CHAPTER VI
POST IRAQ-KUWAIT WAR DYNAMICS

The prosecution of the 1991 Gulf War by the US-led coalition was intended to serve a number of purposes. It was useful to demonstrate to the world that any grave threat to American interests would not be tolerated, particularly where these required the unimpeded supply of fuel to the world's most energy-profligate nation. It was useful also to signal the new global power structure, the 'New World Order' in which a post-Cold War United States could operate without the bothersome constraint of another global superpower. It was essential in these circumstances that Iraq be mercilessly crushed. As the American academic and dissident Noam Chomsky pointed out, the much weaker opponent 'must not merely be defeated but pulverised if the central lesson of World Order is to be learned: we are the masters and you shine our shoes'. ²⁸² There were other purposes: some obvious and some less so. The Americans did not disguise their delight at being able to experiment with a new generation of high-technology weapons. It was helpful to be able to test such devices on the flesh and fabric of a vulnerable state that was obligingly bellicose and conveniently racially-different from the United States. Another factor, rarely discussed, concerned strategic matters of an altogether different kind. Japan remains massively dependent on the huge oil tankers that ply the routes from the Gulf: how prudent for the United States to maintain a stranglehold on the crucial energy supply to a principal economic competitor in the rapidly developing tripolar system of world commerce. ²⁸³ It would be a mistake to believe that the primary purpose of the US initiated war on Iraq was the expulsion of Saddam Hussein from Kuwait.

The expulsion was in fact no more than a means to various ends: it is plain enough that the United States has no principled (as opposed to tactical) objection to aggressions by sovereign states against others, and so the reasons for the onslaught on Iraq must be sought elsewhere. The US did not work to activate the United Nations in

²⁸³ In the early 1990s there were many signs of escalating commercial tensions between the United States and Japan. In 1992 there were growing threats of a trade war between the US and Europe. With the Cold War over, the leading commercial players of the world were increasingly able to revert to their traditional practices of economic confrontation.
military opposition to the Israeli invasions of Lebanon and other Arab lands; to the
Indonesian invasion of East Timor; or to the various South African invasions of Namibia,
Angola and Mozambique. Indeed, there is evidence that it conspired, to varying degrees,
in such invasions; and, of course, the US itself has invaded many sovereign states
(notably Grenada and Panama in recent years). Moreover, in order to protect the war on
Iraq, the US sanctioned fresh contemporary or subsequent aggressions: further Israeli
incursions into Lebanon, the Syrian onslaught on East Beirut, and the (post-Gulf War)
Turkish invasion and occupation of northern Iraq.

The war on Iraq, realistically viewed, was designed to protect US hegemony over
oil (with the broad strategic aims that this implies), to educate the world about post-
Soviet political realities, to test new anti-personnel and other weapons, and to justify the
absurdly high levels of investment in US military power. A further aim was to bolster the
reputation of a US president beset by the 'wimp factor' and the prospect of a presidential
election in 1992. No-one doubted that, whatever the Gulf War's other useful effects, the
reputation of President George Bush had been much enhanced. Commentators queued up
to proclaim the inevitability of Bush's re-election in November 1992. Thus, in an
observation that was typical for the times, the respected journalist Mike Graham felt able
to declaim: ... after winning the war against Iraq and presiding over the death throes of
communism, Bush knows that he barely has to lift a finger to be returned to power in next
year's elections.²⁸⁴ The little-known Arkansas governor, Bill Clinton, could be
discounted since there were already 'whispers about secret affairs and illegitimate
children... he appears vulnerable to the media inquisition that inevitably will occur if he
runs'. In any event, 'no matter who gets the [Democratic] nomination, he is unlikely to
become president...²⁸⁵ Efforts to improve the image of an unimpressive American
president must be judged less important than those designed to safeguard traditional US

²⁸⁴ Mike Graham, 'Bush finds comic relief in a rag bag of rivals', The Sunday Times, London, 8 September
²⁸⁵ Ibid. Virtually alone among the journalistic pundits, Andrew Stephen, The Observer, London, 8
September 1991, while opining that Bill Clinton has probably had too many girlfriends for comfort,
reckoned that the 1992 election would be 'much closer, much more exciting, than everyone else seems
to think'.

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interests. Individuals come and go, but attempts to sustain hegemonic power must be maintained over decades. Iraq had tasted the fruits of US strategic calculations.

One of the most significant factors of the Gulf War was the speed with which the US-led coalition was able to achieve air supremacy. Iraqi air defences were systematically devastated, many of the targets being attacked time and time again. Within a matter of days it became clear that Iraqi aircraft were unlikely to engage allied planes and soon, with the speedy and comprehensive destruction of the multilayered Iraqi anti-aircraft systems, allied aircraft were able to range and bomb at will. What this meant in human terms is hard for distant and comfortable observers to imagine.

Tens of thousands of hapless Iraqi conscripts, many of them from groups known to be persecuted by Saddam Hussein, had no choice but to sit in the wastes of Iraq and Kuwait until the bombs fell. Here they were forced to suffer napalm, cluster bombs that shred human flesh, the air-fuel explosives (virtual mini atom bombs) that incinerate some and asphyxiate others, and the carpets of 'earthquake' bombs laid down by B-52s - all the obscene paraphernalia that in earlier days had killed perhaps three million people in Korea, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.

The relatively brief war saw no first-hand journalistic accounts of the scale of the slaughter: one of the key lessons that Washington had learned from Vietnam was the tactical need to exclude journalists from the scenes of horror. After the war, accounts appeared in the press, but few of these attempted to depict the numbers of the Iraqi casualties or the enormity of what had been accomplished. At Basra, the journalist Karl Waldron picked his way for 'perhaps 100 yards, trying to count the corpses, but it was a hopeless task. There were not enough whole bodies left to count'. Most of the slaughter was intentional, a matter of military planning; but some of it was accidental, as when the marketplace of Fallujah was bombed. Abdullah, the grandson of Terfeh Mehsan, is - we

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286 A detailed account of how journalists were restricted in their efforts to cover the Gulf War is given by John R. MacArthur, *Second Front. Censorship and Propaganda in the Gulf War*, Hill & Wang, New York, 1992.

are told - a 'handsome but frail boy of 12... Where his legs used to be, Abdullah has two little stumps, the skin flayed with septic cuts'. Some of the accounts describe the destruction of the convoys desperately attempting to flee from Kuwait; as, for example, on the doomed road to Umm Qasr: '60 miles of carnage... scores of soldiers lie in and around the vehicles, mangled and bloated in the drifting desert sands'. We were left in no doubt about the face of Iraq in March 1991: At one spot, snarling wild dogs have reduced two corpses to bare ribs. Giant carrion birds claw and pick at another; only a boot-clad foot and eyeless skull are recognisable. One flat-bed truck has nine bodies. Each man clutches the next. Their hair and clothes are burned off, skin incinerated by heat so intense it melted the windscreen on to the dashboard. Another body hangs from the driver’s seat of a shrapnel-riddled front end loader. Half a corpse sits in a truck with twisted metal for an engine. Blowing sand laps at other bodies on the roadside. Such reports soon stimulated discussion as to what might constitute a war crime.

Thus the correspondent Denis Knight suggested that the deliberate massacre of thousands of fleeing soldiers might qualify. And what of the specific weapons used? Paul Flynn, British Member of Parliament, cites a report that fuel air explosives were 'designed to produce nuclear-like levels of destruction without arousing popular revulsion'; and comments that the 'cluster bombs, daisy cutters and fuel air explosives should not be classed as conventional weapons... They are massacre weapons.' He adds that the British government has wilfully refused to recognise 'the holocaust results of the Gulf War. The most recent estimate is that 100,000 to 200,000 Iraqis were killed and 300,000 to 700,000 injured. Most of them Shia and Kurdish conscripts.' In no estimates are there fewer than tens of thousands of Iraqi casualties.

The journalist Christopher Bellamy, after some preliminary computations, suggests that this 'still leaves a huge number [of Iraqi soldiers] missing' (possibly

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approaching 200,000). British estimates, cited soon after the end of the war, suggest at least 90,000 Iraqi soldiers killed; with a French military expert estimating as many as 150,000 Iraqi fatalities. When Beth Osborne Daponte, a demographer at the US Census Bureau, published her own estimates of 158,000 Iraqis, half of them women and children, killed in the war and its aftermath, efforts were made to fire her. Her boss, Barbara Torrey, accused Daponte of using 'false information' and of 'untrustworthiness and unreliability'. Lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) then threatened legal action, whereupon Daponte was reinstated. She later commented: 'They wanted to suppress the figures because I had broken them down to show how many women and children had died'. I find it extremely disturbing that the US Census Bureau tried to suppress and delay the release of information that is embarrassing to the current administration. Government employees should not be fired for speaking the truth . . . in this case the figures were clearly politically embarrassing. Ken Livingstone, British MP, pointed out that most of the 'vast slaughter' took place when the Iraqi government had already declared its willingness to withdraw from Kuwait and when in any case the Iraqi army was in a state of disintegration. And Marjorie Thompson, Chair of CND and the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf, commented in letters to The Independent (6 March 1991) and The Guardian (7 March 1991) that the slaughter of the fleeing Iraqis was an unforgivable act that will come to rate alongside Dresden and Hiroshima 'as one of those acts no one in the world will be found to justify'. In one report, Robert J. Lifton, Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology at the City University of New York, and director of the Centre on Violence and Human Survival, quoted a taxi-driver who had summed up 'accurately enough' the character of the one-sided conflict: 'This ain't no war, It's just us dropping bombs and killing people.' Here it is suggested that much of the slaughter could have been avoided if the war had been ended earlier, as the Soviet Union and other states had urged, while still achieving the goals laid down by the United Nations; and perhaps the war itself could have been avoided altogether 'by pressing sanctions and a

diplomacy of common security. Further reports indicated the extent to which the war had been fought against human beings, rather than simply against tanks and other weaponry.

Thus some discussion was provoked by the revelation that the American army had used earthmovers and ploughs mounted on tanks to bury thousands of Iraqi soldiers alive. One attack of this sort resulted in thousands of Iraqi dead and wounded, with not a single American fatality. Colonel Lon Maggart, commander of the US 1st Brigade, estimated that his forces had buried about 650 Iraqi soldiers; and Colonel Anthony Moreno, commander of the 2nd Brigade, commented: 'For all I know, we could have killed thousands... What you saw was a bunch of buried trenches with people's arms and things sticking out of them'. Such improvised mass graves, to which must be added the bulldozing of thousands of Iraqi corpses at the end of the war, are part of the post-war face of Iraq and Kuwait. And there are many other characteristic features in the erstwhile battlefields: not least the massive detritus of beaten armed forces, the inevitable residue of unexploded ordnance, and the radioactive waste left in the desert by the allied forces.

In November 1991 it was revealed in a secret report by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority that the allied armies had left forty tons of depleted uranium ammunition on the battlefield. Here it was suggested that the long-term health of thousands of Kuwaitis and Western clean-up teams could be threatened, with the chemically toxic and radioactive waste passing into the water supply and the food chain. The report estimated that US tanks fired some 5000 depleted uranium rounds, US aircraft many tens of thousands of rounds, and British tanks 'a small number'. The tank ammunition alone, it was reckoned, contained more than 50,000lb of depleted uranium, enough material to cause '500,000 potential deaths'. A particular hazard would exist in the form of the uranium dust produced when the uranium shells hit and burned out Iraqi

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298 Ibid.

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armoured vehicles. Ingested in sufficient quantities, the uranium dust would cause kidney failure and a range of cancers. In March 1993 an Associated Press (AP) report, citing research by the Boston-based National Toxics Campaign Fund (NTCF), stated that thousands of Gulf War veterans may be suffering from radiation sickness after being exposed to US uranium-tipped weapons. The NTCF chairman John O’Connor, referring to the widespread chemical contamination caused by the US in the Vietnam War, commented: 'What we have here is a new problem which we believe could be the Agent Orange of the nineties'.

