests that reached a peak in spring 2004 after the authorities closed down a newspaper al-Sadr edited. At its peak, the forces loyal to him had as many as twenty thousand men, but relatively few arms. Still, they engaged in regular battles in the Shiite cities in the south and in the massive, Shiite dominated Sadr City slum in Baghdad. The insurrections led by al-Sadr and other Shiites were also troublesome to the authorities because many suspect that Iran has been helping them.

Al-Sadr joined many leaders who initially agreed to dissolve their private militias or have them join the official police and security services in summer 2004. They have not done so. As of September 2007, politicians close to al-Sadr are boycotting the Shiite led government which is hardly a good sign for stability in the country's future.

Soon, however, the focus of opposition to the occupation and new authorities in Baghdad came from Arabs who lived in what came to be called the Sunni triangle in the central part of the country that had been the heart of Baath support.

At first, Americans and others claimed that many of these insurgents were in fact Baathists. As the Baath leadership was arrested, it became clear that the insurgents



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Photo of the destroyed United Nations HQ in Iraq.

were somewhat different and probably bigger. By the end of 2003, almost all of the Baath leadership had been either arrested or killed. Thus Saddam's sons were ambushed and killed. Saddam himself was arrested while hiding in an underground pit. After a trial that many human rights advocates criticized sharply, he was executed.

The de facto end of the Baath did not end the insurrection by any stretch of the imagination. Early on, people looted offices and museums. More frequently, however, they have relied on improvised explosive devices, car bombs, and other relatively primitive devices to kill tens of Americans a month and hundreds of their fellow Iraqis a week. The most dramatic and perhaps most tragic attack occurred on 20 August 2003, when insurgents blew up the United Nations headquarters killing seventeen including Sergio Vieira de Mello who was one of the rising stars of the international community. The United Nations then removed most of its staff and its presence has been limited ever since.

To complicate matters further, some of the insurgents began to refer to themselves as al Qaeda in Iraq. While some

fighters certainly did come from other countries where there were some ties to al Qaeda and while Iran certainly has provided some support, the links to bin Laden and his associates remains elusive. Therefore, President Bush authorized "the surge" early in 2007. General David Petraeus was put in charge of coalition forces, which now included about 30,000 more soldiers and marines. While the increased deployments got the most publicity, Petraeus saw it as an opportunity to work more closely with Iraqi civilians in peace building and reconstruction efforts that had languished since 2003.² Petraeus had first come to public notice when he and his troops succeeded in solving many problems in one of the northern provinces. Drawing on new military thought on counterinsurgency developed initially by Australians and then introduced to the United States by then Marine commandant General Charles Krulak in the late 1990s, Petraeus understood two things. First, counterinsurgencies take a long time. In 2004, the Defense Science Board estimated that it would take ten years to quell a typical one. Second, counterinsurgency forces would have to fight, maintain order, and help rebuild a shattered society often in the same neighborhood on the same day—hence Krulak's notion of a three block war.

The insurgency has continued more or less unabated since Saddam's regime fell. The occupation and local forces have managed to subdue it in parts of the south and have reduced tensions in a few cities such as Fallujah. However, through the end of 2006, there were few signs that much progress had been made in putting a permanent end to the revolt.

We will never know what would have happened if Petraeus and his team had been able to experiment with their ideas from the beginning. The fact that they could only do so after more than three years of fighting made their task all but impossible. Moreover, the American Congress only agreed to the surge if Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker reported to them in September 2007 on the degree to which the occupation forces and the Iraq government had made progress in reaching about twenty benchmarks.

They fell far short on all but a handful of them. The president agreed to a gradual reduction of forces that would bring the number of American troops in Iraq down to pre-surge levels by mid-2008. Pressure to speed the pullout up only seems bound to increase. Meanwhile, politicians in Washington still talk in terms of victory and defeat.

This discussion leads us to another difficult point, the way the American occupation contributed to the broader political crisis in Iraq today which unraveled a bit more in

A Tragic Story

As someone who has been involved in discussions between conflict resolution NGOs and the military since 9/11, I have heard some truly heartrending stories.

Here is the worst.

Unfortunately it is not all that atypical.

In 2006, I attended a meeting organized by a Pentagon office in which a marine reserve colonel was on the program. As often happens at such events, he began with some macabre humor. He had been a lawyer in Boston before he was called up and was on his way from his trailer to the former palace in the Green Zone to watch the final game of the 2004 World Series, which the Red Sox won for the first time in 90 years. As he was walking across the courtyard, mortar rounds landed in the complex. He could see his obituary. "Never got to see the Red Sox win the World Series."

