

T.C.
İSTANBUL KÜLTÜR UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

**IRAQ IN THE TRIANGLE OF THE UNIPOLAR INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM,
TERRORISM, AND IRANIAN INFLUENCE**

MA Thesis by

Sofian Sabah Nori

2000002059

Department: International Relations

Program: International Relations

Supervisor:

Prof. Dr. İbrahim Mensur Akgün

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ÖZET

Bu tez, Amerika'nın Irak'ı işgalinin nedenlerini ve sonuçlarını araştırıyor. Bu tez, "2003'ten sonra Amerika'nın Irak'ı işgalinin Bağdat ve Washington üzerindeki sonuçları nelerdir?" sorusuna cevap aramaktadır. Spesifik olarak, bu çalışma, bu işgalin kararında, Washington'un vaat ettiği gibi demokrasiyi yayma ve terörle mücadele amacından ne ölçüde etkilendiği veya ABD'nin tek kutuplu uluslararası statükoyu vurgulamak için Saddam Hüseyin rejimini kaldırıp kaldırdığı sorusuna ışık tutacaktır. Bu çalışma, işgal kararının ve sonrasındaki gidişatın şekillenmesinde önemli rol oynayan farklı unsurları incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tek kutuplu uluslararası sistem, terörizm, İran Etkileri

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Abstract

This thesis explores the motives and ramifications of the American invasion of Iraq. This thesis seeks to answer the research question, "What are the consequences of the American invasion of Iraq after 2003 on Baghdad and Washington?" Specifically, this study will shed light on the question of to what extent this invasion's decision has been affected by the American purpose of spreading democracy and fighting terrorism as Washington promised or if the U.S. removed Saddam Hussein's regime to emphasize the status quo of the unipolar international system after the Cold War. This study investigates the different elements that have played a significant role in shaping the decision of the invasion and the course after that.

Keywords: Unipolar international system, terrorism, Iranian Influence.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

AAH: Asa'ib Ahl al Haq Militia

DWSR: Dollar-Wall Street Regime

IGC: Iraqi Governing Council

ILC: Iraqi Leadership Council

ISC: International Security Council

ISCI: Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq

ISIS: Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

KDP: Kurdistan Democratic Party

KH: Khata'ib Hezbollah Militia

LAS: League of Arab States

PMF: Popular Mobilization Forces

PSA: Production Sharing Agreements

PUK: Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

SCIRI: Shiite Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq

UIA: United Iraqi Alliance

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

WMD: Weapons of Mass Destruction

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CHAPTER I

1. Introduction

The decision to war constitutes considerable importance for the strategies of states. It pushes scholars to look for the reasons that led these countries to resort to implementing this decision, especially if this country is a superpower. The American hegemony has attracted broad political and academic interests through the years and throughout the world. This research focuses primarily on the American-Iraq invasion's motives and impact on both Washington and Baghdad from 2003 to 2014. This thesis aims to understand the motives beyond the American invasion of Iraq in a unipolar international system after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This study will also discuss the impact of the unipolar international system on the invasion's decision which has changed the shape of the region. Many studies have shown that Washington created a new political system in Iraq based on sectarian divisions rather than bringing democracy after removing Hussein's regime, contrary to what the U.S. promised after it failed to find weapons of mass destruction. This study will also explain two main related factors that have affected the new Iraqi state after the invasion, terrorism and Iranian influence.

The research will be divided into six chapters; it will start with the research questions, literature review and display the arguments of this research in chapter one. In chapter two, the research will spotlight Iraq's situation before the American invasion to cover an essential part of Iraqi history before 2003. It will also discuss the possible motives beyond this decision. In chapter three, the research paper will address the consequences of the invasion of Iraq and whether the U.S. has achieved its announced goals, such as democratizing Iraq. Moreover, in chapter four, the research will discuss the war on terror in Iraq after the invasion, the reasons beyond the spread of the radical groups in Iraq over the past few years and whether the American policies are effective. Additionally, in chapter five, the research will concentrate on the Iranian role in Iraq after the invasion and how Tehran and Washington found a common enemy, the radical Sunni groups, after the long rivalry between them. Ultimately, it will demonstrate the findings and answer this research's different questions.

1.1 The research questions

- 1 - What factors are beyond the U.S. decision to invade Iraq in 2003?
- 2 - What are the ramifications of the American invasion from 2003 to 2014 on Iraq?

3 - What were the American tools to fight terrorism in a Middle Eastern country such as Iraq? And how effective were they?

4 - How has the American invasion magnetized other foreign players in Iraq, such as Iran?

1.2 Methodology

This research will follow the qualitative method based on the research question and the suggested arguments to explain the facts and findings and analyze the collective data that defines the outcome of the American invasion on different levels. This method is compatible with the study as it requires deep analysis. Furthermore, to ensure a better understanding of the subject, primary sources will be used, such as; political statements, newspaper archives, and governmental websites, to find the required statistics. In addition, secondary sources will be employed, such as books and academic articles and clear definitions of the actors in the system, relations between these actors and the motivation yielding these relations.

1.3 Literature Review

The literature review will discuss how the authors address two critical stages Iraq witnessed before and after the American invasion. In addition, this literature review will also spotlight the motives beyond this invasion, whether it is the military danger that Hussein's regime represented or the American national interest, in light of the reinforcement of American hegemony after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the American "war on terror" policy.

1.3.1 Iraq during Hussein's rule

Many scholars have indicated that Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein exercised power in order to maintain his rule. In his work "Establishing the Rule of Law in Iraq," Perito Robert concluded that Hussein exercised power through a sophisticated security structure. In his article, published in 2003, Robert focused on Hussein's regime and the role of different tribes in Iraq before the invasion. The scholar indicated that Hussein operated the country via a vast network of informers and extreme brutality in dealing with dissent. According to Robert, Hussein depended on tribal allegiances, patronage, and economic leverage to rule the country. He mentioned that Hussein skillfully balanced competing forces within Iraq, playing upon ethnic and religious rivalries and coopting groups through financial and political inducements. This is how Iraq could be ruled during that era. Robert relied on textual analysis in order to

reach that conclusion. However, the author did not explain how Hussein strictly divided Iraqi society ethnically before the invasion and, if so, why this was the only way to rule Iraq.¹

From a different angle, in their book published in 2008, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq: Politics and Other Means", Felter Joseph and Brian Fishman discussed the Iranian revolution's effects on Iraq's political system since 1979. The authors stated that the Iranian revolutionary ideology system that controlled Iran has continued to spread Ayatollah Khomeini's ideology to different Arabic countries, including Iraq and Lebanon. Principally, Khomeini's ideas included anti-imperialism and "Velayat- El- Faqih" principles, meaning that the jurist's guardianship visualizes an Islamic state led by a top member of the Shi'a clerical class.² The Iranian notion of anti-imperialism is vocalized as anti-Zionism and anti-Americanism, as the United States used to support Shah's regime. Eventually, Khomeini's Islamist doctrine was deemed an Islamist and populist ideology. The authors concluded that Saddam Hussein was concerned about the Khomeinist-style uprising in Iraq. As a result, he practised violations against some Shiite figures influenced by the Iranian regime. For instance, they mentioned that Hussein assassinated the Iraqi Ayatollah Baqir Al-Sadr in 1980 to crush any potential Shi'a revolution, even though his brother Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq Al-Sadr stayed in Iraq. However, other figures, such as Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir Al-Hakim, fled to Iran and settled to lead the Iraqi refugee movement from Iran.³ Although the book, published five years after the American invasion, included valuable details regarding Iran and Iraq's shared history and its consequence on the Iraqi Shiite, the authors did not mention how this history reflected on the new Iraqi political system. Moreover, their book did not focus on the pro-Iranian militias after 2003.

1.3.2 The Motives for the American Invasion of Iraq

Many researchers linked the reasons for the American invasion of Iraq to Hussein's threat to the United States but from different angles. Some of their research indicated that military motives were the engine for this invasion, while others referred to economic reasons. Meanwhile, many scholars emphasized that proving American dominance after the collapse of the Soviet Union was the primary factor for the invasion. At the same time, other scholars linked this invasion to the rise of radical Islamic groups after the 11th of September's events.

¹ Robert M. Perito, "Establishing the Rule of Law in Iraq," US Institute of Peace, (April 2003):3, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12462>.

² Joseph Felter, Brian Fishman, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq Politics and "Other Means."" West point. (October 2018):14.

³ Felter, Fishman, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq," 14.

A- A Military Perspective

From a military perspective, some scholars considered Hussein's Iraq a threat to the U.S. and its regional allies. Considering the two wars that Iraq witnessed, the Iraqi-Iranian war (1980-88) and especially after the invasion of Kuwait (1990). In this direction goes, in their work "Realism, Liberalism and the Iraq War," Daniel Deudney & G. John Ikenberry. The Authors indicated that Hussein posed a revisionist danger to the American order in the Middle East. Principally, Iraq had invaded Kuwait and held a notion of pan-Arab national consolidation that characterized the elimination of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf emirates' regimes. Moreover, Deudney & Ikenberry stated that the Gulf War of 1991 was the only clear-cut American military victory since the end of WWII. Furthermore, the authors mentioned that in 2002 Iraq was significantly weakened by economic sanctions. As a result, Washington deemed this a chance to destroy a clear rival before restoring its power and showing off the new potency of advanced conventional weapons with low American casualties. Thus, this would send a clear message of 'shock and awe' to other possible revisionist countries that might challenge the extended American interests. However, the authors also stated in their work, published in 2017, that a swift, victorious war against Iraq would also ensure the American hegemonic reputation around the globe. They indicated although democracy promotion was among the many rolling rationales for the war offered by the White House during Bush's era, the post-invasion situation in Iraq deteriorated. They explained that by stating the rise of democracy was a solution proffered by the Bush administration to maintain public support for the war and provide a template for post-war Iraqi reconstruction. According to the authors, democracy was not the main objective but eventually it emerged both as a means to legitimate the war and as a program for making Iraq a new pillar of the hegemonic American order in the area.⁴

The researchers highlighted essential aspects of the factors that led to the invasion. However, Saddam Hussein was far from being considered a military threat to the world's most powerful country when it came to the military field. Nevertheless, the authors were accurate regarding the American allegation of bringing democracy to Iraq in order to justify the war, as the new political system is based on sectarianism, which led to a lot of turmoil in Iraq and the region after the invasion.

In the same context, in their article "Unpredictability in U.S. foreign policy and the regional order in the Middle East: reacting vis-à-vis a volatile external security-provider," Jordi Quero

⁴ Daniel Deudney, G. John. Ikenberry, "Realism, Liberalism and the Iraq War," *Survival*, 59. (2017): 17-18.

& Andrea Dessì highlighted the Former American President George Bush's policy. In their work published in 2019, the authors concluded that after the 9/11 attacks, Bush inaugurated a proactive shift in American foreign policies towards the Middle East. More specifically, these policies contrasted his predecessor's progressive disengagement efforts. For Iraq in particular, the Bush administration assumed that Saddam Hussein's regime was dangerous enough to the U.S. and Israel's interests.⁵

The authors' work did not elaborate on the consequences of the removal of Hussein's regime and how this invasion changed the facts regarding the terrorism waves and American interests in the region. Nonetheless, the authors focused mainly on different Arabic countries and the weak role of the League of Arab States (LAS) after the invasion.

In his work, published 2011, "Research Note: Documenting Saddam Hussein's Iraq," Lawrence Rubin referred to a distinct reason for the invasion. The author asserted that the cause of this occupation was based on the miscalculation and inaccurate assumptions of Saddam Hussein. He indicated that Hussein underestimated American resolve. Moreover, Rubin raised many questions, such as whether there had been a way to convince Saddam of the U.S. resolve and whether the conflict could have been avoided.⁶ Nonetheless, the author did not have answers to these questions. His research also highlighted the reasons for the invasion based on Hussein's behavior, ignoring the American interests and the fact that the U.S. is the main power in this equation.

In addition, in their work, published in 2021, "Saddam Hussein's role in the gassing of Halabja," David D. Palkki & Lawrence Rubin referred to several crimes of Hussein that led to the invasion. According to the authors, they indirectly justified the invasion's decision by claiming that Hussein could hide the tracks of his weapons programs. Their research linked the accident of gassing and suppression of rebellious Iraqi Kurds in Halabja city and hiding the evidence. Moreover, their conclusion indicated that tyrants such as Saddam wouldn't issue explicit, formal orders regarding prohibited weapons programs.⁷

⁵ Jordi Quero, Andrea Dessì, "Unpredictability in US foreign policy and the regional order in the Middle East: reacting vis-à-vis a volatile external security-provider," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 48:2, (Feb 2019): 5, DOI: 10.1080/13530194.2019.1580185.

⁶ Rubin Lawrence, "Research Note: Documenting Saddam Hussein's Iraq," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 32:2. (August, 2011): 463, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2011.590366>.

⁷ David D. Palkki, Rubin Lawrence, "Saddam Hussein's role in the gassing of Halabja," *The Nonproliferation Review*, 28:1-3. (2021): 14-15.

Even though the Halabja case is highly controversial, as Hussein's regime accused Iran of committing this attack, the official Americans who decided to invade Iraq confirmed that Saddam did not have weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, the authors attempted to show the humanitarian side regarding the crimes committed by Saddam against the Kurds to justify the invasion. However, they did not spotlight the catastrophic results of the international embargo from 1991 to 2003 alongside the American invasion on the lives of millions of Iraqi civilians.

In his work, published in 2016, "WMD elimination in Iraq, 2003," Charles Duelfer indicated the ramifications of the invasion. According to the author, the Iraq war was not just about WMD as long as many states considered more dangerous countries, such as Iran. Therefore, he concluded that the consequences of the invasion were not worth it. Justifying his conclusion, the author stated that Washington's policies toward Iran are highly different, regardless of the threats that Tehran could present due to the nuclear program, compared to Hussein's Iraq.⁸

The author built his conclusion on different political events. However, his research was published two years before the Trump administration cancelled the nuclear deal in 2018. Moreover, his research did not highlight that Iran could represent a potential ally to Washington in fighting radical Sunni groups such as ISIS. Therefore, American foreign policies would differ according to country, event, time, etc.

In their work, published in 2009, "The Game: A Rational Actor Approach to the US-led Invasion of Iraq, 2003," Tor G. Jakobsen & Jo Jakobsen focused on the reasons for the invasion. The authors applied in their research the realism theory. They asserted that the two main reasons for the invasion of the United States were to disarm the former Iraqi army and eliminate Hussein's regime.

Conversely, they concluded that Hussein's goals were based on the survival of Iraq as a significant power in the Middle East as of utmost importance. Moreover, Hussein attempted to secure his regime and acquire a capability and reputation for handling regional threats by letting his enemies believe he possessed WMD. In addition, the preceding 12 years of U.S. policy had

⁸ Charles Duelfer, "WMD elimination in Iraq, 2003, *The Nonproliferation Review*," 23:1-2. (September 2016): P.181.

given him the impression that he was facing doves rather than hawks. But after 11 September, the American foreign policy changed from being soft to becoming hard line.⁹

The research is based on solid points and focuses on an essential issue: the 11 September events. These attacks shifted American policies to fight terrorism. However, the authors did not highlight the links between Hussein's regime and those attacks. Moreover, they did not elaborate on why Hussein was the U.S.'s direct target, whereas other enemies, such as Iran, North Korea, etc., could represent more threats.

Despite information to the contrary by Washington and London that the Iraqi weapons considering a great threat to significant Western security after the 11 September events, there wasn't any proof that Iraq had WMD in 2002, according to some scholars, such as Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark. In her work "Storms, Foxes, and Nebulous Legal Arguments: Twelve Years of Force against Iraq, 1991–2003, the author asserted in her article, published in 2005, that Iraq didn't present an immediate threat to peace.¹⁰ Therefore, in accordance to the author, most countries deduced that the American and British legal arguments for invading Iraq did not entirely coincide as the American democratic and republic parties did not have differences regarding their policies toward Iraq before 2003.¹¹ However, the author illustrated that Britain's aim of participating in the invasion was related to the colonial era. Arguing that the previous British prime minister Tony Blair developed a pragmatic vision of the international community over the years that incorporates the notion of just war. Therefore, this vision mixed Britain's determination to maximise its influence after the colonial era and evangelical worries about the world's dispossessed. As a result, Britain's goals converged with the American's goal of self-defence in 2002-2003. Åkermark also warned of the consequences of the Iraq war. She indicated that this move could motivate other countries to launch wars without considering the U.N. and the international system.¹²

Even though the author has a dedicated point here, there needed to be more evidence to build a full conclusion regarding the British role. Moreover, this war was one of many that a

⁹ Tor G. Jakobsen, Jo. Jakobsen, "The Game: A Rational Actor Approach to the US-led Invasion of Iraq, 2003," Strategic Analysis, 33:5, (August 2009): 672, DOI: 10.1080/09700160903064497.

¹⁰ Sia Åkermark, "Storms, Foxes, and Nebulous Legal Arguments: Twelve Years of Force against Iraq, 1991–2003," International & Comparative Law Quarterly, 54:1, (January 2005): 224, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/iclq/54.1.221>

¹¹ Åkermark, "Storms," P:235

¹² Åkermark, "Storms," P:223

superpower country had launched without the agreement of the U.N. Further, the chances of challenging a superpower country, especially militarily, are minimal.

B – The American Hegemony From an Economic Perspective

Conversely, some scholars linked the reason for the American invasion of Iraq to economic factors. Their findings did not assume that the allegation of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction nor the violations that Hussein's regime committed were genuine motives beyond the American invasion. Principally, their works concluded that Hussein's intention to replace the American Dollar with the European currency to sell oil was the real engine of this American war.

For instance, in his article "Currency Wars: Oil, Iraq, and the Future of U.S. Hegemony," Tyler Shipley tackled the economic consequences of the gulf war on Iraq in 1990. The author elaborated that the OPEC organization, founded on 14 September 1960 in Baghdad, holds 80% of proven global reserves and sold oil for U.S. dollars for an extended period. The author indicated that Iraq, under siege after invading Kuwait in 1990, started selling its oil to Euro under the United Nations Oil-for-Food Program in 2000. As a result, the Iraqi economy was spurred on by rapid growth in the value of the new currency against the American Dollar. Thus, encouraging other OPEC nations to consider the switch to Euro.¹³

According to Shipley, who applied the Marxism theory during his work, the consequences of an OPEC switch to another currency like the Euro would devastate the American economy. To clarify, when a country aims to buy oil, it must first accept the American Dollar printed money to purchase its oil. Therefore, the U.S. dollar value loss would create a real economic crisis. Shipley mentioned that this sign would weaken what is known as the "Dollar-Wall Street Regime (DWSR)," which has been fundamental to American hegemony since the mid-1970s when Former President Richard Nixon directed the U.S. Treasury Department to suspend the convertibility of the Dollar into gold. In addition, Nixon ordered the gold window to be closed so foreign governments could no longer exchange their dollars for gold.¹⁴

Shipley focused in his work on the danger posed by Hussein during the rise of the Euro in the first two years of the twenty-first century. Alongside actions by individual states such as Venezuela and Iran regarding considering the Euro as an alternative to the Dollar led to the perception by the Bush administration that the U.S. dollar, or "the American hegemony", was

¹³ Tyler Shipley, "Currency Wars: Oil, Iraq, and the Future of Us Hegemony," *Studies in Political Economy*, 79:1, (2007): 9, DOI: 10.1080/19187033.2007.11675090.