It can be assumed that many of the Iraqi casualties were caused by inaccurate bombing: the US forces, while at first lauding the reliability of the 'smart' weapons, later came to admit the massive number of inaccurate targetings. Thus in one classified US analysis, the computer-navigated Tomahawk cruise missiles hit their targets just over 50 per cent of the time. The 'smart' laser-guided bombs launched from the US F-117A Stealth attack jets hit their targets in only about 60 per cent of the missions flown, in contrast to the 90 per cent claimed earlier. In any case, of the 88,500 tons of bombs dropped on Iraq and Kuwait, only 6520 tons were precision-guided, and 70 per cent of the total 'missed their targets', according to a defence expert quoted by The Washington Post. At the end of the war, wrecked armaments, unexploded mines and other munitions, radioactive debris and mass graves littered the Iraqi and Kuwaiti deserts. It was also suspected, though not at that time known for certain, that the American forces had drawn up plans for the contingency of launching chemical and nuclear attacks against Iraq. Thus Major Johan Persson, a liaison officer at a Swedish army field hospital, declared in interviews in Stockholm that he had seen official guidelines about the use of nuclear and chemical weapons in certain circumstances. Declared Major Persson:

'There was such an order. I saw it. I had it in my hand. It was the real thing.' When US Secretary of State James Baker met the Iraqi foreign minister Tariq Aziz on 9 January

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1991, days before the start of the US-led bombing of Iraq, Baker declared: 'We know that you have a vast stock of chemical weapons. . . Our sincere advice to you is not to even think of using them. If you do, or if we feel that you did, then our reply will be unrestrained. I hope I am understood well.' The authoritative commentator Mohamed Heikal noted Aziz understands 'that Baker was hinting at the use of nuclear weapons'.

It was also known that the infrastructure of the Iraqi state had been comprehensively devastated, though detailed reports had yet to emerge. At the end of the war the toll of US casualties was small; to the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi dead, wounded and traumatised, tens of thousands more casualties were to be added.

The six weeks of allied air raids had destroyed the bulk of the electrical power stations that supplied hospitals, water pumping facilities, sewage treatment plants and water purification facilities; in addition, these various facilities had often been totally or partially destroyed by the bombing. A consequence was that many parts of Iraq had to face a public health crisis of vast proportions. In the immediate aftermath of the war the residents of Baghdad, having had no electricity or running water since the onset of the bombing in mid-January, had to rely for drinking water on the Tigris River, now being fouled by gushing streams of raw sewage. Iraqi and international health authorities predicted that unless sanctions on Iraq were lifted the capital and other major cities would soon be facing outbreaks of cholera, typhoid, hepatitis and polio. Dr Mohammad Ani, the Iraqi director for immunisation and primary health care for the ministry of health, commented: 'We are being killed indirectly.'

The Rustumiya and Sarafiya sewage treatment and water pumping stations had been attacked with allied missiles and bombs, and nearby water treatment plants were working at about one-quarter of capacity. Raymond Naimy, an official of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), commented that Baghdad's water supply had been cut by 90-95 per cent, and a World Health Organisation (WHO) delegation noted a fourfold increase in the number of children being treated for diarrhoea. In March 1991 Dr Roger Vivarie, of the Paris-

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308 Ibid.
based Medecins Sans Frontieres, reported: 'The situation in Baghdad and in Falluja, 80km from the capital, which was visited by our team, was already very difficult a week ago. Hospitals, once among the most advanced and best equipped in the region, now lack the most elementary working tools. There is no infrastructure, no running water, no food and no medicine. All sanitary infrastructures have gone and not a single hospital is in a position to provide the most elementary of services.' The UN special envoy, Martti Ahtisaari, reported that Iraq was in a 'near apocalypse': Iraq was like a patient whose central nervous system had been destroyed. Ahtisaari warned that since the country's energy systems had been so badly damaged by bombing, food aid alone would not be sufficient to avert disaster. The UN sanctions committee was urged to respond to the crisis by declaring that an 'urgent humanitarian need' existed throughout Iraq. In his UN-sponsored report, Ahtisaari himself commented: 'Nothing we had seen or read had quite prepared us for the particular form of devastation which has now befallen the country. . .the recent conflict has wrought near-apocalyptic results upon the economic infrastructure'. Moreover, 'sanctions decided upon by the Security Council. . . seriously affected the country's ability to feed its people'; all sources of fuel and power and modern means of communication were now 'essentially defunct', with the telephone system and the mail service destroyed; the supply of food to private citizens had been reduced to 'a trickle'. There was a real risk of widespread deaths through disease and perhaps starvation.

Ibrahim al-Nouri, the director of the Iraqi Red Crescent, was reporting on cases of cholera and typhoid detected in several towns, and urging international aid organisations to send water purification chemicals to help combat the diseases. Relief officials in Jordan were commenting that Iraqi hospitals had been forced to halve rations for their patients. In Basra and other cities women were forced to wash clothes and kitchen utensils in water contaminated with raw sewage, with the incidence of disease sharply increasing because of the shortage of food and the lack of clean water for drinking. All but two of the city's filtration plants were destroyed, and cholera and typhoid, not yet at epidemic proportions, were increasing. Said al- Tamimi, a medical engineer, was quoted:

'A friend of mine brought me a bucket of water from the mains supply in which was swimming a little snake.' The death rate, particularly among children, was rapidly increasing: the main bridges across the Tigris, the Euphrates and the Shatt ai-Arab had been destroyed, making it impossible to take children to hospital where, in any case, virtually all normal services were impossible.

At the same time it was impossible to monitor with any accuracy the incidence of the burgeoning cholera epidemic, since during the war and the ensuing civil unrest most of the laboratory equipment used to measure the disease had been destroyed. In a damming article in *The New York Times*, Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former national security adviser to President Carter, shattered the US claim that the war was fought with discrimination to minimise civilian casualties. He emphasised that damage-toll 'raises the moral question of the proportionality of the response' to Saddam Hussein's aggression against Kuwait.

The respected British journalist Peter Jenkins, commenting on the Brzezinski report and other material, noted that the peace 'has turned into a nightmare, the continuation of the war by other means'. Joost Hiltermann, Middle East organiser for Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), commented: 'The bombing was called surgical, but we're calling it neurosurgical: with extraordinary accuracy the allied bombs took the brain out of the country's ability to survive'; and PUR president Jack Geiger, having toured the region of Basra, described the effect as: 'Bomb now, die later. You don't kill people, you just cause the system to collapse.' The main themes of the PUR report were familiar enough: malnutrition, diarrhoea and dehydration among the children; dangerous drinking water; and a crippled economy.

In the same spirit a Harvard medical team visiting Iraq found that the death rate of children under five was two to three times higher than before the war. They estimated that over the coming year a further 170,000 children would die because of the problems

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caused by the Gulf War: the massively dislocated social infrastructure and the harshness of the enforced sanctions. Now typhoid and cholera epidemics were flaring up throughout the country, with hospitals - lacking antibiotics, infant formula, medicines, bandages and other supplies - unable to treat malnourished children. One Baghdad hospital reported 30-35 new cases of cholera a week during April 1991; and infectious typhoid patients were being discharged in all regions because of a shortage of chloramphenicol, the drug needed for treatment.

Dr Megan Passey, the leader of the Harvard team, said that the report would be presented to UN agencies, the US Congress and international relief agencies. In May 1991 Iraq declared it was desperate for access to its overseas assets, now frozen by the US-dominated Security Council, in order to pay for the next four months' food supply. Deals had been signed with Australia and Canada for the import of 1.5 billion tons of wheat, half the country's needs, but the orders were dependent on Iraq gaining access to its foreign assets. It soon became clear that the United States, Britain and France were in no mood to lift the sanctions on Iraq, while at the same time Washington began pressing for a 50 per cent levy on all future Iraqi oil revenues. In June the Soviet Union, backed by China and India in the Security Council, urged some relaxation of the punitive sanctions on Iraq, if only to allow the purchase of food and medicines. On 12 June Britain blocked an Iraqi move for the unfreezing of currency printed in Britain for the purchase of food, but the Security Council's sanctions committee agreed that thirty-one countries could release Iraqi assets to facilitate the purchase of food, medicines and other essential supplies. At the same time it was clear that this measure was insufficient to meet Iraq's growing humanitarian needs. Figures provided by the Iraqi health ministry suggested that many patients were dying from infectious diarrhoeal diseases; death from such a cause was rare in 1990 but in the post-war period deaths were running at about thirty-two per thousand admitted to hospital (in April and May 1991, 17,000 people were admitted). At Baghdad's main hospital for infectious diseases the staff acknowledged that they were

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treating many suspected cholera cases, as well as typhoid and meningitis. Dr Michael Viola, an American professor of medicine and microbiology who visited Iraq along with two other New York physicians, reported on the severe epidemic of several diseases, a situation now aggravated by malnutrition ('You don't need statistics. It's everywhere'). The journalist Patrick Tyler, who visited dozens of paediatric and infectious-disease wards across the country, encountered more than one hundred cases of marasmus, a condition of progressive emaciation caused by advanced malnutrition: 'Typical symptoms are a gaunt skeletal look and distended stomach.'

There were also many obvious cases of kwashiorkor, an advanced form of protein deficiency in toddlers seldom seen outside drought-stricken areas of Africa.' Dr Amera Ali, a physician at Ibn Baladi Hospital in Baghdad, commented that if all the marasmus cases were admitted, 'the hospitals would be full in one day'. In July 1991 the UN sanctions committee rejected an Iraqi request that $1.5 billion-worth of oil be sold to buy food and medicine.

By August, according to official Iraqi sources, more than 11,000 people had died of starvation. The poor were at particular risk from malnutrition and disease: there was no suggestion that the Ba'athist leadership, against whom the sanctions were supposedly directed, was going hungry. Soon Western aid donors were warning that unless international sanctions on Iraq were eased the country could face malnutrition and disease on an unprecedented scale. UN officials confirmed the fresh incidence of marasmus and kwashiorkor, and reported infectious diseases such as typhoid, hepatitis, meningitis and gastroenteritis surging out of control. Washington and London continued to block a relaxation of sanctions on the grounds that the Iraqi authorities were refusing to cooperate with UN officials required to inspect Iraq's surviving military facilities. In July a UN mission led by Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan issued a report on 'humanitarian needs in Iraq', compiled following 'observations and conclusions drawn from on the-spot evaluation'. The report declared that sanctions were having a substantial effect on the

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living standards of the civilian population. Damage to water treatment plants and the international block on the supply of spare parts had cut off an estimated 2.5 million Iraqis from the government system they relied upon before the war. The 14.5 million Iraqis continuing to receive water via the pre-war system were now receiving less than a quarter of the pre-war amounts, and this was of doubtful quality. Raw sewage continued to flow in city streets and into rivers used for washing and drinking, resulting in unprecedented levels of infectious diseases, including typhoid and cholera. The international blockade on spare parts meant that medical, surgical, dental and laboratory equipment could not be maintained, and that the electrical supply for most agricultural purposes was running at about one-third of the previous years. The price levels of wheat and rice the two normal staple foods - remained at 45 and 22 times their pre-war levels, with government rationing providing only about one-third of the typical family's food needs. Almost half of the nation's 900,000 telephone lines had been damaged beyond repair, and all the international communications facilities had been destroyed.

The Sadruddin mission urged that Iraq be allowed to import $1 billion worth of spare parts and other materials to begin the restoration of the oil industry; that immediate steps be taken to alleviate the priority needs identified by the mission in the areas of food supply, medicine, water and sanitation, power generation, telecommunications and the oil sector; that food imports, to meet the minimum consumption requirements, be allowed; that imports of fertilisers, pesticides, animal feed and drugs, machinery and spare parts needed to repair the irrigation and drainage system be allowed; and that imports should also be permitted for the repair of surgical, dental and diagnostic equipment, for ambulances, for water pumping and treatment facilities, for the sewage system, for electrical generation, for the oil industry, and for telecommunications.

On 26 August 1991 Iraq reported that more than 14,000 children had died because of the lack of drugs since the United Nations imposed the trade embargo. A month later, publicity was given to the results of the study carried out by the 87-member Harvard Study Team which investigated some 6000 Iraqi households. The earlier enquiry carried out by the same team found that the child mortality rate had doubled. Now it was found
that the death rate of under-fives had trebled and amounted to tens of thousands.\textsuperscript{315} Disease was rampant, with widespread epidemics of typhoid and cholera. There was also a major increase in domestic violence, with 'the highest rate of war-related psychological trauma ever found in a postwar study'.\textsuperscript{316} At the same time the UN Secretary-General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, was urging the Security Council to allow Iraq to sell increased amounts of oil to provide revenue for humanitarian purchases.

\textit{In November 1991 there were reports of food riots in Baghdad and other Iraqi cities, with particularly serious disorder in the Baghdad (Shia) suburbs of Thawra and Khadhimaya.}\textsuperscript{317} Prices of some essential foods had risen a hundredfold. Fifty kilogram bags of sugar and rice were now costing 500 dinars, equivalent to two months' salary for a professional. The Iraqi government, faced with a partially collapsed currency, ordered the major Rafidain Bank to accept currency known to be counterfeit. On 14 November the Iraqi agriculture minister, Abdul Wahab al-Sabagh, declared that thousands more children and old people would starve unless UN sanctions were lifted soon: '. . . only fifteen per cent of our people can afford to buy food on the free market. The rest must accept hunger. That is the reality of the embargo'. Iraq had been allowed to import 100,000 tonnes of grain over the eight-month period since the end of the war, but the normal national requirement was 200,000 tonnes a month: 'Today we have a great lack of food and medicines. We lack spare parts for agricultural machinery. We lack fertilisers and pesticides as well as spares to get our power stations and oil refineries working again. We are a country that lives in the dark. . . we need pumps to bring the water to the fields and these require electricity which we do not have.'