Then, as also often happens at such events, he got serious. Among other things, he told us about a day when a group of young marines under his command were attacked and a couple of their vehicles were destroyed by an IED. A few marines were killed and injured. Their colleagues (who were all 19 or 20) got out of their humvees and saw the person who had planted the bomb. As they were trained to do, they shot him.

A few minutes later, they discovered that he was about nine years old. After the medics got him through life-saving surgery, they discovered the boy was an orphan who placed the bomb in exchange for enough money to buy food.

Once he was out of danger, the authorities labeled him an enemy combatant, which meant he had to be confined in the infamous Abu Ghraib prison. When this very tough (and funny) marine officer learned this, he found a doctor. They went to the prison where the doctor said the boy needed more medical attention. The whisked him back from the prison, but not to the hospital. He was soon on a plane on his way to adoption by a family in Europe.

the week Petraeus and Crocker testified in Washington. That, in turn, leads to the claim that Iraq has a failed state.

Perhaps it could not have been otherwise.

In Germany (see Chapter 6) and Japan, the United States occupied defeated countries and helped them build democratic regimes for the first time—and do so surprisingly quickly. However much President Bush cited those experiences, there were three important differences between

²See, in particular, George Packer, "Knowing the Enemy." *The New Yorker*. 16 December 2006.

those cases and Iraq. First, almost everyone in Germany and Japan acknowledged how dreadful their defeated regimes had been and the need for the societies to undergo profound change. Second, the occupation authorities drew heavily on leaders who had spent the war years at home and could therefore build bases of support. Third, virtually everyone in Germany and Japan agreed that their country as such should continue to exist.

Instead, the United States relied on a group of politicians who had been part of the opposition to Saddam and lived in exile in London, Washington, and other western cities. For the first year after Saddam's fall, the United States (with minimal support from the other coalition members or the United Nations) ruled Iraq directly through the **Coalition Provisional Authority**. Its two leaders, General Jay Garner and Ambassador Paul Bremer did not distinguish themselves. More importantly, many thought that the Americans, who governed from the Green Zone, looked more like colonial powers than liberators. In short, the United States never won the "hearts and minds" of more than a small percentage of the Iraqi people.

After consulting fairly widely, the CPA appointed an Interim Governing Council in June that, in turn, appointed a cabinet in September. The CPA wanted to create a body that was broadly representative of Iraq's three main ethnic groups and ideological factions. But, there was little illusion that the council was an independent body. Its main job was to draft an interim constitution, which went into effect in March 2004, and to pave the way for the creation of an interim government to which the CPA transferred at least legal sovereignty on 30 June 2004.

At that point, Bremer left. The leading American civilian official became the new ambassador, Michael Negroponte, who had been the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and became National Director of Intelligence in April 2005 and Deputy Secretary of State two years later. In most respects, however, the handover of sovereignty was more symbolic than real. Virtually none of the members of the interim government were critical of the United States. And, more importantly, the fact that this government is being put together under the eye of almost 160,000 occupying troops makes any real claims for its independence more than a little illusory.

In fact, the leaders are all but American puppets, most of whom spent years in exile. While opposition leaders had no choice but to live abroad during Saddam's rule, the fact that they lacked many close ties at home made it hard for them to make any kind of profound connection to most Iraqi citizens.

What emerged by the summer of 2004 was a regime that had little legitimacy and was divided among the country's three main religious and ethnic groups. It came as no surprise that the Shiites would dominate the new government,

given their majority status in the population. The Kurds, who had been largely outside of Baghdad's control since the first Gulf War, continued to govern their region as if it were an all but independent country even if one of their main leaders, Jalal Talabani, has served as the president of the new Iraq.

Nonetheless, the interim government led by Prime Minister Ayad Alawi took its work seriously. Several of his colleagues paid for their hard work with their lives as victims of the insurgency.

Their most important task was to prepare for Iraq's first ever free election, which was held on 30 January 2005 to elect a constituent assembly that would in turn write a new constitution. More than two hundred political parties ran candidates in an election that would be held under proportional representation (see Chapter 2). In practice, few of those parties had any hope of winning seats, and as voting day neared they came together in three broad coalitions that for all intents and purposes mirrored the country's ethnic and religious divisions.

Like everything else in Iraq, the election proved controversial. President Bush, the interim government, and their supporters lauded the vote and the relative calm associated with it. Critics noted that most Sunni Muslims boycotted the election either out of opposition to the occupation or out of fear that insurgents might kill them. In the end, 58 percent of Iraqis voted, a total that compared favorably with recent presidential elections in the United States other than 2004. The UN election advisor probably summed up the situation best when he told the press, "The elections were not perfect, they were never meant to be, but they were extremely successful."