¹⁴ Shipley, "Currency Wars," P.12.

under threat because of Hussein's policy. The author asserted that the U.S. administration saw that Saddam Hussein controlled around 25 % of the world's oil. This was the only real weapon of mass destruction Hussein's regime had, in addition to his willingness to disobey the United States' economic demands.¹⁵

Shipley tracked in his work, published in 2007, much information about the dollar and the euro in previous decades and the dollar's relations with OPEC. He assumed that the economic factor stimulated the United States to form the new economic map of Iraq.¹⁶ However, even though, from a Marxism point of view, Hussein's attempts to challenge the dollar hegemony could be a fundamental reason for the invasion. However, the author did not highlight the shape of the new Iraqi economic system after the invasion. Moreover, this could represent just one factor amongst other reasons that the author did not mainly focus on. In addition, other political and regional factors could play a significant role. For instance, Hussein's regime caused a headache to neighboring countries such as the gulf countries and Israel, which have strong ties to Washington. Moreover, the dollar hegemony is still stable despite the American economic challenges over the past few decades.

Similarly, in his book “Making the World Safe for Capitalism,” Christopher Doran stressed that the reason for the US invasion of Iraq was connected to the threats that Saddam Hussein posed to the American dollar and the imperial system. In his book, published in 2012, the author states that if Hussein’s idea of selling oil in euros instead of US dollars in 2000 were spread in anti-US countries, it would weaken the American hegemony, if not destroy it.¹⁷ Doran concluded that the American campaign in 2003 was not only against Iraq. Still, it was intended to send a message to its neighbors, especially when Iran decided in 2002 to convert more than half of the country’s assets into euros. In other words, the Bush administration had to deliver a brief to Iraq and its neighbors that the U.S. could not allow this to happen. Even though Iraq was the only OPEC state that abandoned the dollar completely, the United States feared this trend would continue in Iran and even Saudi Arabia.¹⁸

The author also built his research on a deep analysis of economic foundations, assuming that the Euro has emerged as a competitive currency to the US dollar, and its popularity has

¹⁵ Shipley, “Currency Wars,” P.13.

¹⁶ Shipley, “Currency Wars,” PP:12-14,

¹⁷ Christopher Doran, *Making the World Safe for Capitalism: How Iraq Threatened the US Economic Empire and Had to Be Destroyed* (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 141.

¹⁸ Shipley, “Currency Wars,” P.14.

increased. More specifically, from his point of view, some countries considered the Euro a perfect coin for oil sales, which was the main trigger behind the American war on Iraq.

Even though these types of conclusions represent a worthy point of view. However, they still might not cover the whole image of the motives regarding the invasion. More specifically, multiple reasons could play an important role, such as the regional and political factors in the Middle East, especially during the start of the war on terror era.

On the other hand, some scholars attributed the American invasion of Iraq to the imposition of U.S. hegemony on the world after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Many specialists in international relations asserted that this era witnessed a unipolar world. However, the September events shacked the powerful American image in the global society, despite no ties between Iraq and these attacks.

In her work, "Liberalism & Realism and the 2003 War in Iraq. Does Liberalism or Realism Theory Offer a More Convincing Explanation for the War in Iraq?", Brigid Gesami indicated that the perception of American vulnerability after the September attacks caused Hussein's regime's overthrow to enhance the American reputation. According to her article, published in 2020, Bush's public declaration that the Iraqi regime change was a priority to his country made any delay to the invasion would have made the United States seem weak. As a result, there was not any compromise with Hussein's regime. Moreover, national security interests also motivated Washington to launch this war. Gesami illustrated her findings from a Realism theoretical perspective rather than a Liberalism approach. She concluded that realism would be a better choice of the two in explaining the American invasion of Iraq. She also indicated that the invasion could be underlined in categories of the American self-interest, in addition to the cooperation with other countries to achieve its goals, delivered the state offering assistance does not make known its hegemonic purposes and the fear that the state is in danger because there is no overarching power to tame other states. Even though Iraq was not a threat to Washington compared to other more powerful countries, it still shows the American realist approach to the international system.¹⁹

The author's work extensively explained how the 11th September attacks shook the American hegemony image. In addition, she added more value to support that point of view. However, there were no links between Hussein and those attacks in the first place. More specifically,

¹⁹ Brigid Gesami, "Liberalism & Realism and the 2003 War in Iraq. Does Liberalism or Realism Theory Offer a More Convincing Explanation for the War in Iraq?" SSRN Electronic Journal. 2020. (November, 2020): 8.

removing other potential threats to the U.S. hegemony could represent a better option for Washington, at least in the long run.

In a similar framework, in his article, "Militarism, Realism, Just War, or Nonviolence? Critical Geopolitics and the Problem of Normativity", Nick Megoran referred to many motives beyond the American invasion of Iraq. Nevertheless, the author emphasized in his work, published in 2008, that the primary motivation was the shoring up of the Republican Party's domestic hold on power and the United States' global geostrategic location and identity. Especially when the United States became the leader of the "civilized world" after the cold war with potential capitalist rivals such as Japan and Germany. On the other side, the author indicated that Saddam Hussein could fill the discursive void by rewriting the traditional anti-communist threat narratives that had to be rewritten by allowing the Bush administration to represent itself as the guardian of global law and order in what was described as "an unconscious fantasy drama."

However, Megoran stated that there was insufficient evidence to justify the invasion regarding the causes of the defense of Saudi Arabia or access to oil supplies. Nevertheless, a more significant 'intention' was the shoring up of the USA's global identity and role following the end of the Cold War. The author concluded that the powerful states use violence to achieve success on their terms. They also demonstrate to others that "strategic violence" can have political utility, regardless of the humanitarian cost.²⁰

In his work, Megoran addressed multiple aspects that could justify the invasion. However, the author did not focus on Washington's policies regarding the war on terror, which were the main reason beyond the Iraq war, according to the American part of the story.

Contrary to the notion of the reinforcement of the unipolar system, in her article, "The Rise and Demise of American Unipolarism: Neoconservatism and US Foreign Policy 1989–2009," Maria Ryan concluded that the pursuit of unipolarity was vain. She added that the United States was never the single pole of world power. More specifically, according to the author, the demise of the only other competing superpower created for some the illusion of unipolarity due to different influences that could constrain U.S. freedom of action, such as Europe, Japan, China, etc. Ryan also indicated that even though the United States was the most affluent country regarding conventional military resources and national economies, the notion of

²⁰ Nick Megoran, "Militarism, Realism, Just War, or Nonviolence? Critical Geopolitics and the Problem of Normativity," *Geopolitics*, 13:3. (September 2008): 486, DOI: 10.1080/14650040802203703.

unipolar was too superficial to cater to the various levels on which international relations functioned in a globalized world. She elaborated that when globalization and its security challenges were increasingly apparent, neocons had drawn the parameters tightly around conventional state-based military issues. As late as 2000, they re-iterated their support for "the unipolar moment" thesis. Ultimately, the author stated that if the unipolar moment is over for the neocons, that could mean the aspiration to a lesser form of American primacy remains.²¹

Even though Ryan's work highlighted the American hegemony primarily, the author didn't mention how the Iraq war affected the U.S. position in international society.

In her work, published in 2014, "Wilful Blindness or Blissful Ignorance? The United States and the Successful Denuclearization of Iraq," Maria Ryan highlighted the American policies toward Iraq before and after the invasion. According to the author, the different American administrations' policies from the 1991 war to the 2003 invasion were hyper-politicized. She concluded that Washington could not tolerate a rogue leader like Saddam in a region that was so strategically vital, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. She indicated that the disarmament process became hyper-politicized too and, at times, used as a vehicle for US objectives. In addition, Ryan asserted that the American goal of the invasion was not just disarmament but, in the long term, establishing a stable pro-American regime in Baghdad.²²

Even though the notion seems convenient, the author did not elaborate on the challenges that Hussein could cause to the world superpower's hegemony. Moreover, although the new Iraqi regime principally held power due to the direct American intervention in Iraq, this new system has strong links to regional countries, especially Iran. Therefore, the author did not spotlight the duality that this regime may suffer from that could harm the American goals, even if Washington was the primary factor responsible for taking power.

C- Radical Groups & American Far Right party

In his work, "Beyond the Realist Theories: 'Neo-Conservative Realism' and the American Invasion of Iraq", Mohammed Nuruzzaman, refers to a different stage in world security that led to the invasion. His work, published in 2006, concluded that the 11th September events changed the nature of the security environment, especially the American one, in light of the

²¹ Maria Ryan, "The Rise and Demise of American Unipolarism: Neoconservatism and US Foreign Policy 1989–2009," *American Studies Journal* 65 (2018): 1-13, DOI 10.18422/65-08.

²² Maria Ryan, "Wilful Blindness or Blissful Ignorance? The United States and the Successful Denuclearization of Iraq," *Intelligence and National Security*, 29:3. (June 2014): 484-485, DOI: 10.1080/02684527.2014.895596.

emergence of terrorist non-state factors. Thus, these events led to some core changes in the global security environment. Moreover, Nuruzzaman also indicated that the new structure of threats is defined as the combination of “technology and radicalism,” the categories of threat agents mainly non-state in nature, and the identification of “rogue state” having ties to terrorism and allegedly developing WMD. Consequently, a different change in security planners worldwide during the 21st century.²³ The author used two different theories to compare American motives through two different lenses. He concluded that the national interests and the economic gains were essential elements beyond the invasion of Iraq.

Although this research was published 15 years ago, it covered the Iraq invasion case from different angles. Furthermore, it will add value to this study as it concentrates on national and economic motives behind the American occupation.

In his work, published in 2015, "Why the Iraqi Resistance Was So Weak," Stephen T. Hosmer indicated that the invasion of Iraq was a strong message to the U.S. enemies. He considered that the American step was a lesson for potential adversaries, namely that the United States is willing to take military action, including the takedown of hostile governments. More specifically, Washington aimed to prevent "rogue" states from acquiring or possessing WMD such as the Libyan's Colonel Qaddafi. Moreover, Hosmer asserted that another vital lesson that potential adversaries will grasp after the invasion is that they cannot effectively fight U.S. ground forces so long as U.S. forces have air supremacy.²⁴

Even though the Author focused on the invasion's military aspect, his point of view does not seem convenient to the Iraqi scenario as Baghdad did not have those weapons in the first place. Moreover, the American invasion did not stop other countries like Iran from attempting to have dangerous weapons. Finally, the American air forces' supremacy did not eliminate the terrorism waves in the Middle East and Iraq significantly.

From a different angle, in his book “The United States and the Case of Democracy in the Arab World,” Mahmoud Ali Al-Khatib indicated that since the Clinton administration (1993 to 2001), there had been an imperialist approach to the invasion of Iraq. Still, the invasion occurred when George Bush Jr. came to power due to his close ties with the Christian extremist

²³ Mohammed Nuruzzaman, “*Beyond the Realist Theories: ‘Neo-Conservative Realism’ and the American Invasion of Iraq,*” *International Studies Perspectives* 7, no. 3 (August 2006): 251, DOI:10.1111/j.1528-3585.2006.00249.x

²⁴ STEPHEN T HOSMER, “*Why the Iraqi Resistance to the Coalition Invasion Was So Weak,*” 1st ed. RAND Corporation. (April 2007): 242.

right. In his book, published in 2007, the writer relied on different statements by U.S. officials and research centers. The author concluded that the American invasion maintained the unipolar international system, especially after the 11th September events, which shook the unbeatable image of the U.S. In addition to imposing American policy over the international system in light of the rise of the far-right characters in the Republican Party. Furthermore, Al-Khatib mentioned other primary motives for the invasion, most notably the necessity of the removal of Hussein's regime, protecting Israel's security, attempting to revive the U.S. arms market after a period of recession, ensuring easy American access to oil, and reducing its dependence on Saudi oil. In addition to strengthening American control over the region's countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iran, from the Iraqi base. The author believes spreading democracy is just American propaganda, primarily since Washington mainly supports authoritarian regimes worldwide. Principally, he indicated that the U.S. resorted to a pretext for democracy after it failed to find the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and caused huge chaos there.²⁵

Al-Khatib's book was one of the most diverse works regarding the whole case of invasion. However, the author did not cover the relationship between the war on terror and how this invasion turned Iraq into a terrorism hub after 2003.

1.3.3 Did the Invasion Bring Democracy?

In contrast to the American claims of bringing democracy to Iraq, many scholars do not agree with the American narrative, asserting that the sectarian political system planted by the United States in Iraq has dramatically exacerbated the Iraqis' crises. Further, the fragile democracy and the violations that the Iraqis witnessed after the occupation do not reflect the American promises to bring peace and prosperity to their country.

In his work, "A Centralized and Increasingly Fragile State", Dlawer Alaaldeen concluded that Iraq has become increasingly fragile due to the instability, wars, and social conflicts it has witnessed rather than a democratic state. His work, published in 2020, elaborated that the invasion did not bring stability to the country, as an independent state and non-state actors are responsible for the state's fragility. Alaaldeen demonstrated that in 2005, Iraq was supposed to adopt a democratic constitution. Nevertheless, Iraq's fragility has worsened and will worsen even further. Mentioning the state's highly centralized yet poorly institutionalized governing system is one critical factor that worsens Iraq's fragility and frequent conflicts. In other words,

²⁵ Mahmoud Al-Khatib, *The United States and the Case of Democracy in the Arab World*, Kotobarabia, (2007) :P.47

this represents a failure to manage center-periphery tensions in light of the inability to integrate minority groups into larger polities and the lack of public services. In addition, the author concluded that the successive governments after 2003 failed to garner legitimacy to maintain Iraq's confidence, making the Iraqis more divided. More specifically, Iraqis with long histories of grievance and violent conflicts have become more polarized into ethnic, religious, and sectarian groups than at any other time.²⁶

His work also attempted to compare how the Iraqi local governments weren't accountable to local populations during the Ba'ath regime's reign (1968-2003) and how the system depended entirely on centralization. Conversely, in accordance to the author, the United States, after 2003, insisted on making the Iraqi administration rely on smaller, more autonomous, and decentralized administrative units to achieve legitimate governance and fulfil the social contract between the state and society. Nonetheless, the successive central governments have been extremely slow in implementing the current democratic laws, especially regarding decentralization and transforming the institutional architecture.²⁷

The author explained various aspects of the failure of the new political system in Iraq after the invasion. Moreover, his work was unique and relative to the current events that affected Iraqi governments after 2003. However, he did not elaborate on the factors behind the American policies that eventually led to the current situation.

Similarly, in their work, "Fragile states: Analytically vacuous, politically useful" Maria-Louise Clausen and Peter Albrecht discussed that the vulnerable security situation in Iraq is undermining the social contract and affecting long-term stability. In their article published in 2022, they concluded that the involvement of Western actors is highly political; it affects Iraq's relationship with its neighbors, especially Iran. As a result, it led to a shift from state-building based on stabilization. Further, the strong integration between security and politics makes it more complicated for international support to enhance the capacity of the Iraqi security forces. In other words, Iraq's weak position increased the appetite for large-scale interventions. It's worth mentioning that the authors also indicated that the West had seen the Stabilization in Iraq from a different angle. More specifically, according to their work, the stability limited transformative ambitions. It concentrated on resisting the threat that instability in Iraq supposedly poses to the Western countries or, in other words, Al-Qaida and ISIS. However,

²⁶ Dlawer Ala'Aldeen, "Iraq: A Centralised and Increasingly Fragile State." *Decentralisation in Iraq: Process, Progress and a New Tailor-Made Model*. Middle East Research Institute, (2020): P:8.

²⁷ Ala'Aldeen, "Iraq: A Centralised and Increasingly Fragile State." PP:9-10.

the authors mentioned that those Western countries didn't prioritize controversial normative issues such as the rule of law, democracy, and human rights. Meanwhile, concentrating on internal terrorism led to limited attention to building the Iraqi security forces' ability instead of defending against any potential external enemy.²⁸

Ranj Alaaldin's work, "Fragility and Resilience in Iraq", goes in the same context. The author concluded that the invasion plagued the country with corruption and other issues, such as the Western supporting decentralization, which could still damage the state's authorities and is counter-productive. The article, published in 2017, tackled different aspects of the new Iraqi state. For instance, the author stated that in the 2015–16 school year, the government allocated only 5.7 per cent of its expenditure to education, placing the country at the bottom rank among Middle Eastern states. Moreover, according to many reports, half of Iraq's internally displaced children don't have access to school.²⁹ However, Alaaldin did not spotlight the history of the different political figures in these governments or reveal the corruption cases during the post-invasion years.

In the same direction goes in his research, "Sectarianism in the Iraqi political system and its role in impeding peaceful coexistence," Muhammad Hazem Hamed. The Iraqi author concluded that the American invasion didn't bring "normal democracy" to Iraq. Instead, the new political system is based on the sectarian quota system and "consensual democracy." More specifically, he indicated that the social component becomes a political party, which leads to the weakening of the national identity and the strengthening of sub-identities, reducing the chances of having a peaceful country, peaceful circulation of authority, fighting corruption, and respect for other parties.³⁰

In his research, published in 2020, Hamed did not address the impact of the unipolar system on the American decision to invade but focused mainly on the disastrous repercussions of the American construction of the sectarian political system in Iraq. He explained the impact of this sectarian system on violating the Iraqi people's rights and how it caused the emergence of extremist groups that undermined the stability of Iraq.

²⁸Maria-Louise Clausen, Peter Albrecht, "*Fragile states: Analytically vacuous, politically useful*," DIIS Working Paper, No. 2022:04. (March 2022): 21-22.

²⁹ Ranj Alaaldin, "Fragility and Resilience in Iraq." Istituto Affari Internazionali, (2017) :P.14.

³⁰ Muhammad Hamed, "*Sectarianism in the Iraqi political system and its role in impeding peaceful coexistence*," Kirkuk University. (2020): 170.

Additionally, in his work, published in 2007, "Capitalism, Democracy and the War in Iraq," Erich Weede indicated the elements that could make Iraq more stable after the invasion. According to the author, the U.S. attempted to imply democracy in Iraq to avoid futuristic issues after eliminating Hussein's regime. He mentions that the democratic peace proposition significantly reduces the risk of war between democracies. However, Iraq is still surrounded by autocracies (except for Turkey.) Further, Weede Asserted during his research, which was based on a Marxist approach, that democratic peace is merely one leg of a triad—together with peace by trade and peace by cooperation in intergovernmental organizations. Finally, he concluded that the political economy, economic freedom, and free trade promote growth and prosperity in a country such as Iraq.³¹

The author, who has discussed the important role of democratic regimes, did not elaborate on whether Iraq had a real democracy after the invasion in the first place. Moreover, he assumed that enhancing the economic relations of Iraq could bring stability to the region. He avoided highlighting the possibilities of other factors behind the decades-old turmoil in the Middle East, such as injustice and persecution, alongside the superpowers' foreign policies.

From a different angle, Saadi Ibrahim's work, "Political instability in Iraq after 2003," agreed with other authors' points of view that Iraq has a long history of wars and instability. However, post-2003, the country's main character has become increasingly confused and unstable.

The author's interesting conclusion stated that, before 2003, Iraq used to get the necessary support and attribution from superpowers to maintain its fragile stability. For instance, From WWI till 1958, Britain was the main ally of Iraq whenever it faced huge issues during the period of monarchy in Iraq. Then, Britain was replaced by the Soviet Union, which, although a strong ally, was not as committed as Britain toward Iraq. Ibrahim concluded that after 2003, Iraq became without a genuine partner. In accordance to Ibrahim, although the United States helped the Iraqis a lot in overthrowing the previous regime, it did not attempt to build a successful new authority and left the problems unsolved. The author's work focus on the American lack of support that the U.S. dissolved the Former Iraqi army, opened the Iraqi borders, and turned a blind eye to the activities of extremist groups after the invasion, in addition to the American military withdrew in 2011 before providing solid support. Thus, the country plunged into internal and regional conflicts. As a result, the United States could control the weak country. Ibrahim also addressed in his research, published in 2018, a critical point

³¹ Erich Weede, "Capitalism, Democracy and the War in Iraq," *Global Society*, 21:2. (2007): 226.

that the U.S. didn't hide its intention to repeat the "same experiment" in neighboring countries by establishing a successful model in Iraq. As a result, the surrounding countries, such as Iran, needed to thwart this American experiment before it could be exported to them.³²

Unfortunately, his research did not concentrate on the Iranian role in Iraq. However, this research will discuss the Iranian influence after the American invasion and how Tehran has affected the new Iraqi state's decisions.