At this time the United Nations was expressing a willingness to allow Iraq to raise revenues to buy food and other essential goods, provided that the UN was allowed to supervise food distribution and secure reparations for the victims of the Iraqi aggression.

\textsuperscript{315} Sara Helm, 'Child deaths "have trebled" since Gulf war', \textit{The Independent}, London, 20 September 1991.
\textsuperscript{316} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{317} Helga Graham, 'Starving Iraqis riot as food crisis deepens', \textit{The Observer}, London, 3 November 1991.
The British Overseas Development Minister, Lynda Chalker, announced that further action might have to be taken against Saddam Hussein unless he agreed to the UN terms for oil sales. On 20 November 1991 the director of Oxfam, Frank Judd, having just visited the region, called for a big international humanitarian effort to help the millions of Iraqis suffering malnutrition and now facing a winter without adequate food, medicines or housing. Now children with matchstick limbs and distended bellies, 'like drought victims from Ethiopia', could be seen in Baghdad and other Iraqi cities. A doctor in a Baghdad hospital commented: 'It's a vicious circle. They get weaker and weaker from lack of food. Then they are susceptible to disease because they have no immunity, and that weakens them even more.' Britain had agreed a release of £70 million-worth of Iraqi assets to buy the freedom of the businessman, Ian Richter, but there was no control over how the money would be used: it was unlikely that the plight of the needy would be alleviated, and in any case President George Bush had asserted that the UN economic embargo must remain in effect. Again there was no suggestion that the measures were hurting the Ba'athist leadership. Some 30 per cent of all Iraqi children were now malnourished, with infant mortality trebled since the Gulf War. The situation in Iraq following the war was plain enough. The US-dominated Security Council was insisting that de facto biological warfare be waged against the impotent and traumatised Iraqi people, not against the Ba'athist leadership who alone were culpable. By now the reports were frequent and unambiguous: the UN sanctions - whatever the callous machinations of Saddam Hussein - were bringing disease, malnutrition and starvation to virtually the entire nation. Louise Cainkar, director of the Chicago-based Database Project on Palestinian Human Rights, having spent several weeks conducting fieldwork in Iraq, reported in detail on the effects of the UN-imposed sanctions on Iraq. In Basra she encountered 'the same scene I was to see over and over again . . . Iraqi women holding thin, bloated and malnourished children. . . .' On 20 May 1991 President Bush declared that the trade embargo would continue: 'We don't want to lift these sanctions as long as Saddam Hussein is in power.' And in the same spirit, the deputy national security adviser,

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319 Marie Colvin, 'Saddam thrives as babies starve', The Sunday Times, 1 December 1991.
Robert Gates, nominated by Bush to head the CIA, stated that the Iraqis would 'pay the price while he [Saddam Hussein] is in power'.

While few observers doubted the deteriorating plight of the ordinary Iraqi people, and while Bush repeatedly emphasised that the option of further military action against Iraq was still open, the punitive sanctions - including a (de facto if not de jure) ban on imports of food and medicine - remained in place. WHO and UNICEF had warned of the 'catastrophe' that would beset Iraq if sanctions were not lifted, but Washington and London remained largely oblivious to this concern. In May 1991 the White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater repeated the familiar refrain that 'All possible sanctions will be maintained until he [Saddam Hussein] is gone.' There was plenty of evidence that sanctions were devastating the Iraqi people, but no evidence that they were undermining the Ba'athist regime.

The deteriorating health of the Iraqi population became increasingly obvious through the summer of 1991, though the US and Britain - as lead players on the Security Council - seemed reluctant to agree any relaxation in sanctions. These countries even went so far as to block Iraq's unilateral efforts to export $1 billion-worth of oil to buy food and other essential products, such as water purification tablets. A few states connived with Iraq to break the UN-imposed sanctions, but Iraqi imports remained only a fraction of pre-war levels. Jordan, for instance, was found to be trading with Iraq in violation of UN stipulations, as shown by an Iraqi-Jordanian Joint Committee document, with minutes signed by Abdul Wahid al-Makhzumi, adviser of the Central Bank of Iraq, and Dr Ibrahim Badran, under-secretary 1 of the Ministry of Industry and Trade for Jordan. In July there were signs that the US and Britain were prepared to allow Iraq to sell some oil for humanitarian purposes, provided such activity could be closely monitored and regulated to bring reparations to some of those who had suffered because of the Iraqi aggression. There were signs also that the enduring US hostility to Iraq,

evidenced by threat of further military strikes, was now being countered by other Security Council members unwilling to see further conflict in the Gulf. On 29 July Maurice Gourdault Montagne, a spokesman for the French government, urged the Security Council to ease the trade embargo against Iraq. This pressure, combined with the entreaties of WHO and UNICEF, had some effect: on 15 August 1991 the Security Council authorised Baghdad to sell up to $1.6 billion-worth of oil to help pay for desperately needed food. The deal, under strict UN control, was seen as a one-off humanitarian gesture. Other resolutions passed at the same time fixed a ceiling of 30 per cent on the amount of annual Iraqi oil sales used to pay reparations; and condemned Baghdad's failure to co-operate with UN inspectors responsible for destroying Iraq's clandestine nuclear weapons programme.\textsuperscript{323} It was soon being pointed out that the UN concession was totally inadequate, with even Secretary-General Perez' de Cuellar commenting that the restrictions on the permitted oil sale would provide the Iraqis with 'substantially less than the minimum food import requirements'.\textsuperscript{324} The Iraqi government, perhaps predictably, condemned the half-hearted UN gesture as an interference with Iraqi sovereignty.

On 4 February 1992 the Iraqi ambassador to the UN, Abdul Amir al-Anbari, declared that Iraq would not resume talks on possible oil sales: 'We decided that the talks were no longer useful or productive given the conditions imposed by Security Council resolution 706, which renders the production of Iraq oil a non-profitable enterprise and the Iraq (oil non-marketable.'). However, by the end of March, agreement had been reached between the UN and the Iraqi authorities on the terms that would govern the resumption of Iraqi oil sales. Such agreement came too late to save many thousands of Iraqi deaths: a senior Iraqi health official, Abdul Jabbar Abdul Abbas, reported that in the first four months of 1992 the UN economic sanctions had caused nearly 41,000 deaths, including 14,000 child fatalities. And UN officials estimated that nearly five million children in the Middle East would spend their formative years in deprived circumstances

\textsuperscript{323} Trevor Rowe, 'UN allows Iraqi sale of oil to buy food', \textit{The Independent}, London, 16 August 1991; Mark Tran, 'UN permits sale of $1.6bn of Iraqi oil', \textit{The Guardian}, 16 August 1991.

as a result of the Gulf crisis. Thus Richard Reid, the UN Children's Fund director for North Africa and the Middle East, commented that: 'We can speak with alarming, grave assurance of a lost generation.' On 3 September 1992 Britain ruled out any easing of sanctions on Iraq, instead warning Iraq against any attempt to interfere with the aerial exclusion zone over southern Iraq (see below). A few weeks later, the Harvard research team published their estimate that 46,900 children under the age of five died in Iraq between January and August 1991 as an indirect result of the bombing, the civilian uprisings and the UN economic embargo.

Iraq, claiming purely humanitarian motives, made frequent requests for an easing of sanctions. Thus in November 1992, for example, Tariq Aziz visited New York to ask the UN to relax the current restrictions, but the Security Council issued a statement saying that Iraq had only partially complied with UN demands and so there could be no relaxation of sanctions. It was now clear that the comprehensive embargo was drastically affecting every aspect of Iraqi life. There were serious and worsening shortages of food, medicines and the spare parts needed to repair the national infrastructure (sewage plant, hospitals, water purification systems and the like). Before the war children were given government-supplied meals at school but this was no longer possible; and the embargo, extensive enough to cover imports of paper, meant that newspapers were reducing their number of pages and editions, and that the book trade had virtually collapsed, massively hampering education at all levels. Ian Katz describes how the resilient Iraqi people are struggling to cope with appalling difficulties: thousands of engineers and doctors are unemployed, a pharmacist tells how she can only service a quarter of the prescriptions brought to her, a dentist describes how she cannot any longer obtain the necessary anaesthetics. And there is the frequent suggestion that the repression by Saddam's regime is a lesser evil than Iraq's constant humiliation at the hands of the West.\footnote{Ian Katz, reporting for The Guardian, 29 January 1993.}

The West, for the most part, continued to pay little attention to the privations brought to the Iraqi people by the seemingly permanent sanctions. Hugh Stephens, the coordinator for the unofficial British Commission of Inquiry for the International War
Crimes Tribunal, noted: 'Iraq is inhabited not only by its president, but by 18 million people who, in systematic contravention of Article 54 of the 1977 Geneva Protocols, are being subjected to hunger as a means of war, are being deprived of essential medical supplies and are facing the destruction of services essential to civilian life.'\(^{326}\) There were few signs that the bulk of the Iraqi people were blaming such privations on Saddam.

The various aid agencies and UN-linked bodies continued to report the devastating impact of sanctions that had no justification in law or natural justice. To most independent observers the de facto (if not de jure) blocking of shipments of foodstuffs and medical supplies to an increasingly desperate population had nothing to do with alleged Iraqi violations of UN resolutions and everything to do with Washington's strategic and economic calculations in the context of Gulf oil. Now no-one had an excuse for not acknowledging the impact of the US-contrived sanctions. For example, the charity Medical Aid for Iraq (MAI), struggling to supply medicines and medical equipment to Iraqi hospitals, was publishing regular reports. One of these (relating to the delivery of medical supplies during January and February 1993) recorded the impression of MAI aid workers that the medical situation had worsened since the last visit (May 1992); and the observation that 'as always, it has been the children who have been hit the hardest'. The deteriorating situation was plain enough: The need in the hospitals is greater, with basic supplies such as cotton wool, dressings and soap being in desperately short supply. . . Shortages of milk powder, cannulae, antibiotics and syringes have been a problem since the Gulf War. . . now a lack of insulin has become a major problem . . . As a result children with diabetes are arriving at hospitals in comas and dying. . . foods containing protein are too expensive to buy. The result is an ever increasing number of children with kwashiorkor. . . In every hospital visited the children's wards were full of malnourished children, many of whom also have chest infections or gastroenteritis. Everyone seemed to know someone who had died recently due to lack of food or medicines.

By any medical or health index a mounting disaster was afflicting the entire country. The growing number of malnourished pregnant women was resulting in an

\(^{326}\) The Independent, 15 February 1993.
increasing number of premature births. Asthmatic children were dying because the supplies of salbutamol had long since been exhausted. In some hospitals, with syringes and cannulae being reused, there were no protein foods and no antiseptics. At the time of the MAI visit Dr Saad Al Tibowi, the director of the Samawa Children's and Obstetrics Hospital in southern Iraq, had given his own blood three times in the previous week. The situation was the same in all the hospitals visited: in Karbala Children's Hospital, Nassiriya Children's and Obstetrics Hospital, Kut General Hospital, Basra Teaching Hospital, the Baghdad Medical City Children's Hospital, the Alwiyah Children's Hospital, and others. Shortages of staff and supplies, a growing incidence of kwashiorkor and other nutritional deficiency diseases, a growing incidence of typhoid, the highest recorded incidence of measles and mumps (with all 'childhood diseases potentially fatal because immunity is low due to malnutrition), a growing incidence of rickets, diarrhoea, hepatitis A, polio and diptheria, children dying of the blood disease thalassaemia because the hospitals had run out of the drug desferal, a growing incidence of marasmus - all brought about by UN sanctions in violation of the Geneva Convention. On 22 June 1993 Shibib al-Maliki, Iraq's Justice Minister, told the UN World Human Rights Conference in Vienna that the United Nations was violating human rights by retaining sanctions: 'The people of Iraq suffer today from shortages of food, medicine and medical requirements. . . the blockade is causing thousands of lives to be lost among women and the elderly.' At the same time reports were appearing of a report prepared by Dr Eric Hoskins, a Harvard expert on public health, for the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) on the health situation in Iraq. A 32-page 'preliminary draft' claimed to identify 'the impact of war and sanctions on Iraqi women and children'. It stated: 'Nearly three years of economic sanctions have created circumstances in Iraq where the majority of the civilian population are now living in poverty . . . by most accounts, the greatest threat to the health and well-being of the Iraqi people remains the difficult economic conditions created by nearly three years of internationally mandated sanctions and by the infrastructural damage wrought by the 1991 military conflict.' The conclusion to the executive summary includes the comment: ' . . . politically motivated sanctions (which are by definition imposed to create hardship) cannot be implemented in a manner which spares the vulnerable.' UNICEF, alarmed at

327 The Independent, 24 June 1993.
the obvious political import of the report, decided to shelve it (Hoskins: 'I think I
produced a good document').