It took two weeks for the votes to be counted. The results were not surprising. The United Iraqi Alliance, a loose coalition of Shiite groups, won a slight majority of the seats. When elections were held at the end of the year for the first "permanent" government of the post-Baath era, the results were largely the same (see table 14.5).

The United Iraqi Alliance won 41% of the vote and 128 seats. It was headed by Nuri al-Malaki who soon became prime minister. But, it remained a loose and undisciplined coalition that also included candidates loyal to al-Sadr and to Adnan Chalabi who had been the exile politicians most

TABLE 14.5 2005 Parliamentary Elections in Iraq

PARTY	VOTES (IN PERCENT)	SEATS
United Iraqi Alliance	41.2	128
Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan	21.7	53
Iraqi Accord Front	15.1	44
Iraqi National List	8.0	25
Other	8.9	24



© Msgr. Dave Ahlswede, USAF/AP Photo

Voters lining up outside a polling station in Baghdad, Sunday, 30 January 2005.

favored by the Bush administration. Many of its leaders had close ties both to Iran and to the leading Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

The leading party among the Kurds and supporters of President Talibani came in a distant second. Many Sunni Arabs boycotted the vote, and the largest of their parties, the Iraqi Accord Front, barely won 15 percent of the vote. Since then, most Sunnis and some former members of the United Iraqi Alliance have left the coalition.

Iraq should be seen as a failed state because the al-Maliki government has not been able to establish anything approaching real control over the country. The Kurds are running what is for all intents and purposes an independent country of their own in the north. Despite the surge, there are only pockets of stability in the Sunni triangle. Most of the south is calmer, but it is not clear how strong the government's hold is especially in Najaf, Karbala, and other Shiite holy centers.

Most importantly of all, the al-Maliki government would not exist were it not for the American occupation forces. The Bush administration has tried to transfer political, military, and civil authority to the new regime, but almost no one thinks it has succeeded in doing so.

Even Bush's critics would like to see Iraqis take responsibility for their own security and for creating a stable government. But, everyone also realizes that that will not happen anytime soon.

The United States, too, remains deeply divided over what should be done in Iraq. The administration announced that it could reduce troop levels to pre-surge levels by sum-

mer 2008. General Petraeus claimed the number could be reduced even further. Nonetheless, a minimum of 50,000 American troops seem bound to remain in Iraq for the indefinite future.

That does not bode well either for the United States or Iraq.

FEEDBACK

Under Saddam, the regime had total control of the mass media. This power was not limited to the regime's domination of newspapers, radio, and television news. Foreign newspapers and magazines were banned, and it was illegal for Iraqis to watch television or listen to radio programs beamed in from abroad. Iraqis began tuning in to networks like al-Jazeera (www.aljazeera.com), based out of the UAE, in the last few years, although one suspects that anyone who had a satellite dish did so with the knowledge and acceptance of the authorities.

A lot of this has changed since Saddam was ousted. There are now at least one hundred privately owned newspapers and almost as many radio and television stations. The American authorities claim that these are all privately owned and independently run, which does seem to be the case.

However, at least through the end of 2004, none of those media outlets was more than slightly critical of the occupying forces or the interim government. The creation of a truly free and vibrant press will be a major challenge for the regime that comes to power when and if al-Maliki falls.

SEATS

128
53

44
25
24

The United States and its allies have tried to create a domestic media service that supports the new government. However, most of those attempts have not met with much success, other than in televising the matches of the country's surprisingly successful national soccer team (english.iraqimedianet.net/).

CONCLUSION: FIASCO REVISITED

Four and a half years after the invasion, Iraq remains in deep trouble. The key problem is that Sunni Arabs have felt excluded from and oppressed by the new regime. A few Sunni politicians and religious leaders have cooperated with the new government. A somewhat larger number have cooperated to try to put down al-Qaeda in Iraq. However, most prominent Sunni Arabs have all but boycotted the new regime.

Not all Shiites are happy with it either. The government and its American supervisors tried to dismantle the remaining militias, including those run by Shiites as well as the ones that led the Sunni resistance. By the summer of 2007, the members of parliament and armed citizens closest to al-Sadr had abandoned the regime, denying it of anything that any observer could consider a majority.