1.4 The Arguments

- 1- The occupation of Iraq occurred to confirm the American hegemony globally after the Cold War.
- 2- The American failure to establish a democratic regime in Iraq has exacerbated the waves of terrorism.
- 3- The American invasion paved the way for Iran to expand its influence over Iraq and the region.

1.5 The Importance of Research

Since the beginning of this century, Iraq has been determining the general framework that draws the map of the Middle East. As a result, any alteration in its political system led to a change in the map of the region. For instance, after removing Hussein's regime, the terrorism waves increased in the Middle East and reached their peak in 2014. Meanwhile, the Iranian influence in the region has skyrocketed since 2003. Moreover, Iraq was not a quiet arena during the last five decades. In contrast, wars and sieges that had witnessed due to different internal and external events, such as the Ba'ath Party's control of Iraq, the Islamic revolution in Iran, the collapse of the Soviet Union, thus the American international hegemony, and Saddam Hussein's rash decisions were the main factors for the country's present state.

This study attempts to elaborate on Iraq's new political situation after the change of Hussein's regime. To conclude, how severe was the United States in imposing a democratic system in Iraq after claiming that its primary purpose of the invasion was to protect the world from WMD. Ultimately, the U.S. promised to bring a democratic system to Iraq and the Middle East while ending terrorism. However, these issues remained unresolved during the decades, as terrorist

³² Saadi Ibrahim, "Political instability in Iraq after 2003," *Bölgesel Araştırmalar Dergisi*. (May 2018): 53.

attacks exist today. In a way or another, the fragility of the pillars of the modern Iraqi state has worsened the situation.

Finally, this research will recount the motives of the other competitors to Washington who have influenced the new Iraqi state, such as Iran. This is important in what Iraq represents for the rising Iranian influence in the region.

1.6 Plan of the Book

As a methodology, this thesis relies mainly on qualitative method. It attempts to give a broader explanation of each relation and effect. To understand the research clearly, official documents and agreements are analyzed for each factor that led to the American invasion of Iraq and its ramifications, in addition to journal articles and research centers.

Chapter two will discuss Iraq under Saddam Hussein's regime in light of a unipolar international system. Starting from the economic sanctions on Iraq and their devastating consequences on Baghdad, the Iraqi situation before the year of the invasion. This chapter enables the research to analyze the short history of Iraq before the invasion. In other words, this chapter paves the way for understanding the main events that contributed to what happened in Iraq, which will be discussed later, namely the American invasion, the emergence of terrorist organizations, and the worsening of Iranian influence after eight years of bloody war (1980-88).

The second chapter also draws attention to the effect of American hegemony on the decision to invade Iraq. It will examine the national interests of the U.S. after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This chapter will analyze the impact of American interests on the decision to invade and whether it was linked to the removal of a dictatorial regime in Iraq, as it was announced, or to maintain the status quo after the end of the cold war. Eventually, it will highlight whether the U.S. challenged the international in order to occupy Iraq.

The third chapter touches upon to what extent the new Iraqi political system is a democratic one. It will emphasize the American policies that led to the Sectarian political system in the light of supporting the Al-Maliki government and fighting the Baathism party.

In chapter four, the research will also explain how the U.S. policy of the war on terrorism affected the political situation of the Sunni Arabs in Iraq. Furthermore, this chapter elaborates on how the Sunnis' lack of involvement in the political process fueled the waves of terrorism. Finally, the conclusion of this chapter will explain to what extent the American fight against

terrorism in Iraq was effective, especially when the country turned into a terrorism hub after the invasion and during the civil war.

The fifth chapter explains the Iranian influence on Iraq after the American invasion. Moreover, the scope of analysis focuses on increased cooperation and common interests between Tehran and Iraqi militias whose leaders strongly tie to Tehran. Furthermore, it will stress how the radical Sunni groups forced Tehran and Washington to unite on the Iraqi ground to fight a common enemy, especially ISIS. Finally, this chapter ends with a conclusion that seeks an answer to the question of what extent Iran's influence has reached after 2003 and whether it is invincible.

The final and sixth chapter is the conclusion part. This is the last chapter of the thesis, which combines the addressed points in the previous chapters. In addition, this chapter is the part that combines and concludes the illustrative and analytical aspects of the thesis. The conclusion echoes the analysis throughout the paper and ends with the overall assessment of how the American invasion affected both Washington and Baghdad's situations. In addition to this invasion's role in magnetizing terrorism and Iranian influence in the new Iraqi state.

CHAPTER II

Unipolar International System and the Invasion of Iraq

This chapter will discuss how the unipolar international system affected the United States' decision to occupy Iraq. It will also link all the factors that led to this decision. Principally, this American move has been considered one of the most significant decisions taken by Washington during the current century. But before delving into these details, this research has to address in this chapter some of the fundamental issues that Iraq witnessed before the invasion under the rule of the Baath regime.

2. Iraq Before the American Invasion

Before the American occupation, Iraq was groaning under the weight of the repercussions of two wars it fought under the leadership of the Baath Party. Namely, the first was against Iran in 1980-88, and the second was in August 1990 against Kuwait. In addition, the second war had catastrophic repercussions due to the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq for 13 years until 2003, or the overthrow of Hussein's regime. The coming section will shed light on the economic sanctions in order to understand the country's status before the occupation decision. After the Cold War and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the United States had to use military power for the first time in the region for long decades. This move raised many questions, including whether protecting Saudi Arabia for its oil is better, or even Israel, which didn't follow the United Nations' orders. Nevertheless, Bush was the victim of the Israeli lobbies in Washington. Saddam Hussein tried to link his withdrawal from Kuwait and Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank in Palestine.³³ George H W Bush also indicated that he did not want to get rid of Saddam because of the burden of taking responsibility for such a country as Iraq. Moreover, he elaborated that Iraq is plagued with regional and ethnic issues Iraq—namely, the Shiite, Sunni, and Kurds sects. Meanwhile, the American empire at that time was out of control; its president did not follow a clear doctrine.³⁴

2.1.1 The Economic Sanctions on Iraq

Due to the decisions of Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, especially the decision to occupy Kuwait, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) imposed sanctions against Iraq,

³³ Nigel Hamilton, *American Caesars: Lives of the Presidents from Franklin D. Roosevelt to George W. Bush*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 384.

³⁴ Hamilton, "American Caesars," P: 389

a comprehensive financial and trade embargo. These sanctions were on August 6, 1990, four days after Iraq invaded Kuwait, and lasted until May 22, 2003.³⁵ The purposes of the sanction were to pay reparations and to eliminate any WMD.³⁶

When the United States and its allies initiated a military operation named “Desert Storm.” Principally, this operation ended with a ceasefire resolution in 1991, President George H. W. Bush launched a military strike targeting Iraq in 1993 “in response to continued provocation by Baghdad,” with the participation of France and Britain in the raids.³⁷ More specifically, the cruise missile attacks targeted the Iraqi intelligence headquarters in Baghdad after an assassination attempt on Former U.S. President George H. W. Bush in Kuwait.³⁸

This section will spotlight the American point of view regarding the economic sanctions against Iraq. In their book, “My year in Iraq: the struggle to build a future of hope,” Paul Bremer and McConnell Malcolm tackled the purpose of sanctions. They concluded that the goal was to prevent Saddam Hussein from using oil sales to rebuild his military or to obtain WMD after the 1991 Gulf War, as oil revenues represented 98% of Iraq’s income.³⁹

In the same vein, Lee Feinstein, a senior State Department official during the Clinton administration, stated:

*"We had a hostile Congress that would have leaped down our throats had we drastically loosened the sanctions," he said. "We had the French at the U.N. pushing for outright lifting sanctions. And we had Saddam Hussein, who was a real threat."*⁴⁰

Moreover, James Rubin, the Former State Department spokesman who rejected the notion that sanctions had terrible human costs, stated:

"For those who cannot countenance the use of military force, sanctions will always be an option," Rubin said. "Those who believe, as many of America's critics in the world do, that war is no longer a legitimate means in the modern world except in self-defense or with U.N. Security

³⁵ "Resolution 1483 - UN Security Council - Global Policy Forum". Globalpolicy.org. Retrieved 1 June 2011.

³⁶ "U.N. council brings Iraq closer to end of 1990s sanctions". Reuters. 2013.

³⁷ Åkermark, “Storms,” P:229

³⁸ Åkermark, “Storms,” P:230

³⁹ Paul Bremer, and Malcolm McConnell, *My year in Iraq: the struggle to build a future of hope* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2006), P.41

⁴⁰ David Rieff. “Were Sanctions Right?” *The New York Times*, 2003.

Council authorization will have to turn to sanctions as the ultimate method of coercion in international relations."⁴¹

Furthermore, the Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright described in 1996 in a television interview that the deaths of almost half a million Iraqi children caused by sanctions were "A very hard choice, but we think the price is worth it", she stated. Even though Albright regretted her comment two decades later when she left her position.⁴² Albright declared, "No one has done what Saddam Hussein has done or is thinking of doing. He is producing weapons of mass destruction and is qualitatively and quantitatively different from other dictators." But, she added, "I'm really surprised that people feel they need to defend the rights of Saddam Hussein."⁴³

In 1997, Former American President Bill Clinton declared, "The sanctions will be there until the end of time or as long as Hussein lasts."⁴⁴ Moreover, according to Clinton, the Iraqi children were without medicine or food because Hussein deliberately decided to let them die to build up pressure in order to lift the embargo so he could spend that money however he wanted. Moreover, he added Hussein did not desire to spend that money on his people but utilized that money to become the military dictator of the Middle East.⁴⁵ In 2000, Clinton stated:

"If any child is without food or medicine or a roof over his or her head in Iraq, it's because Hussein is claiming the sanctions are doing it and sticking it to his own children. We have worked like crazy to make sure that the embargo only applies to his ability to reconstitute his weapon system and his military statement. This is a guy who butchered the children of his own country, who were Kurds, who were Shi'ites."

These American policies faced strong denial from the United Nations' officials. For instance, Denis J. Halliday, the UN humanitarian coordinator in Iraq for part of the sanction's era 1998, said: "We are destroying an entire society. It is as simple and terrifying as that."⁴⁶ Due to the catastrophic results of the sanction, Halliday, a thirty-four-year UN veteran, resigned in 1998 in protest after spending more than one year as the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq. He described the sanctions as constituted genocide. Subsequently, his successor, Hans von

⁴¹ David Rieff. "Were Sanctions Right?" *The New York Times*, 2003.

⁴² David Rieff. "Were Sanctions Right?"

⁴³ "When Iraq Was Clinton's War", *Jacobin magazine*, 2016.

⁴⁴ "When Iraq Was Clinton's War", *Jacobin magazine*, 2016.

⁴⁵ "Bill Clinton on Sanctions Against Iraq", *global policy forum*. 2000.

⁴⁶ David Rieff. "Were Sanctions Right?" *The New York Times*, 2003.

Sponeck, a career UN employee, lasted solely two years before stepping down in protest. Later, the World Food Program head Jutta Burghardt took the same decision.⁴⁷

During an interview in 2000 in “Democracy Now”, Clinton denied answering the reasons behind the resignation of dissenting UN officials. Instead, he held that Hussein had the money to feed the Iraqi children.⁴⁸

2.1.2 The Sanctions Consequences

Some scholars deduced that when Hussein decided to invade Kuwait in August 1990, Washington took a clear decision to remove his regime. Concluding that was the moment when American support of the Iraqi exiled opposition “Shia figures” throughout the 1990s, building ground for the new Iraqi government after Hussein’s regime change.⁴⁹ In accordance to British biographer Nigel Hamilton, in February 1991, the United States and its allies launched the desert operation. More than 540 thousand soldiers were enough to defeat the Iraqi Army. However, Bush didn't want to eliminate Saddam through a military process. The Former American president believed that the Iraqi anger would eventually do this mission as the military intervention would raise Arab anger toward the U.S.⁵⁰ But to what extent were these extremely tough sanctions effective in eliminating Hussein?

Iraq used to have a thriving agricultural, health, and educational system; however, the oil-rich country has been unable to school its children or provide health care to sick people due to the international sanctions imposed. The embargo was a war by other means. It banned not only weapons of battle but technologies civilian uses — such as pencils, which the sanctions regime said could be fashioned into bullets.⁵¹

The effects of the sanctions were catastrophic. According to a Lancet study sponsored by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, 576,000 children under five perished. The study, 1995, concluded that the reasons for the death were related to the shortages of food, medicine, and clean drinking water linked to the sanctions.⁵²

⁴⁷ “When Iraq Was Clinton’s War”, Jacobin magazine, 2016.

⁴⁸ “Exclusive Interview with President Bill Clinton”, Democracy Now, 2000

⁴⁹ Toby Dodge, Renad Mansour, “*Sectarianization and desectarianization in the struggle for Iraq’s political field*,” The Review of Faith paper International Affairs, 18, 1. (2020): 60.

⁵⁰ Hamilton, “American Caesars,” P: 385.

⁵¹ JUDITH S. YAPHE, “*Iraq Before and After Saddam*.” Middle East Institute, Vol. 58, No. 2 (2004): 7.

⁵² Child mortality in Iraq, The lancet, 1997

Probability of children dying by age for preceding 5 years before the survey		
Age-group	1995	1996
Neonatal (0 to <1 month)	0·135	0·019
Post neonatal (1 to <12 months)	0·054	0·015
Infant (0 to <12 months)	0·182	0·033
Child (12 to <60 months)	0·029	0·055
Child (0 to <60 months)	0·206	0·038

Table 2.1 Neonatal Probability of Death

According to the lancet, Neonatal probability of death=neonatal deaths/total live births. All other probabilities were calculated from deaths divided by person-years and converted to life-table possibilities.

The question is whether these cruel sanctions were effective on Hussein’s regime, which had ruled the country for over three decades. Principally, the Baath regime had governed through wars, abortive coups, revolutions, and UN-imposed sanctions. Hussein survived by reflecting the tribal characteristics of manliness, honor, and loyalty to family, clan, and tribe in the political arena. In other words, although Saddam Hussein did not have a clear policy, he acted based on instinct and will. Hussein’s philosophy was wrapped around a mix of Arabist and nationalist themes. Moreover, the Former Iraqi president made the close member of his family and the city of “Tikrit” hold important positions in the country.⁵³

Further, the UN “Oil-for-Food” program allowed Hussein to decide which domestic and international firms could get contracts in Iraq. As a result, he increased his domination of the Iraqi economy and enabled him to reward loyalty even though there were highly harsh sanctions.⁵⁴

⁵³ Yaphe, “Iraq before,” P:8.

⁵⁴ Perito, “Establishing the Rule,” P.3.

According to the Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, American President George W. Bush and Vice president Dick Cheney thought the diplomatic efforts to force Saddam to commit to the International Security Council failed. Moreover, all of the economic sanctions did not achieve the required goals.⁵⁵

Rumsfeld added that in 1998, the vast majority of congress supported the decision to change Hussein's regime by sending a message to the Clinton administration. However, there were American concerns about the Iraqi military power, namely, developing WMD. Moreover, from Rumsfeld's point of view, the United Nations was supporting Hussein with billions of dollars through the oil for food program. In addition, the U.S. was overburdened by Iraq's attempts to shoot down U.S. planes in 2001-02. Above all that, the American allies in the Middle East criticized Washington's inconclusive policies regarding Iraq.⁵⁶

In accordance to George Bush, after 11 years of containment, sanctions, inspections, and even selected military action, Hussein still had chemical and biological weapons and was increasing his capabilities to make more. And he was moving ever closer to developing a nuclear weapon. He also alleged that during the economic sanctions, Iraq spent billions of dollars through illegal oil revenues to fund more weapons purchases rather than provide for the population's needs.⁵⁷

In addition, the Clinton-era policy made the 2003 invasion of Iraq possible. In other words, George Bush dramatically escalated the no-fly zone strikes in the months before the “shock and awe” campaign paved the way to the war in 2003. Further, Clinton and Bush supported their actions by asserting the theory of Iraq’s alleged WMD and the need to topple Saddam at all costs.⁵⁸

In 2002, after a year of holding power as President, Bush stated:

“Iraq possesses ballistic missiles with a likely range of hundreds of miles; far enough to strike Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey and other nations in a region where more than 135,000 American civilians and service members live and work. We know that Iraq and Al-Qaida have had high-level contacts that go back a decade. If the Iraqi regime is able to produce, buy or steal an amount of highly enriched uranium a little larger than a single softball, he could have a nuclear weapon in less than a year.

⁵⁵ Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), P:65.

⁵⁶ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 71

⁵⁷ “Transcript: George Bush's speech on Iraq”, *The Guardian*, 2002.

⁵⁸ “When Iraq Was Clinton’s War”, *Jacobin magazine*, 2016.

And if we allow that to happen, a terrible line would be crossed. Saddam Hussein would be in a position to blackmail anyone who opposes his aggression. He would be in a position to dominate the Middle East. He would be in a position to threaten America. And Saddam Hussein would be in a position to pass nuclear technology to terrorists. And there's a reason. We have experienced the horror of September 11. Our enemies would be no less willing, in fact they would be eager, to use biological or chemical or a nuclear weapon. The lives of Iraqi citizens would improve dramatically if Saddam Hussein were no longer in power, just as the lives of Afghanistan's citizens improved after the Taliban. America believes that all people are entitled to hope and human rights, to the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity.”⁵⁹

2.1.3 Iraq’s Ties to Al-Qaida & Weapons of Mass Destructions Allegations

The major American declared reason behind the invasion of Iraq was its relationship with Al-Qaeda and its possession of WMD. This section will attempt to review the most prominent statements of some officials regarding that.

It is worth mentioning that before the actual invasion, the U.S. and its allies launched several raids against Iraq in the 1990s regarding the claims of WMD. According to John Kerry, in December 1998, Former President Clinton ordered the launch of attacks against Iraq to force Saddam Hussein to allow the return of the WMD inspectors. However, the Republican Party found the timing of that move suspicious.⁶⁰

Despite that suspicion, later, during the first two years of the Republican President Bush era, US Secretary of State Colin Powell warned Bush of the American withdrawal from the Middle East. He elaborated that could give the green light to Israel to attack the Palestinians. However, Bush stated that "showing power from one side could clarify the matters." later, the Former U.S. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice met to discuss finding another way to impose democracy in the Middle East by changing the regime of Saddam Hussein and invading Iraq.⁶¹ However, the justification for launching a war was needed; it would be easier if the U.S. found that Hussein was developing WMD. Eventually, Bush insisted on sending inspectors from the UN to search for those alleged weapons. Despite his doubts, Hussein agreed. However, Bush didn't surrender and agreed to an order from Cheney's office to make the CIA falsely accuse Saddam. More specifically, the accusation was based on a lie saying that one of

⁵⁹ “Transcript: George Bush's speech on Iraq”, The Guardian, 2002.