A report produced by the joint FAO/WFP 'crop and food supply assessment
mission' to Iraq, noted that 'pre-famine' conditions were being created: '... the
nutritional status of the population continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate. ... large
numbers of Iraqis have now food intakes lower than those of the populations in the
disaster stricken African countries.' Then - two years prior to writing this update - the
Mission urged 'the most urgent response from the international community to seek a
solution to this crisis'. Now (mid-1995) it seems that Washington is still prepared to do
nothing to relieve the unremitting misery of the Iraqi people.

One irony was that the Kurds in northern Iraq, supposedly protected by the United
Nations, continued to suffer under the imposition of sanctions. Thus reports (August
1993) highlighted the plight of Kurds dying in hospitals with no access to drugs. The 22-
year-old Runak Kamal, admitted to Arbil Hospital, died 10 days after graduating top of
her class at Arbil University: there were no drugs for the minor infection that ended her
life. Dr Chalak Barzingi, of the 400-bed hospital, commented that cholera was expected
and that 'we have no intravenous fluids'. This was not, he declared, 'medicine in the 20th
century'. At the same time Simon Molisson, of the Save the Children charity, noted the
'collapsing situation' (The Independent on Sunday, London, 22 August 1993). On 1
September Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi deputy prime minister, appealed yet again for the UN
Security Council to lift the sanctions against Iraq - to no effect. Now it was being
reported that more than 300,000 Iraqis had died as a result of medical shortages caused
by the UN blockade. The Iraqi health minister, Umeed Madhat Mubarak, announced that
4000 children under five were dying each month, compared with 700 a month before the
Gulf War; with deaths of people over five having risen from 1800 to 6500 a month:
'There are so many infectious diseases now which we had managed to eradicate. Now we
are detecting a large amount of polio and cholera. We are now seeing so many newly
detected cases of serious infectious diseases which are not just caused by the lack of

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medical equipment and drugs but also by general sanitation conditions.' Nearly 1000 cases of cholera, wiped out before 1990, had so far been reported in 1993.

Another MAI report \(^{329}\) noted rocketing food prices, the growing incidence of malnourished children, diarrhoea and gastroenteritis that were 'rife', the block on medical literature to Iraq, the continuing sharp deterioration of the health facilities, many more cases of aplastic anaemia (associated with chemical pollution), and an increase in cancers, especially leukaemia, among the children. One cited example among many was a cancer ward (in the Baghdad Medical City Children's Hospital) 'full of dying children because of a lack of basic antibiotics and cytotoxic drugs'. At the same time there was an unprecedented upsurge of referrals of children with cancer. Similarly there were many more cases of meningitis.

The tubing for resuscitaires in the City Children's Hospital were 'black with dirt, because of the shortage of cleaning and disinfecting fluids'. The labour ward was dirty ('there is little soap or disinfectant'). There were no sheets, and so women were forced to give birth 'on hard plastic tables'. The last working blood gas machine in the hospital had broken and there were no spare parts: so children could 'no longer be ventilated'. The same sorts of problems existed in all the hospitals visited. Frequently there was no oxygen for emergencies as there were no spare parts to repair the cylinders. In one hospital supplies of catgut and silk had been exhausted: after one emergency caesarian section a woman 'had to be left open on the operating table for several hours while a member of staff went to fetch thread from another hospital'. The MAI workers saw a child dying from hydrocephaly: the intracranial shunts that would have saved his life were unobtainable. The conditions described for Najaf Children's and Obstetrics Hospital obtained throughout the Iraqi medical system: Aplastic anaemia, usually rarely seen, is now relatively common. The hospital is also seeing an increase in premature births and congenital abnormalities. . . There are many more children with leukaemia. . . Infections are a major problem. . . The hospital was short of salbutamol, and had no vitamin D injection to treat rickets. . . The obstetric department needs gloves, anaesthetics, muscle

\(^{329}\) Report for the period September and October 1993.
relaxant and catgut. They have sometimes been unable to perform emergency caesarian sections. The labour ward is very dirty, due to a lack of cleaning solutions and disinfectants . . . Babies cannot be ventilated; there is no blood gas machine. Many are left to die."

By 1994 it was clear that any consensus in the so-called international community regarding UN sanctions on Iraq was breaking down. In the Security Council France and Russia were increasingly uneasy about the blockade, not obviously for any humanitarian reason but because they saw commercial advantage in a relaxation of the sanctions regime. Turkey, not a Council member but a strategically important NATO state, was also urging a change in sanctions policy; in particular, because Ankara feared the creation of an independent Kurdistan in northern Iraq that could only serve to strengthen the dissident Kurdish minority in Turkey. Thus Douglas Hurd, the British Foreign Secretary, went to Ankara on 18 January 1994 to tell the Turkish leaders that sanctions must be maintained. At the same time a mission sponsored by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies was collecting further evidence about the plight of the Iraqi people.

The new report made dismal reading. This publication’s Executive Summary includes the observations: The shortage of food in Iraq, the deterioration of the health care system and the hyper inflation has impoverished the majority of the Iraqi population. . . The government rationing system provides only half of the pre-war caloric ration. Most families cannot afford the other 50%. Animal proteins are missing in most diets. The nutritional status of children has been badly affected. Marasmus and kwashiorkor are on the increase. Provision of safe water and sanitation are badly affected by lack of chemicals, spare parts and maintenance for pumps and generators. . . The deterioration of the environmental conditions is also reflected in the emergence of diseases once thought to have been eradicated, such as malaria, cholera,

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typhoid fever, tuberculosis. Shortage of drugs, disposables, laboratory agents, maintenance and spare parts have (sic) reduced significantly the capacity of the health care facilities to diagnose and to provide adequate treatment. The magnitude of the needs to be addressed is far beyond the resources of all the aid organizations combined.

In mid-March 1994, as the Security Council moved to its routine renewal of the sanctions regime, Russia again proposed that the oil embargo be lifted. Baghdad had complied with UN weapons-monitoring demands and now Moscow wanted 'a positive decision' on the embargo question to 'allow us to begin recovering Iraqi debts' (one estimate suggested that Baghdad owed Russia £4 billion, a debt incurred for Soviet-era arms purchases). Britain and the United States predictably resisted the Russian proposals. Said one British official: 'Our view is that the Iraqis respond to a tough line and they have started co-operating because of that line. The argument that we should respond and show flexibility is specious because that isn't what has secured the positive result so far.' Now British sources were expressing irritation with France for allowing the Total and Elf Aquitaine oil companies to hold talks in Iraq about possible future investments.

This, reckoned London, was an unhelpful signal to Saddam at a time when firmness was needed. On 18 March the Security Council yet again renewed the punitive sanctions: in existence, so far, for well over three years. A further MAI report provided yet more evidence of the worsening plight of the Iraqi people. MAI workers were particularly struck by the sharp deterioration of the health provision within Baghdad: children with diabetes, epilepsy and asthma, for example, were not receiving medication; at the Kerbala Children's Hospital conditions had 'worsened considerably'; at the Samawa Children's and Obstetric Hospital conditions were 'deteriorating'; the Children's Hospital in Baghdad had 'no painkillers of any kind'; and so on and so forth. As London and Washington were keen to emphasise, it was important to be firm with Iraq.

It was being reported that medical journals sent to Iraqi hospitals and doctors were being impounded by British Customs and the Post Office as a breach of UN

331 Report for the period 3-22 April 1994.
sanctions, despite repeated government assertions that medical-related supplies were exempt. Thus copies of the British Medical Journal requested by Iraqi specialists were being returned by the Post Office to the British Medical Association, even when paid for by British residents in Iraq. Dr Stella Lowry, head of the BMA's international department, had reportedly told an Iraqi doctor working in London that commercial mail, including medical journals, was being blocked. George Galloway, a Labour Member of Parliament, wrote to Prime Minister John Major to denounce this policy as a 'flagrant and disgraceful breach of UN Resolution 661 [3(a): the ban on exports to Iraq does not include supplies intended strictly for medical purposes]'. On 17 May the United States and Britain again withstood the mounting pressure within the Security Council for a relaxation of the sanctions regime.

In August, France and Russia were again reportedly urging the Council to ease sanctions in acknowledgement of Iraq's co-operation with the UN weapons inspectors. There were moreover perceived advantages in dealing with Saddam Hussein if no realistic successor could be identified. Said one French diplomat: 'It is a case of better the devil you know.' Washington and Paris had, diplomats claimed, exchanged angry messages over the sanctions issue. Russia, supporting the French line, had reportedly reached agreement with Baghdad on the reconstruction of the Iraqi oilfields: according to sources in Russia's foreign trade ministry the work would involve £1.5 billion of contracts for three Iraqi oilfields. Moscow was also said to be supporting a controversial Turkish plan to flush a disused oil pipeline in preparation for a resumption of Iraqi oil exports. On 28 August 1994, at a joint press conference in the Jordanian capital Amman, President Suleiman Demirel of Turkey and King Hussein of Jordan called for an easing of the UN sanctions against Iraq. Now it was being reported (The Daily Telegraph, 29 August 1994) that various other countries - including Germany, Pakistan and Egypt - were also supporting a relaxation in the sanctions regime. Britain and the United States, with support from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, continued to resist any such move. In late September Baghdad announced that the already totally inadequate rations of cheap flour, rice and cooking oil had been reduced by a half.

A MAI report (for October 1994) confirmed further deterioration in the condition of the Iraqi people: 'The situation has deteriorated sharply in the six months since MAI's last visit. . . The major concern of most Iraqis is the question of how to feed their families. . . A severe deterioration is detectable in all the hospitals visited by MAI. . . further deterioration had been hard to imagine. . . Basic medicines and equipment are missing, whilst the numbers of sick and malnourished children continue to rise. The result is a deepening crisis which affects not only the present, but also the future. . . 'On 13 October, as part of a new package of measures negotiated by Russia, Iraq agreed to recognise Kuwait. The Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev then proposed, in view of this development, that sanctions on Iraq be lifted in six months' time. But the United States and Britain continued to resist any change in the sanctions regime. Said Sir David Hannay, Britain's UN ambassador: 'One thing, however, is clear and that is the continued presence of Saddam Hussein as president of Iraq makes these questions [concerning a possible Iraqi threat to its neighbours] too difficult to answer satisfactorily.' Now, far from moving to ease the punishment of the Iraqi people, Washington was threatening the prospect of further military action against Iraq. The overthrow of Saddam was now the explicit US/UK condition, without any justification in UN resolutions or international law, for the easing of sanctions.

On 12 January 1995 the United States, at the Security Council's regular 60-day review of the sanctions regime, was reportedly standing firm against any relaxation in the Council's punitive posture on Iraq. Now there were some signs that Britain was 'more reluctant . . . to acquiesce in a widening rift with France and Russia over policy towards Saddam Hussein'. Tariq Aziz, Iraq's deputy prime minister, was continuing to insist that sanctions should be lifted: 'Iraq has implemented the major requirements which were set in the UN resolutions. According to the letter and spirit of the resolutions, the Security Council has to act positively towards Iraq.' In response, Madeleine Albright, US ambassador to the United Nations, was circulating data and photographs purporting to show that Iraq had kept items of military equipment stolen from Kuwait.

France and Russia had struggled to secure a statement acknowledging Iraq's co-operation with the UN special commission destroying and monitoring Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction. Britain was seemingly 'prepared for the first time to accept such a statement and is sharply aware of the mounting international pressure over sanctions'. When Washington refused to budge, Britain characteristically and supinely fell in line: sanctions would remain. Now UN sources were admitting that Iraq could only be persuaded to continue co-operating with the United Nations if Baghdad saw 'some light at the end of the sanctions tunnel'. Washington had barely acknowledged Iraq's important initiative in offering a formal recognition of the territory and sovereignty of Kuwait: Saddam - and by implication the Iraqi people - would be granted no relief until a 'long-term pattern of compliance' had been demonstrated. How long is long-term? At the time of writing, sanctions will soon have been in existence for five years.