Not surprisingly, neither the Iraqi regime nor the American forces came close to meeting the "benchmarks" established by Congress before it authorized the surge. To be sure, some areas such as Anbar, were more secure. However, the violence continued. On the day after Petraeus and Crocker finished their testimony, insurgents assassinated one of the few prominent Sunni sheiks who cooperated with the Americans. The Iraqi government itself was so divided that it could not pass a law about how the country's oil resources would be managed, resources that were at the key of any economic recovery plan. That same week, an American company did sign a contract to explore for oil, but found that it had to do so with the semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

Key Terms

Concepts

Cult of personality
Kurds
Nation building
Shiite
Sunni
Surge
Weapons of mass
destruction

People

Al-Bakr, Ahmad Hassan
Alawi, Ayad
Al-Sadr, Mukhtar
Bremer, Paul
Bush, George W.
Faisal I
Hussein, Saddam
Hussein, Qusay

Hussein, Uday
Petraeus, David

Acronyms

CPA
INC
OPEC
PUK
RCC
UNSCOM
WMD

Organizations, Places, and Events

Baath Party
Coalition Provisional
Authority

Gulf War
Interim Government
Iraqi National Congress
Operation Desert Shield
Operation Desert Storm
Operation Iraqi Freedom
Organization of Petroleum
Exporting Countries
Ottoman Empire
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
Republican Guard
Revolutionary Command
Council
Sunni Triangle
United Nations Special
Commission

Critical Thinking Exercises

- 1 Much has changed in the world since this book was finished in late 2007. Does the analysis of Iraq presented in this chapter still make sense? In what ways? Why (or why not)?
- 2 In which respects does Iraq have very shallow roots as a nation? Explain how this feature has constituted an obstacle to the country's political and economic development.
- 3 What has been the impact of oil on Iraqi politics?
- 4 What do you see as the main accomplishments of the Baath regime? At what cost were these accomplishments realized?
- 5 In what respects did the very nature of Saddam Hussein's regime make it difficult to reach a peaceful solution to the international crisis generated by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and ongoing conflict with the United States?
- 6 Why did Iraq's rulers lead the country into three disastrous wars in the last quarter century? What impact did those conflicts have on the country's domestic politics?
- 7 Was the U.S.-led coalition justified in launching the invasion of Iraq in 2003?
- 8 Why was the situation so volatile in Iraq after the United States declared the end of major combat operations in 2003?
- 9 What are the prospects for democracy or even stability in Iraq given the fact that occupation forces are likely to be there for years and also given the fact that they are likely to face a protracted insurgency?



Useful Websites

During this time of transition, websites on Iraq are likely to change more rapidly than those for other chapters in this book. There will, for example, be sites created for the transitional

government and permanent regime that follows it. So don't be surprised if some of these links no longer work.

The best source on the Middle East in general and Iraq in particular is the University of Texas's MENIC project, which is also the virtual library site for the region. The site maintained by Columbia University's Middle East and Jewish Studies Program is almost as good.

menic.utexas.edu/Countries_and_Regions/Iraq/
www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/mideast/cuvlm/Iraq.html

Arabic News is one of several good sites that offer news feeds for the Middle East.

www.arabicnews.com

The Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP) is a nonpartisan, Washington-based think tank that focuses on Iraq and the Gulf region as a whole. Its site includes its own reports and links to other good information.

www.merip.org

The Council on Foreign Relations has probably done the most consistent and unbiased work on Iraq since 9/11. Its website archives almost everything its scholars have written, but its URL has changed a number of times. Your best bet is to go to the Council's home page and navigate from there.

www.cfr.org

Further Reading

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- Batatu, Hanna. *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes, and of Its Communists, Ba'athists, and Free Officers*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978. Although very academic in both style and substance, a first-rate, pathbreaking study of Iraqi political movements until the 1968 takeover by the Baath.

Gordon, Michael, and Bernard Trainor. *The Generals' War*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1995. A thorough account of the military politics of the Gulf War; somewhat critical of Colin Powell.

Karsh, Efraim, and Inari Rautsi. *Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography*. New York: Free Press, 1991. One of the best of many books on Iraq that appeared after the invasion of Kuwait, this one focuses on Saddam himself.

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Pollack, Kenneth. *The Threatening Storm*. New York: Random House/Council on Foreign Relations, 2002. By far the best book by a liberal and veteran Iraq watcher on why war was inevitable. Pollack has since written about why some of his analysis was wrong, especially on WMD issues. His article on that is listed in the InfoTrac College Edition Sources section.

Packer, George. *The Assassin's Gate*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005. Along with the Ricks book mentioned next, the best account of post-war Iraq by an American.

Ricks, Thomas. *Fiasco*. New York: Penguin, 2006. Probably the best journalistic account of why the invasion fell apart.

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Woodward, Bob. *State of Denial*. New York: Simon and Shuster, 2007. The last of his three books on American engagement in Iraq.