⁶⁰ John Kerry, *Every Day Is Extra* (Simon & Schuster, 2020), 279

⁶¹ Hamilton, “American Caesars,” P:677

Hussein's agents attempted to buy concentrated natural uranium from Nigeria to initiate a secret weapon for Saddam. Moreover, the CIA noted that Hussein sponsored a plot against America alongside Al-Qaida.⁶²

In accordance to the Washington Post investigating reporter Bob Woodward, the next move after invading Afghanistan in 2001 was invading Iraq. However, Bush didn't want to cause international concern about why the U.S. would attack Iraq at that time. Moreover, according to Powell, Iraq did not represent any threat because it did not have ties with Al-Qaida, neither have any chemical or biological weapons before the American invasion.⁶³

However, from Rumsfeld's point of view, Al-Qaida sought to consolidate its relationship with Saddam to obtain WMD. Some American reports claimed that Iraq trained Al-Qaida members to use chemical weapons. Moreover, Hussein, who was involved in atrocities against his people, provided Al-Qaida leaders such as Abu Nidal a haven in Iraq. Hussein's actions represented a real challenge to America as other regimes would follow his step to challenge the United Nations.⁶⁴

Moreover, Rumsfeld referred that the intelligence services of many countries, such as the UK, Australia, Spain, Italy, and Poland, considered Hussein a real threat due to his WMD. Moreover, Former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak warned Washington about the possibility of Iraqi using biochemical weapons against the American troops.⁶⁵

In Feb 2003, during his speech at the U.N. Security Council, Former Secretary of State Collin Paul showed some Satellite photos from the CIA, claiming that they proved the involvement of Iraq in making WMD. Even though "some" of this information weren't Accurate, according to Rumsfeld. Later, Paul confessed that some American intelligence members knew their sources regarding Iraq weren't good or even reliable.⁶⁶

In Jan 2002, Bush used an abnormal speech when he connected Iraq, Iran and North Korea in the same category. The Former president indicated the necessity of changing all of these regimes after the decline of the priority of Afghanistan and Al-Qaida. Later, his administration started collecting arguments against Hussein, who represented a challenge since the invasion of Kuwait. According to Kerry, Hussein was the man of the miscalculations as he had a long

⁶² Hamilton, "American Caesars," P: 694

⁶³ Hamilton, "American Caesars," P: 689

⁶⁴ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 76

⁶⁵ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 91

⁶⁶ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 109

war against Iran which affected the Iraqi economy harshly, and he used internationally prohibited weapons against his people alongside the invasion of Kuwait.⁶⁷

Finally, according to Kerry, Hussein refused to deal with the inspectors even though the Bush administration only wanted to communicate with Saddam through those inspectors. In the Pentagon, there were some “pieces of evidence” and maps showing that Hussein wanted to develop WMD. However, the sources were suspicious such as Ahmed Al-Jalabi, who was an exiled opponent of Saddam. There were voices in Washington indicating that George Bush, the father wanted to adjust the road after Clinton held power. The American politicians were trying to receive the support of the United Nations. On the other side, the Congress was divided. However, Joe Biden and other senators attempted to collect the required votes to enable Bush to launch this war against Iraq, which Kerry later considered a crucial lesson to many American political figures.⁶⁸

Additionally, Kerry said that the Former United States Secretary of State Colin Powell delivered a shameful speech at the United Nations regarding Iraq’s WMD.⁶⁹ Furthermore, in the presidential political debate in 2004, even though both Kerry and Bush agreed on one point, the danger of possessing nuclear weapons to terrorists, Kerry attacked the Former president because of deciding on the war. He stated, *"Osama bin Laden attacked us, Hussein didn't. Further, your whole campaign of the war was based on the weapons of mass deception."* He also mentioned that the war against Iraq weakened the American army by spreading it unnecessarily in different places and increased American debts.⁷⁰ In addition, he declared that many American figures knew that Bush’s Administration would launch this war either way. So, this war was based on a lie, and Kerry admitted in his book that he would regret voting for the decision to fight for the rest of his life.⁷¹

On a different aspect, despite all evidence that Al-Qaida, responsible for bombing the USS Cole on October 12, 2000, in the Yemeni port of Aden, causing the death of 17 American sailors, will attack again. However, the reports of the Former White House Deputy Chief of Staff Karl warned of similar attacks that would happen against American interests didn’t reach Bush.⁷²

⁶⁷ Kerry, “Every Day,” P: 291

⁶⁸ Kerry, “Every Day,” P: 292

⁶⁹ Kerry, “Every Day,” P: 596

⁷⁰ Kerry, “Every Day,” P: 365

⁷¹ Kerry, “Every Day,” P: 294

⁷² Hamilton, “American Caesars,” P: 681

After 11th September, Cheney and Rumsfeld met to discuss the Iraqi case instead of fighting real terrorism and Al-Qaida. Moreover, Cheney encouraged Bush to employ these attacks to launch an all-out war. He wanted to make Bush the leader of the American empire war.⁷³ Moreover, both Former United States Secretary of State Colin Powell and Former White House counterterrorism coordinator Richard Clarke could not fight against the Bush administration's obsession with Iraq regardless of the non-existent evidence that Hussein's regime had any ties with Al-Qaida.⁷⁴

In January 2001, eight months before the 11 September attacks, US Treasury Secretary Paul Henry O'Neill met with the U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and US Vice President Dick Cheney. O'Neill revealed that Rumsfeld and Cheney were discussing invading Iraq during this meeting. Later, O'Neill was fired in December 2002 for his public disagreement with the administration. In July 2005, the American committee's report regarding 11 September asserted that there were no links between Saddam and Al-Qaida before the events.

Moreover, one week after 11 September, the Former US National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice also received a report denying the involvement of Iraq in these attacks.⁷⁵ Later, when the war in Iraq turned into chaos, Bush could not guarantee his winning of the election only through deception, mystery and cover-up. His administration agreed to prepare an independent report regarding the 11th September events only after the presidential elections in 2004. Further, with each step Bush allowed or deliberately ignored, didn't only his assistants misuse their power, but he also was deposed as a leader. At that point, the United States lost control, especially when the scandals of Abu-Gharib and Guantanamo appeared to the public, and the whole image of the U.S. was shattered.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, according to Kerry, President Bush didn't unify the divided American nation, and most of the characters he nominated were from the extreme right party.⁷⁷

⁷³ Hamilton, "American Caesars," P: 685

⁷⁴ Hamilton, "American Caesars," P: 682

⁷⁵ Hamilton, "American Caesars," P: 705

⁷⁶ Hamilton, "American Caesars," P: 699

⁷⁷ Kerry, "Every Day," P: 286

2.2 Saddam Hussein and the American Hegemony

The term hegemony has become shorthand to refer to a large of work that seeks to understand the government and the public. However, each different theory has a diverse definition of it. A Marxist scholar, Antonio Gramsci (1970), argued that ruling elites could exercise noncoercive dominance through symbols communicated through cultural institutions such as the mass media to deliver a specific message. Moreover, many scholars argue that this hegemony allows elites to perpetuate the political, economic, and social status quo inside their country and even worldwide.⁷⁸

Regardless of the unipolar power's benefits to the U.S. and its hegemony after the cold war, some scholars predicted that states engaged in security competition with the unipolar allies and those for whom the status quo otherwise has lesser value would not accommodate the unipolar. On the contrary, these minor powers will become recalcitrant despite U.S. power preponderance, displaying the limited pacifying effects of U.S. power. At least in the security realm—unipolarity does not give the unipolar more significant influence over international outcomes. Moreover, the scholars indicated that the world would still be unipolar by most measures and considerations, but many countries could protect themselves, perhaps even against the superpower.⁷⁹

Washington didn't wish to lose its hegemony post-Cold War era when the U.S. did not want to compete for power and influence with other state or non-state actors. In accordance to the hegemonic stability theory, the hegemon or leader country sets a game to have stability and international order in the international system. After 1945, the U.S. constructed an international order with total hegemonic control over other nations within the global system. It projected itself as a model for undemocratic countries. Moreover, some cultures are not intelligent according to management in government, schools, and job environments. Cultural intelligence refers to a person's ability to communicate effectively with people of different cultures, and the relationship between cultural intelligence and performance management is essential.⁸⁰

After the Second World War, the value of oil as an energy alternative to coal emerged. The Arab Gulf, the world's largest proven oil reserves, became the center of attention of the two major powers, the Soviet Union and the United States. Since the 1950s, the U.S. has always

⁷⁸ Brian A. Patrick, Trevor A. Thrall, "Beyond Hegemony: Classical Propaganda Theory and Presidential Communication Strategy After the Invasion of Iraq," *Mass Communication and Society*, (2007): P.97.

⁷⁹ Nuno P. Monteiro; "Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity Is Not Peaceful," *International Security* 2012; P.39

⁸⁰ Ipek Danju, Yasar Danju, and Nahide Maasoglu. "The Reasons Behind U.S. Invasion of Iraq", 2013, P: 685.

been on the Arab Gulf's side against all threats as it represents strategic importance to American interests.⁸¹

Under Former American President Richard Nixon's era (1969-1974), the foreign American policy in the Gulf circled, balancing power between Tehran and Riyadh. The Iranian Shah was Nixon's favorite ally due to his efforts to Westernize Iran. However, the overthrow of the Shah and the embargo imposed on Iran after the Islamic Revolution 1979, which removed Iran as a source of oil, increased the importance of Arabic Gulf states. Moreover, before the Iranian revolution, the Middle East had witnessed a critical event that affected the oil supplies and created difficulties for Western countries. More specifically, in the Yom-Kippur War of 1973 between Egypt, Syria, and Israel, the Arab Gulf countries posed an oil embargo on the Western countries. Later, Former Saudi King Fahd threatened to shut down production if Israel did not retreat from Lebanon in 1982. Still, the Arab Gulf states have never shifted alliance.⁸²

Eventually, the protection of the Gulf was embodied in the Carter doctrine, announced by President Jimmy Carter in his State of the Union Address in 1980. It stated that oil was strategically crucial to the U.S. and that it would use military force, if necessary, to defend its national interests in the Arab Gulf states, which received American political and military support. Moreover, Washington kept the Arab Gulf countries in its camp in order to contain the Soviet Union.⁸³

During the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the United States, the largest global economy and oil consumer, followed clear and definite policies in the region to secure the oil supplies from the Gulf. More specifically, As the Arabic Gulf states are the largest oil producer and reserves, Washington attempted to minimize the risks that could affect those states by defeating the Iraqi invading army in order to keep the status quo. Additionally, Washington aimed to show the rest of the world that it would not tolerate any military challenge in the region.⁸⁴

According to many scholars, Hussein posed a great danger to American hegemony from an economic point of view, not a military one. From a Marxist point of view, the American invasion of Iraq was affiliated with the nature of capitalist hunger for new markets, open markets and a new trend of global corporate capitalism and Iraqi oil only. However, in accordance to the Neorealism theory, the international system is anarchic. Therefore,

⁸¹ Dania Koleilat Khatib, "US-Arab Gulf Relations amidst Regional and Global Changes," *The International Spectator*, 52:2, (2017): 101

⁸² Khatib, "US-Arab Gulf," PP: 102-103.

⁸³ Khatib, "US-Arab Gulf," PP:102-103.

⁸⁴ Hasan Johar, Gawdat Bahgat, "Oil and democracy: The American dilemma in the Persian Gulf region," *Comparative Strategy*, 14:2, ((1995): 182.

Washington would be able to prevent future threats that may come from Iraq by overthrowing the Hussein Baathist regime at any cost.⁸⁵

Some scholars concluded that the American goal for the invasion was creating a free trade zone in Iraq to boost the profitability of US companies by increasing Iraq's oil-producing capabilities.⁸⁶ It's worth mentioning that, in the last decades, no one directly threatened the dollar's status, only Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. In 2000, He dared to adopt the euro and give up the dollar for Iraq's oil during the severe sanctions. However, The White House declared that it made no difference to the United States which currency Iraq used. More specifically, in 2000, National Security Council spokesman P.J. Crowle stated: *"I don't think it matters whether Iraq takes euros for oil rather than dollars."* He asserted, *"What's important is that the oil-for-food program continues. So, we'll continue to support the oil-for-food program, but as to the specific currency, I don't think it matters."* Crowley added. *"The fact is that whether it's in euros or dollars, we have control of Hussein's pocketbook so that we make sure that the revenue from the oil-for-food program is used for food and medicine and not for tanks."*⁸⁷

After Iraq, which exported 3.2 million barrels per day, had threatened Washington to stop selling its oil from November 2000 if it faced objections regarding selling its crude in euros, the US Energy Department said the Clinton administration was ready to respond to such an Iraqi move. A spokesman for the ministry indicated that the United States is prepared to respond to any severe oil cuts, including the interruption of Iraqi oil exports to the United States.⁸⁸

In accordance to Nigel Hamilton, Washington attempted to emphasize its hegemony and overcome setbacks she had faced after the collapse of the U.S.S.R. For instance, in September 1993, the U.S. was humiliated in Somalia when the naked dead bodies of American soldiers were dragged in Mogadishu streets. This accident affected the American image badly all over the world.⁸⁹ Later, the U.S. faced a difficult situation in Europe with Serbia. In the summer of 1995, Clinton led NATO to attack the Serbs, forcing them to stop their attacks against the Bosnians. Subsequently, in 1997 the Former American president widened NATO to include other countries such as Czech, Hungary, and Poland. In 1998, Clinton sent more troops to the

⁸⁵ Danju, Danju, Maasoglu. "The reasons," P.689.

⁸⁶ Shipley, "Currency Wars," P.7.

⁸⁷ America Underestimates the Importance of Paying the price of Iraq's Oil in Euros, Albayan Newspaper, 2000.

⁸⁸ America Underestimates, Albayan Newspaper, 2000.

⁸⁹ Hamilton, "American Caesars," P. 617

Gulf area to threaten Hussein. The goal was clear, delivering a message that the U.S. had been the most powerful country in the globe since the collapse of the Soviet Union and could reach any country on any continent.⁹⁰

Challenging the American hegemony was difficult, especially after the cold war. So even though George H. W. Bush didn't have the rhetorical ability, he preferred to emphasize the American hegemony after the collapse of the U.S.S.R.⁹¹ According to Rumsfeld, American decisions determine the shape of the world. Therefore, if Washington stumbled, the whole world would fall as the U.S. would channel its resources to tackle any issue.⁹²

However, in accordance to Hamilton, when Bush later held power in 2001, Former Vice President Dick Cheney controlled the white house. Cheney insisted on making his team check the essential documents before they arrived at Bush's office. Conversely, Bush did not read lengthy documents, contrary to the vice president. Therefore, Cheney felt that Bush lacked information and was illiterate. He respected the President, but he did what he had considered suitable. Ironically, Bush's team feared Cheney because they knew how powerful he was.⁹³ But overall, Cheney wanted to increase the American imperial power to satisfy its needs. Therefore, he attempted to access the required oil reserves, eliminate the enemies' weapons, and maintain American military superiority.⁹⁴ Furthermore, Cheney indicated that he was concerned that taking revenge on Bin Ladin would take a long time. However, invading an Islamic country such as Iraq would prove to the world the real power of American imperialism, even though Colin Powell insisted that there were no ties between Bin Ladin and Iraq.⁹⁵

2.3 U.S. challenging International System?

Before diving into invading Iraq and the American hegemony's role in getting rid of Hussein, this research must look from an American perspective to this course. After 1991, the Former President George H.W. Bush did not receive full support from the other allied countries, so he did not want to change the Iraqi regime. However, other countries, such as Britain, didn't want to leave the work unfinished. In accordance to Rumsfeld, the Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Margaret Thatcher, warned Bush of being indecisive after the Iraqi invasion

⁹⁰ Hamilton, "American Caesars," P: 625

⁹¹ Hamilton, "American Caesars," P. P:573

⁹² Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 443

⁹³ Hamilton, "American Caesars," P: 678

⁹⁴ Hamilton, "American Caesars," P: 680

⁹⁵ Hamilton, "American Caesars," P: 686

of Kuwait.⁹⁶ Moreover, Rumsfeld claimed that both France and Germany, which representing the old NATO powers, gave the wrong impression to Hussein that they could prevent any American war against Iraq through their decisions in the U.N.⁹⁷ Additionally, in accordance to Rumsfeld, the Arabic leaders considered Hussein a threat; they wanted to see Iraq with a different ruler. However, some were not ready to show public support for the American invasion. Furthermore, those leaders wanted the U.S. to eliminate Hussein as fast as possible, as this move could arouse the anger of the Arab street against them, one way or another.⁹⁸

From a diplomatic preceptive, Rumsfeld attempted to justify his country's position on non-compliance with the UN Security Council resolution during the invasion of Iraq. From his point of view, George Bush Jr. administration critics claimed that the Former president acted on his own even though around 50 countries supported the U.S., 30 countries directly, and the rest made their support more discreet.⁹⁹ Moreover, Rumsfeld indicated that this was not the first time his country launched a war without the international council's approval. Furthermore, he added that France's hesitation regarding this war was related to generous earnings from the oil industries in Iraq. He also described the United Nations as having reached the lowest level of decadence when Libya was elected to chair the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 2002. Therefore, according to Rumsfeld, it was not in his country's interest to follow in the footsteps of the League of Nations when it allowed Fascist Italy to invade Ethiopia in 1939.¹⁰⁰

In accordance to many scholars, both Bush Jr. and Hussein were the responsible actors for any action. This is because American leaders prioritized the power of the U.S. in international society and maintained global hegemony. Still, on the other hand, Saddam was responsible for his Baathist party's undemocratic regime in Iraq, a spectacle that led to the invasion.¹⁰¹

Additionally, other scholars have indicated that two factors drove the invasion. The first is a desire to "avenge 9/11", and the second is to perpetuate American global hegemony in the fantasy world where America is forever the "sole remaining superpower". This latter factor is tied up with securing Republican Party electoral success in 2002 and 2004 and an "entrenched economy of defense appropriations". This action revealed that Bush could channel adequate

⁹⁶ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P:67.