Now there was growing acknowledgement that the sanctions could not be maintained for ever. As a new 60-day review of sanctions approached, Madeleine Albright was finding it necessary to pressure various countries with Security Council seats at that time - Oman, the Czech Republic, Italy, Argentina and Honduras - to fall in line: Washington was finding it increasingly uncomfortable to use its veto (to prevent the lifting of sanctions) in an increasingly unsympathetic Council atmosphere. Said one UN official: 'Everyone is starting to look beyond the March review because there is the expectation that soon we will be entering a new phase.' In the event the United States and Britain stood 'shoulder to shoulder' (Albright) in resisting any change to the sanctions regime, with a British Foreign Office spokesman commenting that the leopard had 'not changed its spots'; it was 'pressure' that had 'got us to where we are now and it needs to be maintained'. The review of sanctions by the Security Council in March 1995 saw no change in UN policy. The toll of dying children in Iraqi hospitals would continue to mount. The holocaust would go on.

Why, despite the overwhelming military defeat of the Iraqi army, has the United States failed to secure its ostensible goal in Iraq, a stable pro-US regime? The removal of

\[335\textit{Ibid.}\]
Saddam Hussein has proved to be the beginning, not the culmination, of a long and very uncertain process of occupation and state building. The lawlessness and looting that greeted the US force's seizure of Baghdad on 9 April 2003 have evolved into a self-sustaining dynamic that combines violence, instability, and profound uncertainty. US troops and the nascent Iraqi security services now face an insurgency that has managed to extend its geographic scope, while increasing the level of violence and the capacity for destruction and instability.

The Roots of Instability in Iraq

According to some proponents, the chaos and violence that greeted regime change have their roots in the legacies that Saddam's government bequeathed to Iraq. Iraqi regimes, because of their perceived domestic and international vulnerability, have sought to maximize their autonomy from society. This process reached its apex under the Baathist regime, built by Hasan al-Bakr from 1968 and consolidated under Saddam after 1979. They built a powerful set of state institutions through the 1970s and 1980s that managed to reshape society, breaking organized resistance to their rule, effectively atomizing the population.\[^{36}\] It was not possible to talk of a functioning civil society in Iraq before 2003. The regime had broken, co-opted, or reconstructed all intermediate institutions that would have shielded society from the force of the state.

However, the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War (1990-1991), and finally the imposition of draconian sanctions changed the Iraqi state and with it Saddam's strategy of rule. From their application in 1990 until 1997, when UN-supervised oil revenues began to arrive, sanctions on Iraq effectively curbed the government's access to large-scale funding, with deleterious consequences for state and society. From 1991 until 2003 the effects of government policy and the sanctions regime led to hyperinflation, widespread poverty, and malnutrition. The historically generous state welfare provision that had been central to the regime's governing strategy disappeared overnight. The large and well-educated middle class that had grown in the years of plenty to form the bedrock of Iraqi society was impoverished. The story of Iraq from 1991 until 2003 is of a country suffering a

profound macroeconomic shock.\textsuperscript{337} As sanctions began to take effect after 1991, there was a rapid decline in the official and visible institutions of the state. The government in Baghdad was forced to cut back on the resources it could devote to the armed forces and police. Before 1990, the bureaucracy of the Iraqi state had been complex and all-pervasive. During the 1990s the effects of "self-financing" meant these institutions were hollowed out. Bribery was commonplace, as civil servants' official wages became at times almost valueless. The 1990s saw many professionals leaving the public service, to take their chances in the private sector or flee into exile.

It was the supposed power of Iraq's state institutions that the US forces assumed they would inherit once they reached Baghdad. To quote Condoleezza Rice, "The concept was that we would defeat the army, but the institutions would hold, everything from ministries to police forces."\textsuperscript{338} However, these state institutions were by April 2003 on the verge of collapse. The third war in twenty years and three weeks of looting in its aftermath pushed them over the edge. Civil servants did not return to work after the cease-fire, instead opting to protect their families and property as best they could. Their offices across the country, but especially in Baghdad, were stripped by looters and burned.\textsuperscript{339} The combination of war, sanctions fatigue, and rampant criminality led to a complete state breakdown. The subsequent extended exercise in state building has been far more costly and has required much greater expertise and resources than the Pentagon had anticipated. State institutions still remain to be built, and their relationship with society renegotiated. This will have to be done in the face of increasing resentment while meeting demands for Iraqi participation.


\textsuperscript{339} "So massive was the looting that, just three days after the US secured the capital, computers were selling for as little as $35 in the thieves market." Mark Fineman, Robin Wright, and Doyle McManus, "Washington's Battle Plans: Preparing for War, Stumbling to Peace," \textit{Los Angeles Times}, 18 July 2003.
The difficulties in establishing law and order in the aftermath of the war also have roots in the type of campaign that US planners thought they were going to fight and the type of resistance that the Baathist regime attempted to organize. There is strong evidence that those planning the invasion underestimated the resistance they would face, most importantly by sections of the mainstream army and irregular forces, notably the Fedayeen Saddam.

In February 2003, in the run-up to war, US Army chief of staff Eric Shinseki in a Senate hearing called for "something in the order of several hundred thousand soldiers" to guarantee order. Other assessments concluded that occupying forces would need twenty security personnel, both police and troops, per thousand people to control the country. This compares to the forty-three per thousand that sustained Saddam in power. This means coalition forces should have had between 400,000 and 500,000 soldiers to impose order on Iraq. However, senior civilians at the Pentagon played a key role in limiting the number of troops available to US commanders on the ground in Iraq. They were working on the assumption that at the advent of the air war or in the immediate aftermath of the invasion, a coup would remove Saddam from power and leave governing structures largely in place. President George W. Bush himself, in an eve-of-war speech, actively encouraged the Iraqi armed forces to move against their leaders. If a coup failed to materialize, then the supposition was that Iraqi forces would implode or simply refuse to fight in a fashion similar to that in the Gulf War, with thousands surrendering to allied forces. In addition, US secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld, as part of his commitment to a "revolution in military affairs," put great emphasis on the use of precision bombing and technological advantage and encouraged General Tommy Franks, the man responsible for drawing up the plans for the invasion, to keep troop numbers as low as possible. The result was that in the middle of the invasion,
the United States had 116,000 soldiers in Iraq with 310,000 personnel in the theater as a whole, compared with the 500,000 anticipated by the Pentagon’s planners before Franks’s revision of their plans. Faced with the overwhelming military superiority of the US Army and US Air Force, the Iraqi government had very few options when planning the defense of the country. With the reliability of the mainstream army in doubt, plans focused on the security services, Special and Republican Guards, and on 30,000 irregular forces, the Fedayeen Saddam and the Arab fighters who came to Iraq before the invasion to do battle with US forces. The regime also appears to have learned from the mistakes its military made in both the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War, when units had no ability to act on their initiative. In an attempt to counter this, Baghdad decentralised army command and control down to the lowest level possible. By giving local control to a senior military officer, resistance continues after Baghdad was cut from its hinterland while the large arms dump spread around the country supplied the post war insurgency.

The reality of the war and its aftermath differed from the assumption of US planners. The optimistic prognosis of Washington-based analyst that the Baathist government in Baghdad would be removed by a coup proved to be incorrect. Sections of the mainstream army fought more tenaciously than many had expected. The level of Iraqi resistance in the south of the country, especially around Umm Qasr and Nasiriya, surprised US Central Command. In motivational terms, this resistance reflected a factor that continues to dominate Iraq: nationalism. There is no doubt that ordinary conscript soldiers, 80 percent of whom were Shia, hated Saddam Hussein, but there still exists in the country a militant Iraqi nationalism, born of three wars in the past two decades, and over a decade of punishing sanctions known to be engineered by the United

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347 "In Nasiriyah Iraqi paramilitaries and elements of the 11th Regular Army division waged a week-long urban battle against the Marine Corps’ Task Force Tarawa, a reinforced three-battalion regimental-scale formation. In Samawah, Iraqi paramilitaries fought for a week against the Army’s 3-7 Cavalry, the 3rd Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division, and the 2nd Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division in turn. In Najaf, urban warfare in and around the city center continued for more than a week, tying down in series multiple brigades of American infantry." Stephen Biddle et al., Toppling Saddam, p. 9.
348 See Biddle et al., Toppling Saddam, pp. 6, 9, 10.
States. This was rallied during the war to motivate troops fighting against US forces that were widely seen to be out to grab Iraq's oil, not to benefit its people.

The US occupation itself has facilitated insurgency. Previous best practice from post-Cold War peacekeeping operations stresses that establishing law and order within the first six to twelve weeks of any occupation is crucial for the credibility and legitimacy of the occupiers. For military occupation to be successful, the population has to be overawed by both the scale and the commitment of the occupiers. The speed with which US and coalition forces removed Saddam's regime certainly impressed the Iraqi population, and US military superiority initially appeared absolute. However, what began in April 2003 as a lawless celebration of the demise of Saddam's regime grew into three weeks of uncontrolled looting and violence. To Baghdad's residents, coalition forces appeared unable or unwilling to curtail the violence that swept across the city, encouraging the perception among would-be insurgents that the United States could not control the country. At the same time, with the collapse of Saddam's regime, thousands of Iraqi troops simply merged back into their own communities while the stockpiling of weapons by the Baathist regime in numerous dumps across the country provided supplies of small arms and explosives for those who wanted to use them. Historically, there has been a high rate of private automatic-weapon ownership in Iraq, as the regime never tried to disarm the general population. The rapid collapse of the regime allowed munitions to become widely available at very low prices. The security vacuum that came to dominate Iraq did a great deal to undermine the initial impression of US omnipotence and helped turn criminal violence and looting into an organized and politically motivated insurgency. The initial goodwill that greeted the liberation of Baghdad quickly turned into popular disenchantment with the occupation's failure to establish order, and into increased nationalist resentment of it. To this extent the insurgency has fed off the mistakes of the occupation, utilizing the anger and alienation felt among sections of society.

\[^{349}\text{See Simon Chesterman, } You, \text{ the People, pp. 100, 112.}^{350}\]

\[^{350}\text{US secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld was quoted at the time as saying, “Freedom’s untidy. Free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things.”}^{350}\]
Finally, in this vacuum, it was easy to resurrect the long tradition of Iraqi political discourse, which historically was strongly shaped by the ideological influences of Islam, Arab nationalism, and the increasingly Iraqi specific nationalism. Those fighting are mobilized by these influences to see their mission as ridding their country of a foreign invader and its collaborators. The evolving insurgency, involving diverse tactics and different targets, springs from several separate sources and a multitude of causes. The first identifiable group of insurgents are the "industrial-scale" criminal gangs operating in the urban centers of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. It is organized crime that constitutes 80 percent of violence in Iraq and makes the lives of the population miserable. The organized criminal groups predate regime change, having come to prominence in the mid-1990s at the peak of the social and economic suffering and state weakening caused by sanctions.

These groups have been revitalized by the lawlessness of present-day Iraq, capitalizing on readily available weapons, the lack of an efficient police force, and the US occupation's paucity of intelligence. They terrorize the remnants of middle-class Iraq, car-jacking, house-breaking, and kidnapping, largely with impunity. It is groups like these that make the roads leading from Baghdad so dangerous, regularly kidnapping and killing foreign workers and Iraqis alike. In many cases these gangs are better armed and organized than the Iraqi police trying to stop them. Their continued capacity to operate is the most visible sign of state weakness.

A second group involved in violence comprises the remnants of the Baath regime's security services, party loyalists, and Saddam’s clientage network. This group is estimated to be responsible for up to 60 percent of the politically motivated violence. Sensing both the vulnerability and the incoherence of the occupation, they began launching hit-and-run attacks on US troops in May 2003 and have increased the frequency, skill, and geographic scope of their operations. The speed with which Saddam

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351 Isam al-Khafaji, "War as a Vehicle for the Rise and Decline of a State Controlled Society."


Hussein's government collapsed in the face of invasion and the chaos that caused meant that the beginning of the insurgency was reactive and highly localized. At various levels of former regime loyalists in Baghdad during 2003 paint a picture of a fractured and spontaneous rebellion against the United States.\textsuperscript{354} However, the dissolution of the army and de-Baathification in May 2003 put an estimated 750,000 people out of work and available for the insurgency.\textsuperscript{355} Against this background it was a small step for the Baath Party, an organization with a long history of covert operations, to move from reactively organizing for self-defense to proactively moving to offensive action. By November 2003 the Baathist arm of the resistance had begun to cohere. Documents seized by the US military when it took Saddam into custody in December 2003 indicated that he had been in regular contact with those organizing the resistance. By 2004 a new politburo at the head of the Iraqi Baath Party had been formed, with representation of both the civilian and military wings of the party, and with personnel resident in the country and outside.\textsuperscript{356} Another source of violence is certainly the most worrying for the new Iraqi government and the hardest to deal with. This can be usefully characterized as Iraqi Islamism, with both Sunni and Shia variations. After the Gulf War and the imposition of sanctions, Saddam infused the Baath Party's long-established, secular, broadly socialist rhetoric with an Islamism that reflected the Iraqi population's return to religion in the face of economic collapse and social dislocation.\textsuperscript{357} The strong nationalist and Islamic currents running through the Iraqi polity have combined to create a political ideology that preaches the defense of the Watan, the Iraqi homeland, against foreign and non-Muslim invaders. The battalions of the 1920 revolution are a good example of this dynamic. Formed in the suburban hinterland of Baghdad, they have, as their name suggests, merged an Iraqi nationalism with an Islamic radicalism. This potent combination meant that in 2004, groups like this were the fastest-growing wing of the insurgency, responsible for up to 20 percent of the violence against the US military and Iraqi security forces. This ideological aspect to the resistance movement is not going to disappear.