⁹⁷ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 102

⁹⁸ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 110

⁹⁹ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 104

¹⁰⁰ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 99

¹⁰¹ Danju, Danju, Maasoglu. "The reasons," P. 684.

energy latent in the USA's aggressive, masculinist, militaristic (geo)political culture.¹⁰² It is worth mentioning that, during the Clinton era, the American economy had enhanced. However, the American people wanted a more stable president name not involved in many scandals. Clinton's personal life and sexual scandals paved the way for a more straightforward republic president and represented Christian values in one way or another, George bush.¹⁰³ However, even though Bush's team kept him from the press, hiding his lack of intelligence and care regarding the daily hot issues wasn't easy. But overall, he wanted to take the decision regardless of the results.¹⁰⁴ Even though his decision to invasion could have consequences for the international system. In other words, the member states of the Security Council could avoid any condemning resolutions and impose any alternative conditions upon other States.¹⁰⁵

However, according to Rumsfeld, Iraq without Saddam is way better than being ruled by the Baath regime. Both Saddam and the Iranian government could attempt to possess WMD. Therefore, many countries in the region, including; Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, would also involve in the same race to own those weapons. He stated that the UN sanctions against Iraq failed. Therefore, Washington had to send a bold message to any other country that would challenge it by supporting terrorism and developing weapons. In addition to making the region more stable, Iraq can play a better role against the aggressive Iranian agenda.¹⁰⁶

Furthermore, the American invasion sent a message to threaten any challenging power after the September 11 events. However, Afghanistan was not enough; as Rumsfeld put it on the evening of 9/11, "*We need to bomb something else to prove that we're, you know, big and strong and not going to be pushed around by these kinds of attacks.*"¹⁰⁷ Moreover, Afghanistan was a "fair" war in response to the Taliban's provision of sanctuary to Al-Qaeda's leadership. Rumsfeld considered restricting retaliation to Afghanistan dangerously "limited" and "narrow" and could be perceived as a sign of weakness. They knew that sending a message of unbridled hegemony entailed a disproportionate response to 9/11, which had to extend beyond Afghanistan. On the other hand, Iraq fit the bill because it was more potent than Afghanistan and had been in neoconservative crosshairs since the invasion of Kuwait and the international sanctions. Moreover, Saddam's regime remaining rebellious despite a military defeat was

¹⁰² Megoran, "Militarism, Realism," P. 487

¹⁰³ Hamilton, "American Caesars," P: 657

¹⁰⁴ Hamilton, "American Caesars," P: 675

¹⁰⁵ Åkermark, "Storms," P:235

¹⁰⁶ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 433

¹⁰⁷ Ahsan I Butt, "Why did Bush go to war in Iraq?", Al-Jazeera, 2019

barely tolerable before the September events. Moreover, a senior administration official in Bush's administration concluded that the "*War against Iraq is not just about Iraq; rather, it was of a type, including Iran, Syria, and North Korea.*"¹⁰⁸

In a memo issued on September 30, 2001, Rumsfeld advised Bush that "*Washington should foresee a goal along these lines: New regimes in Afghanistan and another key country or two that supports terrorism to strengthen political and military efforts to change policies elsewhere*". As for then-Vice President Dick Cheney, one close adviser revealed that his thinking behind the war was to show: "*We are able and willing to strike at someone. That sends a compelling message.*"¹⁰⁹

What is surprising is Rumsfeld's confession regarding human rights and democracy that the U.S. is above all considerations if it is related to its interests. This research will discuss in the next chapter the democracy regarding Iraq in detail. Still, from a dominant country perspective, Rumsfeld declared that he practiced pressure on the Belgium government to repeal the law of pursuing those of NATO's forces who were involved in any violations or war crimes regarding the Iraq invasion. Furthermore, He mentioned that he had threatened to change the headquarters of NATO to another country. Moreover, he also threatened to cancel American support to Belgium. Therefore, Brussel had no choice but to abolish that law.¹¹⁰

Moreover, Secret Japanese documents revealed that Tokyo was subjected to American "blackmail" during the eighties and nineties of the last century, which forced it to get involved in Iraq until the invasion in 2003. More specifically, the documents, which were declassified after the legal period had passed in Dec 2022, and issued by the Japanese Foreign Ministry, revealed that the United States, after one of its ships in the Gulf was hit by Iraq, pressured the Japanese government and exercised "political and diplomatic blackmail" against it. The U.S. forced the Japanese government to choose from four options. It was, firstly, bearing half of the financial expenses for the presence of American forces in the Gulf, estimated at one hundred million dollars annually. Secondly, taking the financial burdens for the maintenance of American battleships. Thirdly, raising the proportion of the costs of supporting American camps in the Gulf. Or finally, sending Japanese troops to Iraq by placing them in Samawah

¹⁰⁸ I Butt, "Why did Bush go" Al-Jazeera.

¹⁰⁹ I Butt, "Why did Bush go" Al-Jazeera.

¹¹⁰ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 289

city, 280 km southeast of Baghdad. Eventually, Japan decided to involve its military in the invasion in 2003.¹¹¹

2.4 Analyzing the Factors that Led to the American Decision to Invade Iraq

Saddam Hussein was a crucial actor in Iraq and acted as he saw fit for his rule. From his point of view, the wars he waged against Iran and Kuwait and even the violations he committed against his opponents were all in the interest of reinforcing his rule under an undemocratic regime. Meanwhile, Saddam, who decided to convert oil sales into euros instead of dollars, indirectly challenged U.S. hegemony. Simultaneously, other countries in hostility with Washington, such as Iran, could have taken this approach.

On the other hand, George W. Bush, who imposed unprecedented sanctions on Iraq and expelled the Iraqi forces that occupied Kuwait, was dealing with Iraq from the point of view of military and economic strength to confirm the dominance of his country, which reached its peak after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Moreover, Clinton continued to impose deadly international sanctions on Baghdad under the pretext of Iraq's development of WMD regardless of the humanitarian cost. Clinton bombed Iraq when it had begun to move in the opposite direction to Washington's interest, but overall, the U.S. remained dominant in the international arena.

As for Bush Jr., who unorthodoxly came to power and brought a political team from the far right, his reign was a focal point in the events that shaped the United States and Iraq in the coming decades. More specifically, September 11 events were a central point in the transformation that accompanied the era of Bush Jr., when his administration used it as a pretext to occupy two Muslim countries, Afghanistan and Iraq. Political circles may understand the occupation of Afghanistan because it contains Al-Qaeda. As for Iraq, which was proven not to be linked to Al-Qaeda or to develop WMD, it raised many questions. To clarify, many scholars linked the Bush administration's attempts to hide investigations to disavow Iraq of involvement with Al-Qaeda or the development of WMD, proving that Washington created a false pretext to occupy the country to perpetuate American global domination.

In addition, removing Saddam from power may also be linked to securing the success of the Republican Party, which assumes that force is the most potent deterrent to any enemy, in the

¹¹¹ "Secret documents: Washington put Japan among 4 options that "forced" it to participate in the invasion of Iraq," Baghdad today agency, 2022.

2002 and 2004 elections. In summary, the United States leaders prioritized their country's strength in the international community and maintained global hegemony through different tools, including the military card. Washington also attempted to obtain the support of other countries. Eventually, 50 countries aided Washington by participating in the war on Iraq, despite not getting the approval of the United Nations to launch this war. Moreover, the U.S. practiced pressure on countries such as Japan and Belgium, to receive the required support for its invasion of Iraq. This scene emphasizes American dominance in one way or another.



CHAPTER III

Democratizing Iraq Under a Sectarian Political System

This part of the thesis will tackle an essential aspect of the American invasion, fighting terrorism, ending dictatorship, and bringing democracy to Iraq. The Bush administration claimed that the war aimed to eliminate Hussein's regime to get rid of his WMD. However, although Washington did not find those weapons, it relied on two other factors to justify its invasion. Namely, Iraq's ties with Al-Qaida and terrorism, alongside bringing democracy to a Middle Eastern country plagued with decades of wars, dictatorship, injustices, etc. Therefore, this research will spotlight and compare the official American statements to reality. Additionally, it will also discuss the new Iraqi political system, the American procedures to fight terrorism and its consequences on Iraq and whether it is effective or not.

3.1 Iraq's Division Before 2003

Before tackling Iraq's new political system, to what extent it brought democracy and freedom, and how the American policies toward terrorism were effective, this research paper will briefly mention in this section the country's division before 2003. It is widely known that Baghdad was the capital of the Arab-Islamic empire during the Golden Age of the Abbasids. The city was the capital of the world's culture, science, literature, medicine, mathematics, and philosophy. All the fields flourished from the eighth to the thirteenth century in Baghdad.¹¹² However, Iraq had been divided for decades before the American invasion. More specifically, Iraqi Kurds wanted federalism, which they define Kurdistan region as voluntary self-rule within a federal state. The Kurds are represented in the opposition by the traditional two main parties- the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of Masoud Barzani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) of Jalal Talabani claimed Kirkuk City as their capital. Even though Kirkuk is located outside the scope of the Kurdish authority, most of its population is represented by Arabs and Turkmen. Moreover, Kirkuk has oilfields and economic value, so it could be a hot spot for tension between the Shiites and Kurds after the invasion. Some scholars indicated that if the Kurds aim to declare their state later, they must control this oil-rich city.¹¹³ Additionally, the division in Iraqi society is not limited to the different ethnicities but extends to include each Iraqi sect, such as Shia. More specifically, the Shiite community is not a homogeneous group. To clarify, Shiites are divided into three categories; secular city types, rural, tribal, and religious

¹¹² Yaphe, "Iraq before," P.3.

¹¹³ Yaphe, "Iraq before," P:11.

elements, in addition to the clerics in the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala and the Kazimiyah section of Baghdad with a veneer of Persian culture and history of religious clerical scholarship and political dissent. Indicating that those Shiites living in rural areas and the south tend to be more religious-oriented and tribal than their counterparts in urban areas of Iraq. Ultimately, it's worth mentioning that within the Shiite mosques, there were extensive networks linked to exiles in Iran and other places before 2003.¹¹⁴ This thesis mentioned the Shiite and Kurds sects in the section because the Americans made them more robust policies after the invasion. However, from the American perspective, the Sunnis were already affiliated with the Baath regime in one way or another. Hence, enhancing their power was not an interest of Washington, regardless of its consequences, as it will be discussed in this research.

3.2 The New Iraqi Political System

In his book, published in 2006, three years after the invasion, Bremer stated:

*“Today, Iraq is united, not by forced loyalty to a tyrant, but by a shared vision of freedom for every single Iraqi—man or woman, Arab, Turkman or Kurd, Sunni or Shia, Christian or Muslim...”*¹¹⁵

However, many scholars, such as Christopher Doran, indicated that Washington ensured a new Iraqi political system based on ethnic and religious patterns to establish new lines under the “Arab vs Kurd” and “Sunni vs Shia” categories.¹¹⁶

In this section, the research paper will examine the American announced goals, including bringing democracy to Iraq through its new political system. Before diving in, it is worth mentioning that throughout Iraqi history, there was a competition between state-based Nationalism, Arab Nationalism, Islamism, and sectarianism. However, post-2003, according to many scholars, the dominant category of ruling practice has been the sectarian division.¹¹⁷ But what is Sectarianism?

Sectarianism is a process that sees sectarian entrepreneurs or politicians seeking to force religious variation as the fundamental marker of modern political identity. In other words, it aims to settle the internal coherence of the religious groups and the lines that split groups from each other. After 2005, Iraqi politicians moved from a sectarian vision to “post-sectarianism,”

¹¹⁴ Yaphe, “Iraq before,” P:11

¹¹⁵ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.409

¹¹⁶ Doran, “Making the world,” 161.

¹¹⁷ Dodge, Mansour, “Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization,” P:59.

where there was mobilization intended to move sectarian division from “hot issues of conflict to banal.”¹¹⁸

In the coming sections, this thesis will highlight the various factors and the American policies that have affected Iraq's political and economic systems after 2003.

3.2.1 Iraq’s Economic Transformation

The economic change in Iraq was one of the cruel turning points that followed the American invasion. According to scholars, transforming the Iraqi economy from a nationalist to a liberal phase was one of the main goals of Washington. From the Bush administration’s point of view, the U.N. sanctions should be lifted after 2003, and the private sectors should play a significant role. In other terms, Washington’s strategic objective was to open Iraq’s economy to the outside.¹¹⁹

In accordance to Bremer, the United States had inherited a structural crisis in Iraq. Principally, the country was under the Baathist command economy, with state monopolies controlling the distribution of fuels and subsidized prices kept artificially very low.¹²⁰ Principally, Bremer had directed 2003 a multibillion-dollar reconstruction campaign that restored many public facilities, such as electrical grids and telephone lines, that had been stripped bare by looting that engulfed the country after the Hussein government collapsed.¹²¹

In January 2004, Bremer and his team replaced the Iraqi currency with Hussein's face with a new one with date palms.¹²² Moreover, he had also listed what he called America's achievements, such as deploying 40,000 police officers on the streets, 13,000 new reconstruction projects, more electricity generated now than before the war, reconstruction of 1,500 schools renovated, 22 million vaccinations, and 4,900 Internet connections. Furthermore, the "freedom of speech" didn't exist under Hussein's regime, and finally, putting an end to torture.¹²³ However, Bremer mentioned that there were visible changes. For example, as the borders are open, shops are flooded with goods pouring into Iraq. Furthermore, tens of

¹¹⁸ Dodge, Mansour, “Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization,” P:59.

¹¹⁹ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” PP:88-89

¹²⁰ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.40

¹²¹ Filkinsp, “Bremer Pushes.”

¹²² Filkinsp, “Bremer Pushes.”

¹²³ Ian Fisher, “THE STRUGGLE FOR IRAQ: SIX MONTHS; Iraq Math: Visible Gains Minus Losses,” *The New York Times*, Oct 10, 2003.

thousands were working for the Americans, directly or indirectly, and they got way better wages.¹²⁴

Additionally, USAID has awarded the Research Triangle Institute through non-competitive bidding of more than \$513 million to develop and enhance the capabilities of the new government institution in Iraq. According to researchers, this was the most significant instance of the United States' foreign development assistance since the Marshall Plan to gain a "new agent government" in the region.¹²⁵ Eventually, the American invasion enabled Iraq to enter a neoliberal phase, which could only be done by military means.¹²⁶

Even though violence was the main issue in Iraq, Bremer indicated that there is a need to play down its significance. He mentioned that 90% of the attacks occurred in only 5% of Iraq. They were ignoring the psychological impact of the violence felt throughout the country.¹²⁷ Even if Bremer played down the significance of the violence, he admitted that rebuilding Iraq had turned out to be far greater than expected due to 4 decades of neglect under Hussein. Requesting Congress approve a total of \$20 billion for reconstructing infrastructure services and building a new Iraqi army.¹²⁸ The U.S. asserted that raising the standard of living and convincing Iraqis, maybe even some of those fighters could reduce the violence level in the country.¹²⁹ However, after six months of the invasion, the explosions and the violence underscored the limits of the vast American effort there, illustrating how the steady ongoing violence and uncertainty overshadow American progress.¹³⁰ Democrats criticized Bremer for their decision to send billions of dollars in cash into Iraq quickly after the occupation. They suggested that some of that money may have financially supported the insurgency.¹³¹

At the same time, many Iraqis complained about the deterioration of daily living due to the lack of job opportunities and the frequent cuts of essential services such as electricity and water. According to an UN-backed study, 4 million of Iraq's 26 million people lived in extreme poverty in 2006.¹³² However, the United States has benefited from the role of the military contractors in Iraq after 2003. In other words, the private army sector played a significant role

¹²⁴ Fisher, "THE STRUGGLE FOR IRAQ."

¹²⁵ Kathem Mehiyar, "New imperialism in Iraq: how the US occupation helped establish but then cannibalised the Sadr City district council," *Peacebuilding*, 8:3. (June 2019): 5-7. DOI: 10.1080/21647259.2019.1621074.

¹²⁶ Mehiyar "New imperialism in Iraq," P.2.

¹²⁷ Fisher, "THE STRUGGLE FOR IRAQ."

¹²⁸ Fisher, "THE STRUGGLE FOR IRAQ."

¹²⁹ Fisher, "THE STRUGGLE FOR IRAQ."

¹³⁰ Fisher, "THE STRUGGLE FOR IRAQ."

¹³¹ Helene Cooper, "Blame (Blank) for Iraq," *The New York Times*, Feb 11, 2007.

¹³² "The Iraqi parliament approves the formation of the national unity government," DW Arabic, 2006.

in earning billions of dollars. Thus, it also affected the American policymakers in Iraq. Nevertheless, the private sector wasn't fully controllable; as a result, it also hurt the American position in Iraq.¹³³

But overall, the United States transformed Iraq's economy from nationalization "under the full control of the Iraqi state" to another open to the penetration of global capital under American hegemony.¹³⁴ Finally, Washington ensured that Iraqi oil was invested using the euphemistically entitled production sharing agreements (PSA) between Iraq and Western oil transnationals. These agreements will place effective control over the oil production of Iraq by them.¹³⁵

3.2.2 De-Baathification

After the invasion, the first American political step was dismantling the Iraqi army. The first order of the Coalition Provisional Authority, the "De-Baathification" of Iraqi Society. This order was signed on May 23, 2003, and issued based on many factors from an American point of view. According to Bremer, Firstly, the United States wanted to show that it was serious about building a new country. Secondly, Hussein's instruments of repression have no role in the nation. Thirdly, this bold step was intended to ensure that the new representative Iraqi government was not threatened by Baathists returning to power.¹³⁶ Washington wanted to build new Iraqi forces unconnected to Hussein's regime in order to withdraw the American troops as quickly as possible.

Later, Rumsfeld confessed that dissolving the Iraqi army was a wrong decision and said that he had asked Bremer to recall some Iraqi military units but refused. Bremer justified his decision by claiming the Iraqis did not want to interact with any form of the previous Baathists.¹³⁷

In accordance to Rumsfeld, even though Bremer felt that he was blamed for deciding to dissolve the Iraqi army, but many of the American figures were responsible for it. Moreover, Bush wanted to give Bremer as much independence as possible in his decisions regarding Iraq. Nevertheless, Rumsfeld indicated that this decision also had some advantages for the new

¹³³ Christopher Spearin, "American hegemony incorporated: the importance and implications of military contractors in Iraq," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 24:3, (January 2007): 42, DOI: 10.1080/1352326032000247136.

¹³⁴ Doug Stokes, "The War Gamble: Understanding US Interests in Iraq," Routledge, 6:1. (2009): 110.

¹³⁵ Stokes, "The War Gamble," 111.

¹³⁶ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.53

¹³⁷ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 191

army, which became Iraq's most influential organization. However, on the other side of the coin, the police lacked experience and training and were plagued with corruption and sectarianism.¹³⁸

Even though Rumsfeld said that dissolving the Iraqi army did not happen due to his will, he indicated that leaving that army as it is could have a negative impact in the long run. More specifically, he referred that the former Iraqi army was used to prosecute the Kurdish and Shiite Iraqis even though they represented most of the population.¹³⁹

From Rumsfeld's point of view, the American parties accepted Bremer's decision to de-Baathism. However, he confessed that millions of Iraqis were already members of the Baath party due to the long decades of Hussein's rule, even though they did not believe in its values. Nevertheless, this policy of de-Baathism was used by the Shiite member Ahmed Al-Jalabi to get revenge on other people. As a result, many innocent people were killed.¹⁴⁰

3.2.3 The Consequences of De-Baathification

Many scholars believe Washington wanted to destroy the Iraqi Baath system after 2003 by firing 120,000 government workers throughout the Iraqi ministries.¹⁴¹ More specifically, this decision has been the primary key to the deterioration of the security scene on various levels. Furthermore, the consequences of “De-Baathification” have affected Iraq and the entire regional scene for around two decades. Principally, the U.S. suddenly made around 400,000 Iraqi soldiers unemployed yet still armed. Creating a vast pool of humiliated, oppressed, and politicized men.¹⁴² However, the politicians in Washington thought the Iraqi forces could replace the American troops by the spring of 2004 or a year after the invasion. So, they attempted to convince themselves that the not-well-trained Iraqi forces were equal to the American army.¹⁴³

Furthermore, the catastrophic repercussions of the “de-Baathification” decision did not include the army only but also affected the educational sector tremendously. More specifically, the educational system in Iraq was severely affected by the de-Baathification process, which

¹³⁸ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 192

¹³⁹ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 189

¹⁴⁰ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 186

¹⁴¹ Doran, “Making the world safe for capitalism,” p.141.

¹⁴² Timothy Lynch, *In the shadow of the cold war: American Foreign Policy from George Bush Sr.to Donald Trump* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 132-133.

¹⁴³ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.163

involved more than 1,700 university professors and staff who were fired, along with several thousand primary and secondary school teachers. Eventually, it has affected the students as well for the coming years.¹⁴⁴

After Bremer's decision to disarm the Iraqi Army, the armed groups in the country were divided into five strong groups. First of all, Baathist supporters of Saddam Hussein, including his previous Army and intelligence officers, whose ideology is a variant of Pan-Arabism. Secondly, Iraqi nationalists, a group of Iraqis who believed in Iraqi self-determination, rejected the presence of the American forces and took arms against them. Thirdly, Sunni Islamists, Wahhabi / Salafi, or the "jihadists." This group was against any non-Muslim groups and advocated a return to a strict understanding of Islam. They also attacked Shia Muslims, whom they considered apostates. Fourthly, the foreign Islamist volunteers linked to al Qaeda were primarily driven by the Wahhabi/ Salafi ideology. They move from countries such as Syria and Saudi Arabia to fight in Iraq. Finally, the Shi'a militias linked to Iran, such as Badr Organization and the Mahdi Army, are ideologically influenced and armed by Tehran. Ironically, The Badr Organization was formed by the Iranian Government to fight against Iraqi forces during the Iranian- Iraqi war 1980-88. Following 2003, they moved from Iran to Iraq, but this time to fight alongside the US-led forces against other insurgents. It is worth mentioning that these Shia militias supported the Al-Maliki governments from 2006-14. Conversely, Al-Mahdi Army, "Shiite militia," was created by Muqtada Al-Sadr. They were the first severe Shia opposition to the American-led coalition, and they were trained by Iran and fought against the occupying forces for around five years.¹⁴⁵ After the bloodshed between Al-Sadr's Militia and the American troops, Muqtada announced a "cease-fire" against Coalition forces in 2005. Meanwhile, Washington also received credible reports that Muqtada had attempted to rally Iraqis against the Sunni terrorists.¹⁴⁶

Terrorist tactics are portrayed as requiring less personnel than guerilla or conventional warfare, with a significant focus on targeting non-combatants. However, insurgencies often depended on terrorist actions early in their formation due to minimal requirements for extended support.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.72

¹⁴⁵ Lily Hamourtziadou. "Fault Lines to Trenches: Iraq 2003–2014," Journal of Global Faultlines, Vol. 2, no. 1. (April 2014):103.

¹⁴⁶ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.401

¹⁴⁷ Marcia Hartwell, Lieutenant Barkley, "Terrorism, the US Army perspective in Iraq," Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression. Routledge. Vol. 3, No. 2. (September 2011): 152, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2010.512154>.

Moreover, the insurgency in Iraq had taken different forms. For example, fighting against the occupying forces, the Iraqi government, as well as a fight against another faction. However, sometimes they fought even against former members of the same section. For instance, the Sunnis sided with American forces in 2008 during the “Sunni Awakening” against Al-Qaeda.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, after the American withdrawal in December 2011, a renewed wave of antigovernment and sectarian insurgency swept Iraq because of the potential Iranian support to the militias, as will be discussed later.

3.2.4 The Sectarian Division

Before the American invasion, according to Bremer, the CIA had been connected to the Iraqi exiles, "primarily Shiite," for several months. Principally, those exiles were dissidents living abroad, men who had opposed Saddam Hussein's regime for long years.¹⁴⁹ However, Saddam's opponents are divided by leadership competition and tactics disagreements. In addition to that, the exiles disagreed about who should personally lead.¹⁵⁰

In December 2002, the Iraqi Leadership Council (ILC) was created in London by selecting from the exiles who were against Hussein's regime. Principally, ILC included 5 Shiites, 2 Kurds, and only one Sunni to represent the new stage of Iraq. Subsequently, Bremer established the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), which was the provisional government of Iraq from 13 July 2003 to 1 June 2004.¹⁵¹ The leadership council that ran the country through quotas was mainly based on a “virtual census.” This council has divided Iraq into ethno-sectarian terms, assuming that Iraqi Shi'a Arabs represent 55 % of the population, Sunni Arabs 22%, and Kurds 19%.¹⁵²

Bremer indicated that he had wanted to consider the exiled parties as peripheral because they didn't represent the whole of Iraqi society. Nevertheless, as the violent opposition to the occupation increased, Washington had at least to turn to an Iraqi body with them, if not dividend authority. More specifically, the United States and the Coalition Provisional Authority spent six weeks selecting a 25-person Governing Council membership. Ultimately, this council chose the ministers who would run the first post-regime change government. However, a clear sectarianization of Iraq's political system was represented by how Governing Council was chosen. As a clear example of symbolic violence, Bremer stressed that the

¹⁴⁸ Hamourtziadou. “Fault Lines to Trenches,” P.102

¹⁴⁹ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.55

¹⁵⁰ Yaphe, “Iraq before,” P.11

¹⁵¹ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.59

¹⁵² Dodge, Mansour, “Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization,” P:61.

Governing Council membership, 13 Shi'a, 5 Kurds, 5 Sunnis, 1 Turkmen, and 1 Assyrian on 13 July 2003.¹⁵³

Later, after three months of cooperating with members of the representative Constitutional Convention, Bremer mentioned that they were split along sectarian and ethnic lines. He also had indicated that they wanted more authority but lacked enough knowledge to utilize it. In conjunction with the American insistence and pressure to turn over sovereignty as soon as possible, Bremer pointed out that he had attempted to find more Sunnis to join the “provisional government” to write the constitution. However, according to him, finding a responsible Sunni leader was difficult because Saddam mostly had either co-opted or killed them.¹⁵⁴ Also, Bremer indicated that he had faced a problem with the Shia Islamist parties due to their insistence on Islam being “the” basis of all law. To rephrase, they wanted the Shiite Islamic “Sharia” to be the primary constitution of Iraq. Meanwhile, the Sunni, the Kurdish, and all the secular Shiites found this request a threat.¹⁵⁵

When it came to forming the new government, the only real competitors to the Shiites were the Kurdish, who had a long history of cooperation with the Americans. Since 1991, the Iraqi Kurds had been protected by coalition airpower from Saddam Hussein; they used to have a quasi-independence. However, after a de facto military alliance with the U.S., the Kurds formed their Regional Government with their parliament and cabinet. Moreover, Washington was willing to support the Kurdish demand for federalism after 2003. However, the United States wanted to achieve that only in a unified Iraq. In addition, Bush's administration also wanted to create a central government exercising authority over key Iraqi national issues such as foreign policy, defense, and natural resources.¹⁵⁶

In return for not separating from Iraq, the Kurds called an urgent political confab at which the two Kurdish parties would pass a resolution. Demanding either the presidency or premiership.¹⁵⁷ The Kurds also made a deal with Bremer about the divisions of other ministries.¹⁵⁸ Eventually, the Kurds supported the latest Shia tendency towards Islam, leaving

¹⁵³ Dodge, Mansour, “Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization,” P:61.

¹⁵⁴ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.202

¹⁵⁵ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.304

¹⁵⁶ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” Pp.282-289.

¹⁵⁷ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” p.375.

¹⁵⁸ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.387

the Sunnis isolated. According to Bremer, it was hard to rechallenge the Al-Sistani's vision, a point certainly not calculated to make it easier for the Sunnis to come aboard.¹⁵⁹

Furthermore, Bremer also expressed concerns about Shiite revenge on Sunnis due to historical conflicts. Mainly, the roots of these conflicts had happened more than a thousand years ago when the Sunni ruled the land. As a result, Bremer mentioned that he insisted on the importance of guaranteeing rights in the new constitution an essential reassurance for the Sunnis.¹⁶⁰ But how was this system created in the first place? Why has it lasted after the invasion until now?

3.3 Factors Behind the Sectarian Political System

Apart from the American announcement that the majority of the Iraqi population is Shiite at around 60%, the Sunni are 20%, and the Kurds are about 20%, different sources indicate that the Sunni percentage is about 53% and the Shiite are around 40%.¹⁶¹ But overall, why would a democratic country have a sectarian government based on its sect, whatever the results of the votes are? In other words, why did Washington mainly focus on the Shiites as the ruling majority to create the new Iraqi government and the constitution?

Four factors pushed Washington to take that decision in a country plagued with sectarian crises for centuries.

3.3.1 Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani

The Shiite cleric, an Iranian–Iraqi Twelver Shia Ayatollah and Marjahad, refused to speak directly with Bremer and other US officials. He also pushed for direct elections, a step that administration officials asserted would be logistically difficult to achieve by June 30, 2005. As the Ayatollah could mobilize massive demonstrations against the American-backed plan, he left the administration scrambling two months after it settled on the approach after negotiations with the Iraqi Governing Council.¹⁶²

However, to overcome this issue, Bremer emphasized that he had communicated with Al-Sistani through private channels even though the Shiite cleric declared he would not meet with anyone from the Coalition. As Al-Sistani couldn't be publicly seen cooperating with the

¹⁵⁹ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.311

¹⁶⁰ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.240

¹⁶¹ Abu Owais Al-Baghdadi, "The full truth about the numbers of the population of Iraq, Sunnis and Shiites." *Al Bayan Magazine*, Jun 26, 2013.

¹⁶² Richard W. Stevenson, "THE STRUGGLE FOR IRAQ: INTERIM GOVERNMENT; U.S. Willing to Alter Steps to Iraqi Self-Rule, Bremer Says," *The New York Times*, Jan 17, 2004.

occupying powers, Bremer indicated that he had not insisted on a personal meeting. There were “Shades of 1920” when the Shiites did not cooperate with the British after WWI. Eventually, the Sunnis held power in Iraq under the British invasion. Therefore, Al-Sistani had to cooperate with U.S. and protect his flanks from other Shiite leaders, such as Muqtada Al-Sadr. Moreover, Bremer also mentioned that the United States and Ayatollah had shared the same goals throughout the Coalition’s time in Iraq.¹⁶³

One of the clearest examples of the corporation between Washington and Al-Sistani was when he informed Bremer that Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad wanted him to issue a "fatwa" against the Coalition. Principally, this fatwa's aim for calling a jihad against the Coalition is similar to what had the previous Shia leaders done against the British forces in 1920. More specifically, the Shia leaders incited the revolution that broke out against the British occupation after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Bremer indicated that If Al-Sistani approved the Syrian president's request, the Coalition would have faced a bloody two-front uprising from Sunni and Shiite Iraqi groups.¹⁶⁴

In addition, Bremer promised Al-Sistani through their private channels that the interim constitution would respect the Islamic identity of most Iraqis. In other words, the new form will favor Shiites to get Al-Sistani's approval.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, the Shiite clerics wanted to manipulate the Shia majority to the detriment of other ethnic elements and sectarian Iraqi society.¹⁶⁶ Later, Bremer formed a new government with a new constitution indicated before he left Iraq. At the same time, Ayatollah Al-Sistani informed him that he was “pleased” with the outcome in the holy cities, the new Iraqi government and the prime minister. Finally, Al-Sistani expressed his hopes to continue his connections and talks with Bremer.¹⁶⁷

Despite Bremer’s team being assured that the ultimate goal of Ayatollah Al-Sistani for Iraq was not an Iranian-style mullah-ruled theocracy, they were concerned about such a course in Washington.¹⁶⁸

According to many scholars, Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani and the formerly exiled parties, alongside the role of the United Nations, all played a significant role in solidifying the sectarianization of Iraq in the first Iraqi elections in 2005. To clarify, Al-Sistani urged the CPA

¹⁶³ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.179

¹⁶⁴ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.212

¹⁶⁵ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.257

¹⁶⁶ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.96

¹⁶⁷ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.395

¹⁶⁸ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.179

to pass rapidly toward the polls. He also arranged a single coalition of Shi'a parties to maximize the community's influence in parliament. Therefore, the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) was created, demanding three orders. Firstly, maintain voting discipline within the coalition. Secondly, he asserted maintaining the "Islamic character" of people. Finally, he didn't support any legislation that could be considered against the Sharia.¹⁶⁹

3.3.2 Exiles Instead of the “Evil Powers”

From the Former Minister of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's point of view, the political vacuum attracted the attention of different “evil powers” After the invasion, such as Al-Qaida, Wahabi groups, extremist Shiites, and communists. Therefore, the American choice went to the exiled Iraqi opposition, “mainly Shiite,” for two reasons. Firstly, Washington wanted to ensure legitimacy in the country, especially in the eyes of other regional states. Secondly, the Bush Administration attempted to ensure that none of the “evil powers” or the wrong parties could fulfil the place of Hussein.¹⁷⁰

Furthermore, in order to avoid the need for “evil groups” and maintain control over the exiles to apply the American aim of the invasion, Bremer informed Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, who was exiled to Iran, that the Shiite leaders should avoid another tragedy by making the same mistake of the 1920.¹⁷¹

However, many researchers concluded that the American focus on Shiite and bringing the exiles to Iraq, based in London, Paris, and Amman, was dangerous as none had been in Iraq for more than two decades.¹⁷² More specifically, the United States should be prepared for the chances that Iraq could face a long period of chaos after removing Hussein's regime and bringing bloodshed to the country, as not all categories of the society are represented similarly.

¹⁷³

Furthermore, some expatriates were dangerous and secretly entered the political system to enhance their influence after the invasion. For instance, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, an elected member of the parliament in 2005, had to flee to Tehran after CNN exposed his dark history. To clarify, he was a member of the Dawah cell that perpetrated the Kuwaiti embassy bombing in 1983. Consequently, Al-Muhandis rose through the ranks, and he worked with both the Quds

¹⁶⁹ Dodge, Mansour, “Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization,” P:61.

¹⁷⁰ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 150

¹⁷¹ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.57

¹⁷² Yaphe, “Iraq before,” P:10

¹⁷³ Yaphe, “Iraq before,” P:12

Force and Ayatollah Baqir al-Hakim to challenge Saddam's regime. Moreover, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) changed its name to the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI). However, although the aim of this move seems to endorse Ayatollah Al-Sistani in 2007, it did not change its deep ties with Iran and SCIRI/Badr.¹⁷⁴ It is worth mentioning that the U.S., during the Trump administration, assassinated Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis alongside the Iranian general Qasim Sulaymani by targeting them through a drone strike at Baghdad International Airport on 3 January 2020.¹⁷⁵

3.3.3 The Lack of Planning and the Shortage of Time

The United States was unsure what cooperation to get from the United Nations as Annan withdrew his staff from Iraq. But primarily, there was a bomb attack that targeted the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad and killed 22 people, including the head of mission, Sergio Vieira de Mello, on August 19, 2003. In other words, security remains a significant concern.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, U.N. Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi and the CPA started with different views on the composition of the new government of Iraq. As Brahimi preferred nonpolitical engineers and financial and industrial experts, he didn't want the new government to include "politicians." Principally, Brahimi intended to change all the ministers in the existing Iraqi government and exclude members of the Governing Council from the cabinet.¹⁷⁷ In light of the spread of financial corruption, the Iraqi National Congress had been involved in financial crime. To clarify, the personal secretary to the minister of finance had illegally recycled millions of dollars' worth of old currency turned in for destruction. He also allegedly solicited kickbacks from other employees.¹⁷⁸

In addition to that, according to Bremer, despite the blurry atmosphere, some politicians in Washington were leaning toward handing sovereignty to an appointed government with no constitution in April 2004, regardless of the consequence of this step.¹⁷⁹

Moreover, the Pentagon demanded the Iraqi exiles hold power after the invasion. Meanwhile, according to Rumsfeld, the CIA and Former United States Secretary of State Colin Powell did not fully support his opinion. However, Rumsfeld indicated insufficient time to find highly

¹⁷⁴ Felter, Fishman, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq," 24-25.

¹⁷⁵ "Qasem Soleimani: US kills top Iranian general in Baghdad air strike," *BBC*, January 3, 2020.

¹⁷⁶ Stevenson, "THE STRUGGLE FOR IRAQ."

¹⁷⁷ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.361

¹⁷⁸ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.376

¹⁷⁹ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.231

qualified political characters. At the same time, Dick Cheney warned about delivering Iraq to “the government of chance”; otherwise, there would be a need for a long invasion.¹⁸⁰

Furthermore, the most dangerous factor was despite the recognition of their incompetence in managing the new state of Iraq, Bremer promised the governing council members to give them a role in the next government. However, Bremer also justified his promises due to the lack of time and difficulty getting Al-Sistani’s approval; in light of the terrorist attacks, the Shiite militias spread, especially Jaysh al-Mahdi Militia, connected to Muqtada Al-Sadr. Meanwhile, there was an intense American tendency to withdraw the American forces as soon as possible.¹⁸¹

3.3.4 The Division of the American Vision of Iraq

Almost as soon as the U.S. military had toppled Baghdad, the Bush administration faced three different forms of pressure. Firstly, establishing a safe environment after removing Hussein's regime. Secondly, the failure to find any weapons of mass destruction. Thirdly, facing public concerns over the American army casualties in the war in Iraq.¹⁸²

In accordance to Bremer, inside the American political corridors, there was a rivalry between the CIA and Pentagon’s intelligence units for the American military forces in Iraq. As the Pentagon wanted to withdraw the American troops quickly, even if this would create unhealthy pressures on the new Iraqi security force, it had turned into a sore subject in Washington.¹⁸³ For instance, the previous American Secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld visited Baghdad in September 2003 to assess the options to reduce American troops in the newly occupied country. Putting heavy pressure on the military to find a rationale to achieve that goal. However, from Bremer’s point of view, if Washington reduced its forces in Iraq, it could face an "untidy century."¹⁸⁴

On the other side, the former minister of defense confessed to a division inside the Bush administration regarding Iraq. According to Rumsfeld, there were different approaches between the Pentagon and the U.S. Secretary during Colin Powell’s era in light of the lack of planning after the war in 2003 between the different agencies.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 157

¹⁸¹ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.246

¹⁸² Patrick & Thrall, “Beyond Hegemony,” P.99.

¹⁸³ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.170

¹⁸⁴ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.202

¹⁸⁵ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 153

Firstly, Rumsfeld mentioned that many officials indicated that choosing "Bremer" in the first place to be the American ruler in Iraq was a massive victory for the State department over the Pentagon and Rumsfeld himself. However, this dispute between the two ministries triggered Bush's anger, who said it must stop.¹⁸⁶

Secondly, Rumsfeld also pointed out that as Bremer directly connected with Bush, he assumed that he could apply a different approach in Iraq. Thus, these other leading wheels led to a blurry vision due to the clash of various American parties, which harmed Iraq somehow.¹⁸⁷

Finally, Rumsfeld also said that he urged Bremer to concentrate on creating projects in the Sunni cities and reinforce his relations with the tribes there just like Saddam Hussein did. However, Bremer refused to follow his advice as he did not believe the concept of Iraq belongs to Iraqis and they have their own culture and institutions.¹⁸⁸ This marginalization of the Sunnis alongside the de-Baathification will turn Iraq into a terrorism hub later, as this research will discuss in the coming sections.

3.4 A Shaky Start - Elections Amid a Sharp Sunni Boycott

In October 2004, the interim Iraqi government officially took power from the American occupation. It took the constitutional oath in a ceremony where Former Iraqi President Ghazi al-Yawar called for Iraqi unity.¹⁸⁹ Senior Iraqi officials, including President Al-Yawar and the interim government's head, Iyad Allawi (June 28, 2004 - April 6, 2005), attended the power transition. They officially received a document ending the occupation from the U.S. governor in Iraq.¹⁹⁰

On the 29th of June 2005, one day before the elections, Former American President George Bush stated:

“Congratulations to the Iraqi people on the great strides made in the past year toward freedom and democracy in Iraq. The United States is a committed partner in this endeavor, and it is my honor to propose the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Iraq

¹⁸⁶ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 172

¹⁸⁷ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 176

¹⁸⁸ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 213

¹⁸⁹ “The interim government takes over and Bremer leaves Iraq,” *Aljazeera*, Oct 3, 2004.

¹⁹⁰ “The interim government,” *Aljazeera*.

with permanent missions, effective immediately upon the assumption of sovereign authority by the Interim Iraqi Government."¹⁹¹

The international community and the Arab world widely welcomed the announcement of the power transfer to the interim Iraqi government. United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan also welcomed the transfer of power to the Iraqis and Iraq's return to the "family of sovereign nations."¹⁹² However, mixed feelings overwhelmed the Iraqi people regarding the American occupation. Mainly, the U.S. has made Iraq better than under Hussein's regime, except for Sunni. However, the American promises haven't been fully delivered.¹⁹³

With a total voter turnout of 58%, this process specified that the sectarianization of the electorate had been successful. However, many Iraqi Sunnis boycotted the elections averaging less than 10 per cent due to the presence of the occupation authority.¹⁹⁴ Iraq has witnessed lengthy negotiations between the ruling parties after each national election to create governments since 2005.¹⁹⁵

In accordance to the High Elections Commission in Iraq, the list of the United Iraqi Alliance, backed by the Shiite authority, Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, won a slim majority of the seats in the new Parliament. When the election results were ratified, the Shiite coalition continued complex negotiations to choose its candidate for the position of prime minister in the new government among the leading contenders. Namely, the head of the Islamic Dawa Party, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, and the leader of the National Congress, Ahmed Chalabi.¹⁹⁶ A source in the coalition confirmed that 96 members of the list met without agreeing on who will take the position, noting that the winner must receive 66% of the votes.¹⁹⁷

After the elections, representatives of 35 Iraqi groups representing Sunni, Shiite and secular currents decided to form a joint operations room to demand the international community abolish the results of the recent legislative elections and hold new elections.¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, tens of thousands of Iraqis went out in mass demonstrations after Friday prayers in Baghdad,

¹⁹¹ TRANSITION IN IRAQ; Parting Words from Bremer, Acceptance from Allawi and Congratulations from Bush." *The New York Times*, June 29, 2004.