\textsuperscript{354} Ahmed S. Hashim, "The Sunni Insurgency," p. 3.
\textsuperscript{355} Phillis Bennis et al., A Failed "Transition," p. 37. On the influence of de-Baathification on the intensity of the insurgency, see Jon Lee Anderson, "Out on the Street. The United States' de Ba'thification program fuelled the insurgency. Is it too late for Bush to change course?" New Yorker, 15 November 2004.
\textsuperscript{356} Op. Cit.
\textsuperscript{357} Ibid.
An early indication of the cause and effect behind the mobilization of political violence in Iraq can be seen in the case of Fallujah, a market city of some 300,000 people, thirty-five miles west of Baghdad. Notwithstanding Paul Wolfowitz's incorrect assertions, far from being a "hotbed of Ba'thist activity," Fallujah was known in Iraq as the "Medinat al-Masajid," the City of Mosques, highlighting its deeply conservative reputation, famed for its adherence to Sunni Islam and, along with Ramadi, as a city where the secular government's influence was at its weakest, and where the state found it difficult to impose law and order.

It was two weeks after the fall of Baghdad before US troops entered Fallujah. In the interim, Iraqi troops and Baath Party leaders left the town. Imams from the local mosques stepped into the sociopolitical vacuum, bringing an end to the looting, even managing to return some of the stolen property. Fallujah became a center of violent opposition to US occupation so soon after liberation because of a series of heavy-handed missions by US troops searching for leading members of the old regime. Resentment escalated when two local imams were arrested. Events reached a climax when US troops broke up a demonstration with gunfire, resulting in seventeen Iraq fatalities and seventy wounded. This caused a spiral of violence and revenge that has destabilized the area and overshadowed the US military's attempts to impose order on the whole northwestern region of Iraq. The result was the killing of four private security guards at the end of March 2004 and a bloody retaking of the city by US Marines.

The political organizations that emerged from Fallujan society to control the town and negotiate an end to the siege, the Mujahideen Shura (Resistance Council) and the Hayat al-Ulama al-Muslimin (Muslim Scholars Council), are indicative of the diversity of ideological trends within the opposition. Members of both groups claim to represent the variety of Islamic trends found in the northwestern region of Iraq. These include the Sufi tradition, which is influential in Fallujah, but also the much more austere and radical

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358 See Paul Wolfowitz, deputy secretary of defense, testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 22 May 2003.
Salafi approach to Islam. Muqtada al-Sadr has been the political figure who has successfully rallied the nationalist and radical Islamic trends among Shia sections of the population. Sadr’s support originates in the poorest and most disadvantaged sections of the Shia population. Capitalizing on a large charitable network set up by his late father, Sadr has used radical anti-US rhetoric to rally the disaffected to his organization. As the occupation failed to deliver significant improvements to people’s lives, Sadr’s popularity began to increase. In the run-up to the handover of power on 28 June 2004, Sadr’s rhetoric and actions became more extreme in an attempt to convince the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) that he could not be excluded from the post occupation political settlement, as the CPA intended. Sadr deployed his own militia, the Mahdi Army, to increase his power in the large Shia slum of Baghdad, Al-Tharwa (renamed “Sadr City” following the war, after his dead father), and across the south of the country. This game of cat and mouse, with Sadr upping his rhetorical radicalism while highlighting his military capacity, meant that strategically the CPA could not ignore him. But it proved ill-judged to confront his organization at the same time that US Marines were trying to contain the Fallujan uprising. The CPA, by closing down Sadr’s newspaper and arresting Sheikh Mustafa al-Yacoubi, one of Sadr’s key deputies in Najaf, drew him into open conflict. The resulting revolts in key towns across the south of Iraq Basra, Amara, Kut, Nasiriya, Najaf, Kufa, and Karbala—as well as in Baghdad itself, highlighted two things. First, Sadr’s organization had been preparing for just such a confrontation since the invasion at least, organizing the Mahdi Army with this in mind. Second, even with this lead time, the geographic scale of the southern uprising indicated a bandwagoning effect; other smaller militias and local armed groups used the cover of Sadr’s confrontation to launch their own preemptive strikes against coalition forces.

In twice confronting the superior military forces of the occupation, Sadr’s Mahdi Army clearly overreached itself. The full force of US air power used against the rebellion in Sadr City and Najaf broke it. However, the constituency that Sadr aspires to represent, the economically disadvantaged and politically alienated, will not disappear. The

widespread casualties resulting from the suppression of the revolt, particularly in Baghdad, have created a wellspring of resentment that will take years to diffuse. Sadr or politicians like him will have continued access to a constituency large enough to fuel radical political mobilization.

The final contributing factor to the insurgency is the most controversial and difficult to judge: the role played by Arab fighters from neighboring countries and behind them the organizing capacity of Al-Qaida in Iraq. The US occupation has presented the actions of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian-born Islamist, as evidence of a sustained Al-Qaida presence in Iraq. There is clear evidence of foreign fighters playing a role in the insurgency and the suicide bombings that have plagued the country. Mobilized through diffuse and informal networks across the Middle East, they have been making their way to Iraq in an uncoordinated fashion. However, their numbers appear to be comparatively low, estimated by the US Army to be between 500 and 2,000. In March 2004 less than 150 of the 10,000 security prisoners held by the US military in Iraq were non-Iraqi Arabs. Although it may be politically expedient for US and Iraqi politicians to stress the non-Iraqi aspects of the insurgency, the revolt is very much a homegrown phenomenon.

The insurgency is diffuse in command and control, in personnel and in strategy. Clearly, US troops initially formed the main target. In a classic case of asymmetrical warfare, small bands of highly mobile assailants, making use of their local knowledge, inflicted increasing fatalities on US troops. With its genesis in late May 2003, by July the insurgents were beginning to show signs of greater professionalism, deploying organized reconnaissance to perfect a modus operandi that used small groups of ten to fifteen fighters to attack with maximum efficiency and minimum loss of life. Capitalizing on the lack of US armored transportation, the insurgents used rocket propelled grenades and improvised roadside bombs to great effect. By early summer 2003, road travel for US convoys had become very dangerous. By the autumn, US forces recognized the increased

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The geographical spread of the insurgency, the improved coordination between the different groups, but also their use of a wider range of arms, including mortars and mines. The downing of several US Army helicopters with heavy loss of life, in the first two weeks of November 2003, further indicated the vulnerability of US forces on the move. This gave rise to a negative dynamic in which increasing US casualties gave the impression that the insurgents could strike with impunity. In addition, the increasing violence spread a deep sense of insecurity across the population of Iraq, in turn increasing resentment of the occupation.

As US troops have increasingly been redeployed to more secure bases outside urban areas, to reduce their vulnerability and political visibility, the insurgents have sought out more accessible targets. A small minority of those perpetrating the violence have deliberately targeted international institutions, specifically foreign embassies, the United Nations and the Red Cross, signaling that they would try to make any multilateralization of the occupation both costly and unworkable. Second, they began to target the nascent institutions and personnel of the new Iraqi state. This change in tactics was heralded by the attack on three police stations in Baghdad on the same day in October 2003. Since then, this method has broadened in its geographical scope and ferocity, with the use of car bombs to target police stations and army recruiting centers across the country. These attacks are designed not only to discourage Iraqis from working for the new state but also to stop the growth of its institutions. They undermine attempts to deliver to the Iraqi population what they have been demanding since the fall of the Baath regime: law and order.

The final tactic adopted by radical Sunni jihadis was to target high profile Shia and Kurdish political figures in an attempt to fracture and destabilize the Iraqi polity. This has the potential to be most damaging to Iraq's long-term stability. The first indication of this was in August 2003, when a massive explosion outside the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf (one of the holiest shrines of Shia Islam) not only cost the lives of a

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365 For example, military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel George Krivo, quoted in Patrick E. Tyler and Ian Fisher, "Occupiers, Villagers, and an Ambush's Rubble," International Herald Tribune, 1 October 2003.
hundred innocent civilians but also killed Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim, the leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, a group that the UK and US governments had been assiduously courting to form the cornerstone of a new political order in post-Saddam Iraq. This bombing not only signaled the high cost of becoming involved in the governance of Iraq but also hinted at the increasingly sectarian nature of targeting. In February 2004, the tactic was extended to the Kurdish areas of Iraq when two suicide bombers killed 101 people in Arbil at the offices of the main Kurdish parties, the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. In a series of attacks on 2 March, by targeting the large crowds who gathered to commemorate the Shia festival of Ashura in Baghdad and Karbala, the perpetrators were clearly attempting to trigger a civil war between Iraq’s different communities. This assumption was strengthened by the discovery in Baghdad of a letter allegedly written by a senior Islamist figure, the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who argued that the only way to "prolong the duration of the fight between the infidels and us" is by "dragging them into a sectarian war, this will awaken the sleepy Sunnis who are fearful of destruction and death at the hands of the Shia." US officials and Iraqi politicians have been keen to blame the use of suicide bombers and the rise in sectarian violence on outside forces, but the speed, number, and efficiency of these attacks point to a large amount of Iraqi involvement and direction. Such jihadis seek to create a new brand of radical sectarianism and mobilize Sunni fears of Shia and Kurdish domination. Although the use of indiscriminate violence has alienated the majority of Iraqi public opinion across all sections of society, the carnage it has produced has been a major setback for state building and stability. Those deploying this form of violence believe that the resulting chaos will further delegitimize the Iraqi government and hasten the departure of US troops. These groups hope that they would be best placed to exploit and eventually control the resulting political and security vacuum.

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366 Dexter Filkins, "Memo Urges Qaeda to Wage War in Iraq," International Herald Tribune, 10 February 2004; Justin Huggler, "Is This Man the Mastermind of the Massacres?" Independent on Sunday, 7 March 2004.

367 For example, Abel Abdul Mehdi, an Iraq Governing Council spokesman quoted in Rod Nordland, "Thousands Attend the Funeral of Dozens Killed in the Karbala Explosions on March 2," Newsweek, 7 March 2004.
The Creation of Postwar Political Structures

US planners anticipated a limited exercise in regime change and easily managed state reform in the aftermath of the war. However, once the institutions of government had collapsed, the task facing the occupation became complex and potentially contradictory: the building of a new political order that would be stable and legitimate yet also in broad agreement with US foreign policy aims.

Toward this end, the role of former Baathists in the government had to be minimized, but other political forces that might destabilize a pro-US agenda also had to be identified and marginalized, not least in order to create a space within which a new, pro-US ruling elite could be nurtured. However, this policy objective clashed with the needs and demands of the Iraqi population. De-Baathification, the dissolution of the army and expulsion of 40,000 former administrators from the civil service, greatly hindered the restoration of government services and law and order. And the United States faced a highly mobilized society vocally expressing its newfound political freedom. Legitimizing a new government both internationally and even more importantly, domestically, had to involve, at some stage, handing power over to an Iraqi governing elite that was either popularly elected or could at least mobilize a significant section of Iraqi popular opinion to support its rule. Reactive US policy measures to meet these contradictory demands and interests were largely short-term, paying little attention to the medium- to long-term consequences of each new initiative.