¹⁹² "The interim government," *Aljazeera*.

¹⁹³ Fisher, "THE STRUGGLE FOR IRAQ."

¹⁹⁴ Dodge, Mansour, "Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization," P:62.

¹⁹⁵ Dodge, Mansour, "Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization," P:58.

¹⁹⁶ "The Iraqi Electoral Commission approves the final results," *Aljazeera*, Feb 17, 2005.

¹⁹⁷ "The Iraqi Electoral," *Aljazeera*.

¹⁹⁸ "Protests escalate over Iraqi election results," *Aljazeera*, Dec 24, 2005.

Mosul, Tikrit, and Samarra in protest against the results of the elections and the victory of the “United Iraqi Alliance.”¹⁹⁹

Adnan al-Dulaimi, a prominent member of the Iraqi Accord Front, stated in a speech to the protesters, "They wanted to use these false results to say that the Sunnis are a minority in this country." Additionally, the Secretary-General of the Islamic Party, Tariq al-Hashemi, refused to talk with the United Coalition until complaints of fraud in the elections were treated.²⁰⁰

On the other hand, the interim Iraqi President Jalal Talabani "Kurdish" announced his intention to form a national government that includes all segments of the Iraqi people.²⁰¹ Meanwhile, the Iranian ambassador to Britain, Muhammad Hussein Adli, revealed that his country cooperated closely with the United States to make the recent elections in Iraq successful. Stressing that Tehran is ready to work again with Washington to ensure stability in the Middle East when their interests converge.²⁰²

Even Bremer reminded his respondents that he did not create the catastrophe that befell Iraq after the invasion. However, he was only asked to clean it.²⁰³

Later, it was announced that the US governor, Paul Bremer, had left Iraq on a military plane. Subsequent, it was declared that the new US ambassador to Iraq, John Negroponte, had arrived in Baghdad to take over the largest American embassy in the world.²⁰⁴

Eventually, after each election since 2005, there were political settlements with different ministries and senior positions, and the political parties have been competing for their interests.²⁰⁵ In addition, there was an inner competition between politicians, figures of religious authority, militias leaders, and even the media to sort out the primary social fields. To rephrase, they wanted to tell the Iraqi society how it is to be formed or who can be an Iraqi citizen. But on the other hand, the political parties wanted to control the people through their handling of the financial resources, violence, and coercive capital. In addition to “social capital”, which means the ability to symbolic capital and mobilize groups, especially when Nuri Al-Maliki reached power.²⁰⁶ But who is Al-Maliki? And why do many Iraqis hold him responsible for

¹⁹⁹ “Protests escalate,” Aljazeera.

²⁰⁰ “Protests escalate,” Aljazeera.

²⁰¹ “Protests escalate,” Aljazeera.

²⁰² “The Iraqi Electoral,” Aljazeera.

²⁰³ Filkinsp, “Bremer Pushes.”

²⁰⁴ “The interim government,” Aljazeera.

²⁰⁵ Dodge, Mansour, “Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization,” P:60.

²⁰⁶ Dodge, Mansour, “Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization,” P:60.

the civil war 2006-07, alongside the deterioration of several key sectors in Iraq after the invasion?

3.5 Iraq Under Al-Maliki Rule

Nuri Al-Maliki was born in Babylon city in 1950. He obtained a master's degree in Arabic literature. In the 1970s, Al-Maliki left Iraq for Syria, and from his exile, led the Dawa Party in the 1980s.²⁰⁷ Al-Maliki was able to reach power for the first time in 2006 amid sectarian violence that was threatening the country, and he remained in office until 2014.²⁰⁸

After the American invasion, Al-Maliki aimed to prove he was a strong leader who could unify the country. In addition to that, he also helped draft the current Iraqi constitution as one of the members of the committee. Furthermore, he cooperated with the United States regarding excluding the Baathists under what was later known as the "De-Baathification."²⁰⁹

In May 2006, five months after the parliamentary elections, the Iraqi parliament approved the formation of the national unity government, presented by Prime Minister-designate Nuri Al-Maliki, without reaching a final settlement regarding the interior and defense portfolios. As a temporary solution, the Iraqi prime minister assumed the portfolio of the interior until a decision was made on who will take over these two portfolios. However, the Shiites, Sunni Arabs, and Kurds failed to agree on the two sensitive ministries. Later, Al-Maliki announced his choice of independent Shiite Hussein Al-Shahristani to take over the Strategic Ministry of Oil, and the Former Minister of Interior, Bayan Jabr Solagh, as the Ministry of Finance. Meanwhile, the Sunni Accord Front and the Iraqi National List, led by Iyad Allawi, objected to the formation of the government. They declared that the size of the votes obtained in the elections did not match the new government.²¹⁰

Furthermore, the strategic Ministries of Interior, Defense, and Oil took massive attention in forming a government between Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish. This being said, Al-Maliki had confirmed that Interior and Defense ministries should not be granted to parties or militias accused of participating in violence. Meanwhile, the Sunnis constantly accused the Minister of

²⁰⁷ "Iraq elections: Nuri al-Maliki, leader of the State of Law coalition," *BBC Arabic*, May 5, 2018.

²⁰⁸ "Iraq elections," *BBC Arabic*.

²⁰⁹ "Iraq elections," *BBC Arabic*.

²¹⁰ "The Iraqi parliament," *DW Arabic*.

Interior, Bayan Jabr Solagh, of covering up criminal practices carried out by Shiite militias against civilians.²¹¹

On the other hand, the Kurds wanted to keep their armed forces, the peshmerga, and control over taxing power oil revenues in both Kirkuk and Khanakin cities, which are considered two oil-producing centers that the U.S. does not deem as part of the Kurdish region. Meanwhile, the United States struggled as it had to fix complicated issues.²¹²

3.5.1 Sectarianism & Corruption of Al-Maliki

Regardless of the various obstacles and challenges that Al-Maliki's government faced, such as providing security, fighting corruption, improving the economic situation, and providing essential services, its policies were based on sectarianism.²¹³ Moreover, his policy was a significant reason behind the outbreak of sectarian war. Later, in 2007, Al-Maliki allowed the American forces to strike Al-Qaeda militants, and he led a campaign against Shiite militias loyal to Shiite leader Muqtada Al-Sadr 2008.²¹⁴ But before discussing the civil war, which will be addressed in the war on terror chapter, this research paper will examine the Former Iraqi prime minister's sectarian policies during his reign (2006-2014).

According to John Kerry, the feelings of sectarianism between Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq worsened during the Al-Maliki era. Therefore, creating an environment that made terrorist groups easy to appear. Moreover, Al-Maliki was a sectarian leader and focused only on the Shiites instead of unifying the country, his government was a mess, and his army was weak.²¹⁵

In accordance to Rumsfeld, the American officials said the Al-Maliki government did not apply the law against the Shiite militias. Therefore, Iraqis considered Al-Maliki, an implicit supporter of death squads against Sunnis. Moreover, Al-Maliki also exercised pressure to release Muqtada Al-Sadr's Shiite followers who were detained by US forces, even though he had a rivalry against Al-Sadr. Rumsfeld mentioned that Washington informed Al-Maliki, during his first official visit to the city as a prime minister in 2006, that he should eliminate the Shiite sectarian who penetrated the Iraqi forces. However, Al-Maliki claimed the American troops did not allow him to follow that approach. Therefore, Bush warned him about believing these

²¹¹ "The Iraqi parliament," DW Arabic.

²¹² Steven R. Weisman, "U.S. Presses Iraqi Kurds to Compromise on Issue of Autonomy," *The New York Times*, Jan 8, 2004.

²¹³ "The Iraqi parliament," DW Arabic.

²¹⁴ "Iraq elections," BBC Arabic.

²¹⁵ Kerry, "Every Day," P: 608

false claims as the U.S. officials in Iraq were sending reports about Al-Maliki's intention to integrate those militias with the Iraqi army. Eventually, he succeeded achieving that during the start of the war against ISIS in 2014.²¹⁶

Moreover, the sectarian procedures taken by Al-Maliki pushed the people of Al-Anbar to protest and demand “an end to unlawful home raids and detentions.” They also demanded an end to checkpoints and gangsters and secret prisons. These procedures were deemed something that came out of the Saddam Hussein era.²¹⁷ As a result, thousands had been arrested, imprisoned, and tortured by the new Iraq-elected government, which had profound and clear ties with Iran. Moreover, many protesters were killed, and any insurgency is met with shelling that kills insurgents and civilians alongside the prosecution of political opponents. Subsequently, as the American forces withdrew in 2011, Iraq's security situation worsened.²¹⁸

All of these events led directly to the destruction of the Al-Askari Mosque in Samarra in February 2006. Many scholars deemed the collapse of the mosque's golden dome as the moment of the outbreak of the civil war in Iraq after almost three years of violence. The Samarra bombing was a declaration of war against the Iraqi Shiites. After that incident, the sectarian civil war reached its highest level through kidnappings, death squad killings, sectarian cleansing, suicide bombings, and other deadly anarchy.²¹⁹

After the end of the civil war, other negative consequences of the system appeared, such as systematic political corruption. As a result, the Al-Maliki government could not deliver essential state services such as water and electricity. Starting in 2009, there was a series of mass demonstrations against the corrupted political system. The protests linked the failures of the state to the sectarianization of the political system. As a consequence, it undermined its legitimacy, reducing the widespread credibility of the ruling parties.²²⁰ Furthermore, Al-Maliki has also been accused by many of the Iraqi population of nepotism and mismanagement of the country's vast oil wealth. His son-in-law worked in his office while his son Ahmed headed Al-Maliki's protection forces at a time when most Iraqis suffered from difficult economic conditions.²²¹

²¹⁶ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 409

²¹⁷ Hamourtziadou. “Fault Lines to Trenches,” P.104

²¹⁸ Hamourtziadou. “Fault Lines to Trenches,” P.103

²¹⁹ Meiser, Heye and McKee, “From Anarchy to Civil War,” P.79

²²⁰ Dodge, Mansour, “Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization,” P:59.

²²¹ “Iraq elections,” BBC Arabic.

After 2009, a new movement appeared, which was “anti-sectarian”. Eventually, it has become influential. This unique factor became a fundamental challenge for the role of sectarian division representing the political system’s core. More specifically, it tended to evolve a different ruling system based on secular and nationalist factors.²²² There were protests in Iraqi cities against the government’s inability to deliver essential services such as electricity during the hot summer months. Nevertheless, in 2011, demonstrations were influenced by the region-wide protests of the “Arab Spring”. It was challenging the whole post-2003 system. Those demonstrations were against sectarianization that represented the symbolic capital and poor government services. It was demanding a system that had foundations built on secularism.²²³

When demonstrations broke out, especially in Sunni cities such as Al-Anbar, Al-Maliki struggled to face the "Islamic State" organization, which has operated on the Syrian-Iraqi borders since 2012 under other names. As a result, the return of violence was primarily due to the failure to restrain sectarianism in the previous decade.²²⁴ The Subsequent government sectarian actions made Nikolay Mladenov, UN Special Representative for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, express great concern about the deteriorating security situation in 2014. Mladenov also assured that tens of thousands of families had been displaced due to the violence in the last year of Al-Maliki's reign in 2014. At the same time, the displaced families are left without drinking water, food, sanitation, and limited access to health care during the emergence of ISIS and after it.²²⁵ Later, the sectarian violations of the Al-Maliki government over eight years contributed to the control of ISIS over Al-Anbar, Nineveh, and Salah al-Din cities in 2014, which will be explained later.

According to the Former Secretary of State John Kerry (2013–17), Washington was deeply involved with fickle Shiite leaders in Iraq. Subsequently, Syria became a hotspot for transferring terrorists and weapons to Iraq.²²⁶ In June 2014, when ISIS controlled Al-Mosul city, the second biggest city in Iraq, after the collapse of the Iraqi Army, Al-Maliki demanded the US interfere and launch raids against the terrorists. This request put Obama and his whole administration in critical condition because Iraq was in danger of not only terrorism but, according to Kerry, Al-Maliki himself and his policies led to this situation. In other words, ISIS couldn't be defeated if Al-Maliki was still in power. Therefore, Washington didn't desire to

²²² Dodge, Mansour, “Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization,” P:60.

²²³ Dodge, Mansour, “Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization,” P:64.

²²⁴ Meiser, Heye and McKee, “From Anarchy to Civil War,” P.80

²²⁵ Hamourtziadou. “Fault Lines to Trenches,” P.104

²²⁶ Kerry, “Every Day,” P: 441

repeat the past. Thus, Obama's administration made a hidden substantial diplomatic effort to transfer power peacefully. More specifically, in June 2014, Vice President Joe Biden and other American politicians secretly visited Baghdad and met Al-Maliki to remove him from power, and their mission succeeded. However, this mission wasn't an easy one. First, according to Kerry, Washington sent a message to Baghdad that it couldn't receive any American support if Al-Maliki stayed in power. Later, the Iraqi politicians chose Haider Al-Abadi as an alternative to Al-Maliki, who didn't receive substantial Iranian support after the emergence of ISIS.²²⁷

3.5.2 The Pretext of Baathism to Turn the Table on the 2010 Elections' Results

During political struggles, Al-Maliki separated from the "United Iraqi Alliance" and formed a new coalition under the "Coalition of the State of Law". On January 31, 2009, The State of Law Coalition was created amid political alliances that preceded the provincial elections.²²⁸ Moreover, the coalition was led by the Dawa Party headed by Al-Maliki. However, this alliance was formed due to the split of the United Iraqi Alliance, which was developed on the eve of the parliamentary elections in December 2005.²²⁹

Additionally, this alliance included seven Shiite parties formed on a sectarian basis. The slogan of the coalition bloc is "the imposition of law and the establishment of security", which refers to what Al-Maliki considers to be his most notable success during his rule.²³⁰

However, after the 2010 elections, Al-Maliki was accused of neglecting the consensus strategy in favor of concentrating power in the hands of his allies, most of whom belonged to the Shiite community. The accusations also indicated that he is the main ally of Iran; for example, he supported the Iranian position on the conflict in Syria.²³¹

Al-Maliki was also accused of using the judiciary to imprison and silence his political opponents. Moreover, He struggled to contain the wave of violence that had already fueled sectarianism throughout his reign.²³²

Iyad Allawi, the leader of the Iraqi National List (Iraqiyya), sought to exploit the declining symbolic capital of overt sectarianism by building Iraqiyya's campaign around a critique of the

²²⁷ Kerry, "Every Day," P: 609

²²⁸ "State of Law Coalition led by Nuri al-Maliki," *Aljazeera*, Feb 2, 2009.

²²⁹ "State of Law," *Aljazeera*.

²³⁰ "State of Law," *Aljazeera*.

²³¹ "Iraq elections," *BBC Arabic*.

²³² "Iraq elections," *BBC Arabic*.

sectarian politics that had driven the country into civil war. Instead, Iraqiyya's symbolic capital was built on an overt secular nationalism with equal citizenship for all.²³³

The Iraqiyya coalition, by seeking to build a cross-communal electoral team, posed a direct threat to the symbolic capital of the ruling elite and the system they had made. Al-Maliki faced this challenge by using "de-Baathification legislation" to ban many Iraqiyya candidates from participating in the 2010 elections.²³⁴ Subsequently, the "Ba'athist threat" became a key plank of Nuri Al-Maliki's election campaign. Iraq's increasingly fluid political field saw the vote split into three major sections, with Iraqiyya winning 24.7 per cent of the vote, Al-Maliki's State of Law, who mixed an overtly Shi'a Islamism with calls for a more vital state gaining 24.2 per cent, and the Iraqi National Alliance, 19.2 per cent, with an overall turnout of 62 per cent. Iraqiyya's success challenged the symbolic capital justifying the whole system. It also won votes across central and southern Iraq with an overtly secular nationalist practice category. This challenge saw the ethno-sectarian parties rally alongside Iranian and American diplomats to defend the symbolic violence of the "Muhasasa Ta'ifiyya" and the system itself. By November 2010, Al-Maliki had managed to use the threat of Iraqiyya's electoral to unify the rest of the ruling elite.²³⁵

Once again, ministerial posts and state resources were allotted to the parties that had won the elections of 2010. The symbolic violence of sectarianism was deployed in the political field to justify this. Iraqiyya were subjected to sectarianization, relabeled as another communalist party representing Sunni Iraqis. The threat of de-Baathification would be held over Iraqiyya's senior members to ensure they played their allotted role and did not try, once again, to challenge the system as a whole.²³⁶

Ironically, between 2012 – 2013, Iran tried its hardest to rein in the anti-Sunni activities of Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki. To clarify, Tehran feared that Al-Maliki would drive Iraq's Sunni Arabs into the arms of ISIS and initiate another civil war, threatening Iranian stability. Thus, creating the potential for a rabidly anti-Iranian group to use Iraq as a base of operations against Iran.²³⁷

²³³ Dodge, Mansour, "Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization," P:62.

²³⁴ Dodge, Mansour, "Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization," P:62.

²³⁵ Dodge, Mansour, "Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization," P:62.

²³⁶ Dodge, Mansour, "Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization," P:63.

²³⁷ Kenneth M. Pollack, "Iran in Iraq," Atlantic Council (2017): 3.

3.5.3 Paving the Way for ISIS and Al-Abadi

In 2010, Iyad Allawi rallied a few parties seeking to mobilize secular and Sunni voters into one coalition, *Iraqiyya*. However, in 2014, the Shi'a, Sunni, and secular parties failed to unite into vote-maximizing unions. Instead, they chose to run in much smaller organizations with a greater diffusion of symbolic capital across Iraq's political field. As a result, the Shi'a parties are divided into three main electoral groupings. The largest was Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki's State of Law coalition. Moreover, the election campaign saw a similar division in attempts to amass symbolic capital with the ethno-sectarian electoral blocs fracturing. Al-Maliki engaged against in an overtly sectarian campaign, by attempting to solidify Shi'a voters by juxtaposing the "Shi'a community" against Sunnis and Kurds. He also deployed overt Shi'a imagery at rallies and damned his Sunni opponents as complicit in terrorism. On the other hand, Muqtada Al-Sadr, a Shiite politician and cleric, labelled Al-Maliki a "tyrant, dictator, and a dominating figure" responsible for the corruption that now touched every aspect of the state.²³⁸

The results of the 2014 elections, but not their aftermath, reflected both the fractured nature of the electoral campaign and the success of Al-Maliki, as an incumbent and a politician unafraid of indulging in overt and divisive sectarian rhetoric. Al-Maliki's coalition, State of Law, secured 92 seats. In addition, Al-Maliki won the highest personal backing of any Iraqi politician, with 721,000 votes. However, Al-Maliki's overall position was greatly strengthened by the fractured ballots of those who opposed him. Muqtada Al-Sadr's Ahrar came second with 34 seats, and Allawi's Wataniya gained only 21.²³⁹ Even though the State of Law coalition won the majority of votes in the parliamentary elections held in April 2014, Al-Maliki failed to form the new government. However, the other Shiite politician Haider al-Abadi was assigned to this mission for many reasons.²⁴⁰ As ISIS fighters controlled Mosul city, the Iraqi parliament later issued a report holding Al-Maliki responsible. Many Iraqi politicians blamed Al-Maliki's policies and his corruption for the collapse of the Iraqi army in the face of the members of ISIS. Moreover, the political system had become the target of widespread irritation during the rise of Anti-sectarianism.²⁴¹

Conversely, Al-Maliki rejected the accusations, describing the information as "worthless."²⁴² Another reason for getting rid of Al-Maliki was that when ISIS controlled vast areas of Iraq,

²³⁸ Dodge, Mansour, "Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization," P:63.