Apart from the collapse of the state itself, the central problem that hampered the occupation was an acute lack of knowledge about the country. The occupation authorities took up residence in the old seat of government, the Republican Palace, at the heart of the secure "green zone" in the center of Baghdad. It was dependent upon a small group of Iraqi exiles, long absent from the country. They returned with the invaders to act as a conduit between US forces and the Iraqi population, helping them to understand an unfamiliar society. Most important, it was hoped that these exiles would become the basis of Iraq's new governing class.
However, this reliance created distinct problems. The main organization formed in exile, Iraqi National Congress and its allies, brought back to the country a view of Iraqi society as irrevocably divided between sectarian groupings and mobilized by deep communal antipathy, a view that bore little resemblance to the real state of Iraqi society in 2003-2004. This "primordialization" of Iraq clearly influenced the way the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) was formed in July 2003, after negotiations between the US authorities and seven exiled parties. The United States promoted the IGC as "the most representative body in Iraq's history," but this could not come from the undemocratic method of its formation; instead it reflected the supposed religio-ethnic divisions in the country: thirteen Shias, five Sunnis, five Kurds, a Turkman, and a Christian. The forced and rather bizarre nature of this arrangement was highlighted by the inclusion of Hamid Majid Mousa, the Iraqi Communist Party's representative in the "Shia block" of thirteen. Such sectarian mathematics was also used to expand the number of cabinet portfolios to twenty-five, so that the spoils of office could be divided up in a similar fashion. The manner of the IGC selection caused a great deal of consternation across Iraqi opinion. Criticism focused on the fostering of an overt sectarianism that had previously not been central to Iraqi political discourse, and on the damage that selection on the basis of sectarian or religious affiliations, rather than competence, would do to the restoration of government. Indeed, senior US officials themselves became rapidly disillusioned with its ability to deliver either leadership or legitimacy, noting that "at least half the council is out of the country at any given time and that at some meetings, only four or five members show up." A new governing structure was needed to cope with the rising insurgency but, as a senior occupation official said at the time, "it is unlikely that we will want to make a provisional government out of a council that has been feckless." Faced with increasing pressure from the UN Security Council for real sovereign power to be delegated to an Iraq governing body, the increasing alienation of the Iraq population, and a rising tide of political violence, the Bush administration set 30 June 2004 as the deadline for transferring sovereignty to Iraq. But it was the intervention of the most senior religious figure in the country, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, that forced the democratization of

368 Isam al-Khafaji, "A Few Days After."
this hasty process. Sistani has continually pressed for early elections as the only way to reduce violence, guarantee Iraq’s progress to democracy, and lessen the influence of the United States in running the country. His ability to influence events was highlighted by the hundred thousand people who demonstrated in Baghdad in January 2004 in support of his demands for nationwide elections. The transitional law finally agreed to by the Iraqi Governing Council in March 2004 reflected this demand and set a clear timetable for progress toward democracy, stating that national elections must be held no later than 30 January 2005. Ayatollah Sistani then encouraged the formation of a "Shia list" to fight the elections, a disparate group of 228 candidates and parties brought together and vetted by Sistani’s advisers.

The voting of 8.5 million Iraqis in the 30 January 2005 elections was certainly a historic moment. Despite nine suicide bombings in Baghdad and 260 attacks across the whole of the country, 58 percent of those eligible to vote did so. The elections, held under US occupation, were certainly not flawless; however, it would be churlish not to recognize the bravery and hope that propelled the majority of the Iraqi electorate to the ballot box. The Shia list, the United Iraqi Alliance, won 48 percent of the vote and 140 seats in the 275-member assembly. The Kurdish Alliance, formed by the two main Kurdish parties, won 75 seats, with the list of US-appointed interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi winning 13 percent.

Elections, by themselves, however, leave unresolved broader issues of political reconstruction. Iraq at the time of the elections was a country still lacking effective institutions, military, administrative, or political. The two political parties at the core of the victorious United Iraqi Alliance, the Al Dawa Party and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, were swept to power not by their own organization, canvassing, or legitimacy, but by their association with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. The danger is that they will not solidify the societal mobilization of the election by building mass party organizations and will instead lose the political momentum they have achieved and revert to a neo-patrimonial strategy of using state resources to buy political loyalty. The Iraqi population would then come to experience politics not as citizens but as
subjects, whose votes and political participation would become meaningless, causing them to revert to the cynicism and mistrust that has dominated postwar Iraqi politics.

**The Impact of US forces in Iraq**

The US government's policies have had a profound effect on Iraq, from its insistence on the maintenance of a punishing sanctions regime to its invasion and occupation of the country. Their damaging impact has obstructed Washington's ability to achieve its ostensible goal in Iraq, a stable but pro-US regime.

Whatever ambitions Saddam Hussein had earlier entertained, following the catastrophic defeat of 1991 his first imperative was the survival of his regime. With good reason, their enemies portrayed Saddam and his Baathist colleagues as a group who would stop at nothing to retain power, but few took this to its logical conclusion. To survive, the regime habitually reacted with brutality toward those suspected of disloyalty, but survival also meant being ready to bow to superior force even at the expense of abandoning supposedly fundamental principles. This meant that sanctions could be effective in securing their declared aim of stripping Iraq of the weaponry with which it might pose a threat to other states in the region, but they were a blunt instrument in Washington's campaign for regime change, since the regime could adapt to the conditions they created, while inflicting the costs on the general population.\(^{371}\) Saddam had never relied purely on force to retain power. Those employed in the institutional pillars of the regime, notably the secret police forces, the elite Republican Guard and other special forces, as well as the administrative elite, were well paid. Large-scale planned investment had raised Iraq's standards of literacy and health and its level of overall economic development to a place among the region's best by the time of the 1990-1991 Gulf War: almost all children attended school, affordable health-care was available to the whole population, and in 1987 Iraq's human development index rating was third in the Arab world after Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (though it should be added that this

status was already threatened by a halving of oil revenues since 1979, and the costly 1980-1988 war with Iran). For Iraqis prepared to cooperate with the regime, there were rewards, including well-paid jobs. Young people were courted and coerced through the education system: none were able to go to university without at least appearing to support the regime and, among those who were sent abroad, a high proportion were government supporters who were prepared to inform on their fellow students if they stepped out of line to the slightest degree.

Two wars and over a decade of sanctions had a devastating impact upon Iraq, but the suffering and burdens they imposed were distributed very unevenly among the country's population. There were some changes in the way patronage operated; it became a less centrally managed operation. Some people became party to smuggling operations to circumvent sanctions. But patronage continued to reward those considered reliable and loyal, mostly a minority from the Sunni Muslim community who were shielded from most of the worst consequences of sanctions, partly by the employment and spending policies of the regime. Tribal identity had become relatively unimportant to Iraqis in modern times, particularly in the urban areas, but with the partial breakdown of the state under the impact of sanctions the regime began co-opting influential tribal leaders to fill the authority vacuum, giving them an enhanced status as arbitrators in disputes involving members of their tribe and others, as well as land rights or the promotion of relatives to rewarding posts in the more favored cases. This "retribalization" was a retrograde step judged by the standard of the Baathists' proclaimed nationalist principles, but it reinforced a crumbling power base.

It was the people whose loyalty had been seen as at best suspect or who were deemed unimportant to conciliate who suffered most under sanctions. Though they included some Sunni Muslim Arabs, the Shiite Muslim majority of southern and central Iraq suffered the most. Encouraged by George W. Bush, they had revolted against

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373 Faleh A. Jabar, "Shaykhs and Ideologues."
Saddam's rule in 1991 and expected to receive US support. Instead, they were left to their fate woken. Saddam rallied his loyal troops and drowned the rebellion in blood. It was widely believed that the United States, alarmed at rebels whose political leaders called for an Islamic republic and who were considered close to Iran, regarded its former ally, Saddam, as a lesser evil. Sanctions rubbed salt into their wounds; a vindictive regime that controlled whatever was imported into most of Iraq saw to that. The experience of Iraq's Kurds, some 20 percent of Iraq's population, was very different. Backed by the imposition of the northern no-fly zone and a stronger foreign reaction to Saddam's attempt to crush their revolt in 1991, they succeeded in establishing an autonomous region under its own elected parliament, which was not subjected to as rigorous an application of the sanctions regime as was the rest of Iraq after 1991, and also, under the oil-for-food program, received a 13 percent share of the proceeds of Iraqi oil sales.

The oil-for-food program, which was agreed in 1996 and subsequently modified, allowed Iraq to sell more oil internationally and to pay for permitted imports after a 30 percent cut of the takings had been allocated mainly for reparations payments to Kuwait. As its critics claimed, the program was manipulated by the regime, which ensured that its supporters received the greatest benefits, but it did check the decline in standards of living and the child mortality rate fell. To what extent Iraqis blamed Saddam for the sanctions varied according to their relationship to the regime, but many who loathed it and longed for its downfall also regarded the United States and the United Nations as responsible for their suffering in the repression of the 1991 uprisings and under sanctions.

**US Baseless war on Weapons of Mass Destruction**

Following the attacks of 11 September 2001, the George W. Bush administration resolved to embark on regime change in Iraq (former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill claims that planning for an invasion began earlier, within days of Bush taking office in

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374 Faleh A. Jabar, *The Shiite Movement in Iraq*, is an invaluable account of modern Iraqi Shiism, and particularly of its political movements.
January 2001). The administration used the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) issue to justify and secure support for war on Iraq, but war was never necessary to disarm Iraq.

Hussein Kamil, Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, told Western intelligence agencies after his defection from the regime in 1995 that Iraq's WMDs had been secretly destroyed following the earlier war. He was well placed to know the truth, having headed Iraq's biological weapons program, but in 2002-2003 the hawks in the West chose to sweep this inconvenient testimony under the carpet. The weapons had been destroyed because the United States and United Nations had demanded it, and Saddam's regime did not believe that it was possible to conceal them. Their destruction was undertaken secretly, it appears, lest the regime lose face before the peoples of Iraq and the rest of the region.

There was a similar outcome in the case of Iraq's medium-range ballistic missiles. The Samoud-2 was not a formidable weapon. When armed with its payload, the Iraqi government maintained, its range would conform to the tight UN-declared restrictions upon Iraqi armaments. Neither the United States nor a UN Security Council that was seeking to placate it agreed: without a warhead, the missile had a range that exceeded the pre-scribed limit of 150 kilometers, and all stocks had to be eliminated. So it was that in the final days before their country was attacked, Iraqi soldiers were obliged to cooperate in the destruction of a weapon that would have allowed their army to hit the bases in Kuwait where the US and allied invasion forces had gathered to attack them. This was a telling indication both of the weakness and of the priorities of Saddam Hussein's regime. With war all but inevitable, it sought to avert it by yielding to external pressures that reduced its military capabilities. Neither this, Iraq's cooperation with the UN inspectors, nor their failure to find weapons of mass destruction could deter Washington from the war it had already determined upon.

The immediate impact of the US invasion on Iraq's economic and social life was catastrophobic. Civilian casualties were mounting than most humanitarian agencies had expected, and the nightmare predictions of millions of refugees fleeing the tide of war did

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created problems. The worst damage came later, inflicted by the application of a blinkered ideological approach. The triumph of the US forces in Iraq was symbolized by the episode of the felling of Saddam's statue in Baghdad's Paradise Square on 9 April 2003, although not in the way intended when it was offered up as a spectacle for a cooperative media by an army psychological operations team. A US marine colonel had decided to pull the statue down, but loudspeakers were used to call upon Iraqis to come, so that it would appear as if the liberated masses were spontaneously venting their hatred upon Saddam. US troops initially placed a US flag over the statue but removed it when they realized it would symbolize conquest rather than liberation. The smallish crowd of Iraqis proved incapable of pulling down the statue and the sun was sinking fast, threatening to ruin the photo opportunity of the statue's fall, so the marines used one of their vehicles to tug it from its plinth. The mighty statue was a hollow shell. In the first months of its rule, Washington acted as if Iraq was its property, to do with as it wished, although all would take place in the name of freedom and Iraqis would be found to give it a veneer of legitimacy. Paul Bremer, a conservative career diplomat who had earlier served as ambassador at large for counterterrorism, was appointed head of the occupation administration, dubbed the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), and a team of twenty-five Iraqi political leaders who were prepared to cooperate with it were appointed to a body dubbed the Iraqi Governing Council. A portion of central Baghdad around one of Saddam's former palaces was fortified against attack, and this became the CPA's base of operations. When the provisional Iraqi government was set up under Iyad Allawi, a former Baathist and leader of the US-backed Iraqi National Accord, in 2004, the CPA morphed into one of the largest US embassy establishments in the world, headed by John Negroponte, whose illustrious career had included service as US ambassador to Honduras during Ronald Reagan's campaign to bring down the Sandinista government in neighboring Nicaragua. Iyad Allawi became prime minister. Despite the symbolism of the handover of sovereignty, the United States remained in charge: the provisional government's scope for decision making was limited and it certainly had no power to veto or interfere in the conduct of military operations by US or allied forces. It is now widely

376 A US army study of the event was reported by the Los Angeles Times, reprinted in the *Sunday Times* (Singapore), 4 July 2004.
considered by supporters of the US invasion that Bremer's dissolution of the Iraqi army-making some 400,000 armed and trained men unemployed—was a serious mistake. The move was justified at the time as part of a process of de-Baathification—the removal of all vestiges of the regime of Saddam Hussein from Iraqi life. It has included purges of the state bureaucracy and academia that have added another 100,000 to the ranks of the unemployed and discontented. This was a case of ideology prevailing over reason.

The Iraqi army was founded following World War I, not after the Baathist coup in 1968. Its command levels were staffed by men regarded by Saddam as regime loyalists, but (except for the Republican Guard) its rank and file were not politicized supporters of the government; many soldiers were alienated from it because of Saddam's repression of their communities, the severity with which they were treated by their officers, and late payment of wages. This national institution needed a weeding out of the cruel and corrupt, not abolition. The US-created police and armed forces lack credibility as Iraqi institutions: they are widely regarded as mere tools of the occupier. It is unemployment and poverty that drive men to join them, not belief, although this wins them no sympathy from the resistance groups, which attack recruits pitilessly. Their primary goal is to survive from one day to the next. As a result, people complain of a law-and-order situation that is much worse than it was under Saddam's regime. Theft and burglary are common; the kidnapping of individuals by criminal gangs for ransom by their families, practically unknown before US invasion, is now a common occurrence; all middle-class families have either experienced it for themselves or have friends who have. The streets have become no-go areas at night for women in Baghdad and the other central Iraqi cities.

The purge of Baathists from the state bureaucracy, professions, and academia revealed its instigators' refusal to let their ideological zeal be tempered by mere practical considerations. Saddam Hussein's regime had tried to co-opt highly skilled and talented people. They were offered social prominence and promotion in their professions in exchange for proclaiming their support for the regime, while many also acted as monitors of any opposition to the regime among their colleagues. Anecdotal evidence suggests that
the initial post-Saddam purge of these people was conducted with insufficient
consideration for how much harm each individual had really done and for the probable
consequences for society of the sudden removal of experienced policemen,
administrators, and academics. The negative impact of the partial implementation of this
policy has been exacerbated as tens of thousands of members of the middle class and
intelligentsia have fled the violence and hardships of what some insist upon calling, in
defiance of reality, "postwar Iraq." Economic reconstruction has been disastrously
mishandled. Iraq's infrastructure had decayed since the late 1980s as a consequence of
war and sanctions. During the US-led invasion and its aftermath, bombing and the
movement of heavy tanks along streets fractured water and sewage pipes, already in a
state of poor maintenance: water supplies remain unreliable in many areas. Electricity is
often available for twelve hours or less a day) in Baghdad, and most of the country
receives a supply of under three hours.

Insurgent attacks and the deterioration under Saddam of the supply system, which
now necessitates large-scale repair programs, were blamed, but this is no consolation to
most Iraqis. They contrast the present state of the repair effort unfavorably with what
happened in 1991, when the old regime restored electricity supplies to pre-Gulf War
levels in a matter of weeks. In the ten months before the US invasion, Baghdad had
electricity almost round the clock. The unreliability of the electricity supply has worsened
the problem of fuel distribution. Power outages stop pumps from working, leading to
lengthening queues of frustrated motorists at gas stations. In the country with the second
largest oil reserves in the world, they may wait five hours to fill up their cars-unless they
can afford to go to a hawker, who will sell them gasoline for up to fifty times its official
pump price. Those who can afford to have bought private generators that they can use
whenever the electricity supply fails, but this has increased demand for gasoline, which
would be better used earning export revenues.

The infant mortality rate is nearly twice its pre-invasion level, according to a
survey conducted by the Iraqi Ministry of Health in cooperation with the UN
Development Programme and the Norwegian Institute for Applied International Studies.
The report, published in November 2004, revealed that a rate of acute malnutrition among children under five that peaked at 11 percent in 1996 under the sanctions regime, fell with the oil-for-food program to 4 percent in 2002, but in 2004 had shot up to 7.7 percent—about 400,000 children. This is despite the continuation of the distribution of the food rations. In September 2004 the World Food Programme concluded, following a survey, that 6.5 million Iraqis—one in four of the population remained highly dependent on food rations. Some 2.6 million were so poor that they had to resell part of their rations to pay for necessities such as medicines and clothing. It is not yet known what the overall loss of life among Iraqis from all war-related causes is, as the occupying powers have deliberately refrained from collating this information, but an assessment published by the prestigious British medical journal The Lancet in October 2004 estimated it at 98,000 people.\(^{377}\) US and British government sources disputed this figure, but are unable or unwilling to provide a "realistic" count of their own.

Had the warriors in Washington and London given serious thought to postwar reconstruction before their attack, they might have been ready with a practical economic program that would have served both to repair damage speedily and to provide employment and income to desperate people. Iraq has a large middle class and no

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\(^{377}\) Les Roberts, Riyadh Lafta, Richard Garfield, Jamal Khudhairi, and Gilbert Burnham, "Mortality Before and After the 2003 Invasion of Iraq." The Lancet released the paper on its website on 29 October 2004, ahead of its print appearance in November. The survey was based on interviews conducted with thirty-three clusters of thirty households. The estimate of 98,000 is for the excess number of deaths over what would have been expected to occur during a comparable period of time before the war. Most deaths by violence were ascribed to air strikes by the allied coalition, which habitually plays down the impact of air attacks and stresses the death toll inflicted upon Iraqis by insurgent attacks. Other estimates of the number of Iraqi dead include the running total compiled by Iraq Body Count, based solely on news reports. As of 2 September 2005, this stood at a minimum of 24,495 and a maximum of 27,705: the lower total provides for possible double counting based upon different reports of the same incidents. "A Dossier on Civilian Casualties in Iraq 2003-2005," published by Iraq Body Count in association with the Oxford Research Group, offered a breakdown of 24,865 deaths in the first two years of the war that agrees with the Lancet study in ascribing the largest proportion of deaths to coalition action: 37 percent of civilian victims are estimated to have been killed by US-led forces, 9 percent by "anti-occupation forces/insurgents," and 36 percent by criminal violence. The proportion of deaths inflicted by insurgent action upon Iraqi civilians has undoubtedly increased as the conflict has dragged on. In June 2005, Interior Minister Bayan Jabr told reporters that insurgents had killed about 12,000 Iraqis since the start of the occupation. The Ministry of Interior later told the New York Times that 8,175 Iraqis were killed by insurgents in the ten months that ended on 31 May 2005. It did not provide a breakdown between civilians and police, but it did exclude Iraqi soldiers. Sabrina Tavernise, "Iraqi Death Toll Exceeded 800 a Month, Data Shows," New York Times, 15 July 2005.
shortage of skilled workers for most trades; those who lived there were better equipped than anyone else to understand how its infrastructure worked, who needed to be approached to tackle specific problems, and how to lay hands on necessary supplies. They might have been contracted to handle reconstruction at a fraction of what foreign businesses would demand, and the money they were paid would then have been diffused into the wider economy, stimulating supply industries and the retail sector. Instead, the Bush administration bestowed its largesse on the likes of Halliburton, chiefly for rehabilitation of the oil industry and provision of services to the military. Much is made of the $18 billion that the United States has committed to Iraq for reconstruction, but only around $2 billion of that has so far been spent. Of the money passing through the hands of the ministries set up since the occupation began, huge amounts have gone missing. In a report issued on 30 January 2005, Stuart Bowen, special inspector-general for the reconstruction of Iraq, concluded that the Coalition Provisional Authority had failed to keep track of almost $9 billion that it had transferred to Iraqi ministries. The money derived from sales of Iraqi oil and from seized assets of the previous regime. It wasn't that the occupiers were without ideas about what to do with the Iraqi economy; they were just the wrong ones. There was a large state sector, which included the oil industry: What could be better than to throw it open to the bracing winds of the market? That would shake out a lot of inefficiency in the system, and short-term pain would translate into long term gain. And wasn't a well-functioning free enterprise system a cornerstone of democracy? In this case, the neoconservative ideological approach hit a wall of Iraqi opposition that included most of those who were cooperating with the United States. They recognized that throwing even more Iraqis out of work while their country was in a state of turmoil was not a good idea. They saw that a privatization of the Iraqi oil industry that could lead to its wholesale takeover by foreign companies would provoke a strong

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378 Yochi J. Dreazen, "Former Bush Aide Turns Critic As Iraq Inspector," Wall Street Journal, 26 July 2005. Bowen conducted audits of spending in Iraq and reported his findings to the Defense and State Departments. They have exposed incompetence, embezzlement, and fraud on the part of US personnel in Iraq, as well as corruption in the new Iraqi ministries. It was Bowen who, in November 2004, called upon the US Army to withhold close to $90 million from Halliburton because it could not justify what it had charged. The Iraqi Board of Supreme Audit has concluded that at least half of the $1.27 million supposedly spent on military procurement by the Iraqi defense ministry in the eight months following the "transfer of sovereignty" on 28 June 2004 has disappeared. It has been paid to middlemen who have disappeared, given it away as kickbacks, or spent it on useless equipment. Ed Vulliamy and Richard Norton Taylor, "Millions Embezzled at Iraqi Ministry." The Guardian, 22 August 2005.
reaction from the entire population of their country, as well as confirming many in their view that the United States invaded their country in order to seize its oil. The would-be privatizers were not encouraged by the reaction of the international business community. Much as sectors of the Iraqi economy might have seemed like an appealing investment, many companies doubted that security could be guaranteed, and recognized that the proposed sell-off could be invalidated as contrary to international law:

an occupying power's rights to make changes in the laws or economic system of an occupied state are strictly limited under Articles 53, 55, and 56 of the 1907 Hague Regulations Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land. A commonsense approach eventually prevailed; the oil industry remains Iraq's property and the demolition of the state sector has been frozen, but the anger, outrage, and fear that the mooted reforms provoked have done their harm. There is no deep-rooted opposition to the privatization of most of the bloated state sector in Iraq, but it has to take place on Iraqi terms, not Washington's.

**Freedom fighters and the Struggle over Iraq's Political Future**

The Bush administration's economic and social policies after the invasion, thus, did nothing to conciliate most Iraqis. Many say that they are worse off now than they were under Saddam Hussein, and some have reacted with armed resistance to the occupation of their country by a foreign invader.

Those who responded most forcefully came from the communities who had most to lose by the imposition of a new order in Iraq, the Sunni Arab minority, who see their traditionally dominant position slipping away, to the benefit of the Shiite majority. While the United States hoped to consolidate a pliant Iraqi leadership, the foremost Shiite cleric, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, insisted on an elected parliament that would write a new constitution and the United States had to accede. It was the Shiite religious leadership who were chiefly responsible for keeping most predominantly Shiite areas out of the violent struggle against the occupation. While their community as a whole was deeply
hostile to the invaders, the leadership saw an opportunity to assert their rights in Iraq after decades of living under regimes that privileged the Sunni Arab minority. That required making temporary tactical compromises with the occupier; it also required calling for patience and restraint from Shiite Iraqis in the face of a series of sectarian suicide bombings. This approach finally paid off when the United Iraq Alliance (VIA), the political grouping backed by the Shiite religious leadership, won a majority of the seats in the January 2005 elections.

Although Sunni Muslim Arab Iraqis had answered resistance calls to boycott the elections, and although the elections were held under conditions of war and occupation, they were not simply a sham. They are likely to be recognized in the future as marking a decisive moment in the reordering of Iraq’s power structure. The coalition headed by US favorite Iyad Allawi came in a distant third, after the UIA and the Kurdish alliance. The preferred course of the Shiite leadership will be to seek to unify Iraqis around agreed political goals and an acceptable power-sharing structure. If the process of establishing a national consensus is not derailed by deliberate sectarian attacks by elements of the resistance, it could result in a broad based agreement on a constitution, the restoration of a functioning Iraqi government, and a firm deadline by which the foreign occupation forces must leave every inch of Iraqi soil or face far stronger opposition than they have yet encountered. This is not the outcome of which the architects of the invasion dreamed.

When Bush stood for reelection in 2004, he told Americans that their army was fighting the terrorists in Iraq so that it wouldn’t have to fight them in the United States. However, it would never have had to fight against at least nineteen out of twenty of the people shooting at and blowing up US soldiers in Iraq if it had not invaded their country. When the history of "what went wrong in Iraq" comes to be written, there will be a school of thought that insists upon seeing the US intervention as a noble enterprise that was derailed by a combination of the misguided policies followed later and an insurgency of unanticipated strength, fed by those policies. Put simply, those who argue this view will claim that a different set of post occupation policies, particularly toward economic reconstruction, could have resulted in success. They will be wrong. The basic problem is
the occupation itself but insensitivity to Iraqi opinions, failure to meet desperate social and economic needs, and ill-considered policy initiatives that play well in neoconservative think tanks in Washington but not in the real world, only made things worse. Iraq is not US property to be partitioned, privatized, or remolded, and its people really do want freedom.