²³⁹ Dodge, Mansour, "Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization," P:63.

²⁴⁰ "Iraq elections," BBC Arabic.

²⁴¹ Dodge, Mansour, "Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization," P:64.

²⁴² "Iraq elections," BBC Arabic.

Former American President Barack Obama pushed for the ouster of Nuri Al-Maliki as a condition for renewed American military support. Obama thought that Al-Maliki's brutal policies and crackdowns on Iraqi Sunnis had led to the rise of the Sunni extremist. Al-Maliki's replacement, the British-educated Haider Al-Abadi, was more friendly to the West and less sectarian. However, the Iranians knew they had plenty of other Iraqi ministers in their pocket, such as the Iraqi Interior Ministry Bayan Jabr, who was involved in many violations against Sunni. In addition to the ministers of municipalities, communications and human rights were all members of the Badr Organization. Moreover, no Iraqi politician became prime minister without the Iranian regime's blessing, as they all have close ties to Tehran.²⁴³

3.6 American Announced Goals Vs. Reality

The democracy factor in the American narration was an essential element in getting rid of Saddam, as one month before the invasion, Bush declared:

*“The nation of Iraq, with its proud heritage, abundant resources, and skilled and educated people, is fully capable of moving toward democracy and living in freedom.”*²⁴⁴

But what are the characteristics of the new Iraqi leader that Washington desires?

The head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq, Paul Bremer, indicated the preferred characteristics of the new Iraq president. He asserted that Bush preferred to see an Iraqi President as American-educated, with a private enterprise and political background. Principally, this character could openly thank the Coalition for ending Saddam's era. Bush wanted an Iraqi president who could show his determination to continue the process to sovereignty and eventual democracy.²⁴⁵

Even though this research does not discuss the British role in Iraq in this paper, it is essential to grasp the reasons for its participation in the invasion with its principal ally, the U.S. The previous Former prime minister Tony Blair who was talking about a "roadmap for peace", stated:

“On poverty and sustainable development, on democracy and human rights, on the good governance of nations. Before him “Saddam” Iraq was wealthy, but today it is impoverished,

²⁴³ “The Iran Cables: Secret Documents Show How Tehran Wields Power in Iraq,” *The New York Times*, Nov 19, 2019.

²⁴⁴ “Bush offers vision of post-war Middle East”, CBC,2003.

²⁴⁵ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.372

*60% of its population dependent on food aid. Thousands of children die needlessly every year from lack of food and medicine. Four million people out of a population of just over 20 million are in exile. The brutality of the repression - the death and torture camps, the barbaric prisons for political opponents, the routine beatings for anyone or their families suspected of disloyalty are well documented. I recall a few weeks ago talking to an Iraqi exile and saying to her that I understood how grim it must be under the lash of Saddam. "But you don't", she replied. "You cannot. You do not know what it is like to live in perpetual fear." And she is right. We take our freedom for granted. But imagine not to be able to speak or discuss or debate or even question the society you live in. To see friends and family taken away and never daring to complain. To suffer the humility of failing courage in face of pitiless terror. That is how the Iraqi people live. Leave Saddam in place and that is how they will continue to live."*²⁴⁶

According to Condoleezza Rice, After the September 11th attacks, Washington followed a different response strategy to overcome its vulnerability. She referred that Hussein sat in the heart of the world's most volatile region, defying the UN Security Council resolutions, terrorizing Iraqis, and threatening his neighbors and the world through his two wars against Iran and Kuwait. From her point of view, "*Saddam was the only tyrant of our time who possessed weapons of mass destruction and used them in acts of mass murder against his people.*" Even though she confessed that there was no evidence that Hussein was involved in the September attacks, she indicated that Saddam and the terrorists would not hesitate to use those dangerous weapons to devastate the U.S. Furthermore, she stated that "*Saddam maintained ties to terror, harboring known terrorists within his borders and subsidizing Palestinian suicide bombers.*" In accordance to Rice, the Iraqi people are free after the invasion as everyday life in Iraq is reborn as essential services are restored. Furthermore, she stated that Iraq turned into the central front in the war on terror: "Enemies of freedom are making a desperate stand there, and they must be defeated there." She also promised that Washington would build a new Iraq by offering its people freedom. Moreover, she indicated that Washington would also provide a unique opportunity for a different kind of Middle East, which suffers from a freedom deficit far from the fertile ground for ideologies that convinced promising youths to blow themselves up and threaten America's security. Eventually, from her point of view, a free, prosperous Iraq can help create new momentum toward a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ "Tony Blair's speech", the Guardian, 2003.

²⁴⁷ White House Archives, "Dr. Condoleezza Rice Discusses Iraq in Chicago," (October 8, 2003).

However, seven years later, in 2010, even though she insisted on how important it was for Washington to eliminate the dangerous Saddam, Rice regretted that the Bush administration failed to work closely with the Iraqi people in order to rebuild the war-torn country.²⁴⁸

Furthermore, Bremer asserted that Washington wanted to turn Iraq into a peaceful, stable, democratic state with a vibrant economy. Moreover, security was one of the main objectives. Therefore, the U.S. wanted to train Iraqi police and army forces as quickly as possible in a professional way after disarming the Iraqi Army due to its ties to the Baath regime.²⁴⁹ However, according to Bremer, democracies don't work unless building a successful political structure. For instance, what the world has seen in Germany and Japan is based on a robust civil society, political groups and parties, an independent judiciary, freedom of the press, and open accountability for public funds.²⁵⁰

On the contrary, From Rumsfeld's point of view, if any country is used to being a non-democratic country, then the U.S. should not push it into another approach. In other words, he indicated that as long as this country taking in its consideration American interests, then the U.S. should not reprimand it. He also asserted that democracy was not the American goal behind the invasion, justifying that by the fear of sending a wrong message to Iraq and its neighbors, Washington attempted to impose its political system on them without considering the Middle East's history and culture. Moreover, Rumsfeld referred that human rights and democracy are two goals from many other strategies Washington should force countries to follow. Nevertheless, the U.S. must examine the whole picture when determining its foreign policies.²⁵¹ According to Rumsfeld, it is not a piece of cake to turn Iraq from a dictatorship to a democracy overnight. Especially, Iraq has been plagued with centuries of sectarianism even though Hussein successfully handled this sectarianism. Moreover, he asserted that when Washington failed to find WMD in Iraq, it tended to talk about imposing democracy there to justify the invasion and change the course. Rumsfeld also warned Bush and Rice about giving Iraq to Iran on a silver plate.²⁵² This part regarding the Iranian role will be discussed in chapter five.

In accordance to Rumsfeld, the price of American intervention in Iraq was high for Washington as thousands of American forces were killed and injured. Moreover, the U.S. had to spend

²⁴⁸ "Condoleezza Rice admits some regrets over Iraq war," The Christian Science, March 2010.

²⁴⁹ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.128

²⁵⁰ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.32

²⁵¹ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 329

²⁵² Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 167

billions of dollars on that war. In addition, this war turned into a dangerous weapon against the Bush administration inside the U.S. Meanwhile, the democrats in Washington attempted to cut the war funding to force the Bush administration to withdraw from Iraq. Rumsfeld also indicated that since removing Hussein's regime, Washington's goals shifted to more ambitious efforts. More specifically, Washington attempted to bring a government that would not try to develop weapons of mass destruction and would respect the minorities in Iraq. Therefore, Washington shifted its policies to imposing democracy in a country plagued with sectarianism and long history of wars.²⁵³ Additionally, Rumsfeld indicated that Washington could not impose democracy in a country that has not witnessed it for centuries. Moreover, he also expected that Iraq would suffer for an extended period from sectarianism, inadequate infrastructure, a bad economy, etc. Eventually, from the former minister of defense's point of view, Washington should only contain Iraq's complex issues, not fix them, which Iraqis should tackle.²⁵⁴

As for John Kerry, the former Secretary of State, despite his vote in Congress on the decision in favor of the war on Iraq, he used this war as a primary weapon in his election campaign against Bush in 2004. Kerry, as a candidate for the Democratic Party, indicated that Bush broke his promises of depending on diplomacy and initiating a broader coalition when the American Army invaded Iraq.²⁵⁵ Kerry's book, which covers different aspects of his work as US Secretary of State, didn't spotlight the Iraqi file enough. Even though he wrote about Iraq, the purpose was to show the failure of Bush's policy. Nevertheless, the most exciting part was that he didn't mention Iraq again, only when ISIS emerged in 2014 and focused on Syria rather than Iraq. Further, his book, from an objective point of view, is a bit unconventional, as Kerry concentrated on Israel, Syria, Iran, Russia, and even Vietnam and didn't spotlight the country that was one of the main reasons for reshaping the map of the Middle East in the last two decades. However, it could be linked to his "regretting" for voting on the war decision in the first place.

Moreover, the former Secretary of State during Bush's Administration, Colin Powell, his name would be forever tied to the American invasion of Iraq. In the previous chapter, this research referred to his speech in front of the security council a few weeks before the war. He indicated that Saddam was developing WMD based on intelligence reports and documents. "*Sources*

²⁵³ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 427

²⁵⁴ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 433

²⁵⁵ Kerry, "Every Day," P: 300

back up every statement I make today, solid sources." he declared, "These are not assertions. What we are giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence."

Nevertheless, two years later, when the U.S. did not find those weapons, in a 2005 interview, he stated:

"I didn't lie. I didn't know it was not true. I was Secretary of State, not the intelligence director."

Just months after he was asked to resign from the Bush administration, he added, *"It was painful. It's the blot on my record. I don't think we would have had the basis to go to war."*²⁵⁶

Conversely, many international relations researchers indicated that when the WMD claims were impossible to prove, the American administration focused on how cruel Hussein's regime had been. In other words, the justification for the invasion shifted into humanitarian concerns, internal insecurity, violation of human rights, and lack of freedom. Nevertheless, the question is whether Iraq witnessed a peaceful or even better era than Hussein's. Officially, Iraq is an independent, democratic country. However, the lines between war and peace, oppression and democracy, and entrapment and freedom have blurred since 2003.²⁵⁷

Moreover, the ruling parties after the year 2003 have used their symbolic capital, driving the sectarianization of Iraq's political field. This sectarianization reached its peak during the election campaigns of 2005. However, there wasn't any alternative source of symbolic capital. The ruling elite controlled economic prosperity via different institutions of the state. Moreover, corruption has become a central part of the system's stability as it created cohesion among other parties, but this corruption turned into the main factor of de-legitimation.²⁵⁸

As the symbolic capital based on sectarian rhetoric decreased due to public discontent at systemic corruption since 2009, the ruling parties found it hard to face the waves of movement based on calls for secular nationalism and equal countrywide citizenship. As a result, the political parties used extremely high levels of covert and overt coercive capital. Thus, hundreds of protesters had been killed, wounded, arrested, and many thousands more had been tortured.

²⁵⁹ The status quo of the new Iraqi state is dependent upon violence more than sectarian. Yet,

²⁵⁶ "Iraq War role was a stain on Powell's record — one he openly said he regretted," Washington Post, Oct 18, 2021.

²⁵⁷ Hamourtziadou. "Fault Lines to Trenches," P.100

²⁵⁸ Dodge, Mansour, "Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization," P:67

²⁵⁹ Dodge, Mansour, "Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization," P:67

despite sectarianization's failure, it has remained the guiding logic for the political elite's plans for survival.²⁶⁰

In a nutshell, the "liberated" Iraqis are captives of their leaders, their fragmented society, and the legacy of US coalition forces. Additionally, they are not allowed to escape this trap.²⁶¹

Since 2003, Iraq has been witnessing many types of wars: aggressive, preemptive, civil, guerrilla, proxy, religious, as well as a war of liberation. More specifically, between 2006 and 2007, the country experienced its highest sectarian violence due to the bloody fight between Shia and Sunni. Principally, this bloody sectarian war has had negative consequences for an extended period. The daily conflict has led to millions of Iraqi refugees, millions below the poverty line, and many sufferings from diseases. Moreover, internal and external circumstances worsened the Iraqi people's conditions.²⁶²

Even though Iraq is a rich country, others have exploited those resources due to its geographical location. Meanwhile, a third of the Iraqi population lives below the poverty line. In addition, while the Iraqi government was elected twice under occupation in 2005 and 2010, those elections only inspired mistrust and revolt among Iraqis. In conclusion, Iraq has become a fragmented state in all aspects, especially politically, where each party struggles to gain power. Moreover, they seek relative gains without cooperation, where their gain is a loss to another rather than an absolute gain.²⁶³

Moreover, the American-led coalition was supposed to prevent any spark of ethnic strife, especially in a country such as Iraq, where religious factions could turn into revenge-taking, but it did not.²⁶⁴ Additionally, the United States failed to establish a successful local regime in Iraq. Instead, it turned the country into another Vietnam through the chaos, division, and endless wars that Iraq has witnessed.²⁶⁵

3.7 Analysis of the Implications of Establishing the New Political System

The various statements of different American officials asserted the necessity of replacing the Baath regime with another power is a primary goal that has been achieved. According to the existing data, this new Iraqi regime did not directly challenge the United States, even though it

²⁶⁰ Dodge, Mansour, "Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization," P:67

²⁶¹ Hamourtziadou. "Fault Lines to Trenches," P.105

²⁶² Hamourtziadou. "Fault Lines to Trenches," P.102

²⁶³ Hamourtziadou. "Fault Lines to Trenches," P.98.

²⁶⁴ Perito, "Establishing the Rule," P.2.

²⁶⁵ Shipley, "Currency Wars," P.29.

leaned toward Iran in one way or another. Washington also changed the country's economic system and became within the framework of capitalism. Firstly, Washington changed the previous Iraqi currency. Secondly, Iraq used the dollars again to sell its oil instead of euros as Hussein's regime used to do.

Moreover, Washington took different steps to ensure that the Ba'ath Party would not return in any way. Initially, the Bush administration brought exiled politicians opposed to Saddam Hussein's regime. Moreover, the Washington made a fateful decision that mainly changed the shape of Iraq for decades, which is "de-Baathification." A decision that has many negative repercussions in the political and security arena.

After the Americans failed to prove the multiple pretexts that it resorted to occupying Iraq, such as the development of weapons of mass destruction and Iraq's ties with Al-Qaeda, the American narration turned to transmit democracy in a country that had long been torn apart by wars and sectarianism. Ironically, Washington has deepened sectarian feelings among the Iraqi people and politicians unprecedentedly, primarily after it built a political system based on purely sectarian foundations.

The Bush administration handed power to a political class that Washington was not convinced of its eligibility to rule—various reasons behind this American decision. Principally, the most prominent reason was the fear of returning power to the Baath Party or Sunni extremists during the peak of the American war on terror. Therefore, Washington had to reduce escalation with the Shiite clerics and politicians in order to avoid a different clash with the Shiite militias while fighting the armed Sunni groups. Furthermore, another cruel factor that led to that decision was the lack of planning for the post-invasion phase, as the goal was to strip Saddam of power. Moreover, after the invasion, the U.S. witnessed a bitter division; it was not only between the Republican and Democratic parties but between the Ministry of Defense, the State Department and U.S. intelligence.

In addition, the voting phase on the new Iraqi constitution and the formation of governments witnessed a boycott of the Sunnis, who was linked to the Baath Party in one way or another, especially after the decision of "de-Baathification." Subsequently, during the reign of Al-Maliki, Iraq witnessed severe crises that varied between the consolidation of the sectarian political system, corruption and thievery of the money of the country that depended on its oil only. Moreover, Iraq had witnessed systematic violations, civil war, the emergence of terrorist organizations in response to crimes against Sunnis and Shiites civilians, alongside a severe

deterioration of essential services. As a result, there were numerous demonstrations denouncing the new political system. However, as Hussein's regime previously did, Al-Maliki suppressed his opponents in the political arenas and demonstration halls, but this time by using the pretext of the Baath Party, which Washington had criminalized.

In conclusion, Iraq was weak politically, economically, and socially before the invasion due to previous wars and economic sanctions under a dictatorship. Nevertheless, the invasion turned those fault lines into trenches. To clarify, post-2003, the country has witnessed occupation, terrorism, insurgency, and increasingly competing interests with an extremely sectarianism divided country "Shias, Sunnis, Kurds, religious fanatics, seculars, the non-Muslim". The external interests of the United States also control this internally divided country.



CHAPTER IV

The War on Terror in Iraq

Before the American invasion of Iraq, many international relations scholars and various countries expressed concerns about the consequences of this step on Iraq, the region, and the entire world. For instance, some countries, such as Malaysia, were against invading Iraq due to many factors. But, the most important one is that the use of power unjustifiably would undoubtedly increase the chances of cycles of violence. Thus, aggravating worldwide terrorism, which will happen in a more unsteady world order.²⁶⁶

However, it was hard to stop Washington from the invasion decision after the 11th of September events. The "Bush revolution" in foreign policy has led to a generation-long conflict between Washington and the radical social forces within a vast community of Islam. According to many scholars, this invasion will negatively affect American hegemony.²⁶⁷ This being said, the announced reasons behind the American attack were the tied between Iraq and Al-Qaeda or having Baghdad have any weapon of mass destruction without proof. Nevertheless, Bush argued that the American sacrifice was justified. Warranting his decisions by claiming Iraq had become the central front in the "War on Terror."²⁶⁸

Moreover, the Former U.S. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and the Former Secretary of State Colin Powell are convinced that Iraq has become the decisive theatre in the war on terror, so if the United States won in Iraq, Islamic terrorism would be defeated. So overall, there was a new American notion that Iraq had become the decisive theatre in the war on terrorism.²⁶⁹

4.1 Official American Statements

Two days before the invasion, Bush announced that Hussein's regime had a history of reckless aggression in the Middle East. Moreover, the Iraqi government deeply mocks the U.S. and its allies. According to the former American president, Iraq has also aided, trained and harbored terrorists, such as Al-Qaeda members. Promising Iraqis to enhance their lives in different aspects apart from dictatorship. He stated:

²⁶⁶ Åkermark, "Storms," P:225

²⁶⁷ Philip S. Golub, "*Imperial Politics, Imperial Will and the Crisis of US Hegemony*," Review of International Political Economy 11, no. 4 (October 2004): 764, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4177521>.

²⁶⁸ Patrick, Thrall, "Beyond Hegemony," P.112.

²⁶⁹ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.298

*“The danger is clear: using chemical, biological or, one day, nuclear weapons, obtained with the help of Iraq, the terrorists could fulfill their stated ambitions and kill thousands or hundreds of thousands of innocent people in our country, or any other. As our coalition takes away their power, we will deliver the food and medicine you need. We will tear down the apparatus of terror and we will help you to build a new Iraq that is prosperous and free. In a free Iraq, there will be no more wars of aggression against your neighbors, no more poison factories, no more executions of dissidents, no more torture chambers and rape rooms. The tyrant will soon be gone. The day of your liberation is near.”*²⁷⁰

In the same vein, Paul Bremer referred that Washington was seriously concerned about WMD in case of the terrorist groups got their hands on them as Hussein was supporting them. Nevertheless, it received a report revealing that Hussein had almost certainly not possessed the thousands of tons of poison gas and their delivery warhead. Moreover, the report also pointed to Hussein’s lack of needed requirements to produce nuclear weapons that the intelligence services of Western countries judged he had.²⁷¹ Nevertheless, Bremer pointed out that he had informed Bush in 2003 that American intelligence was looking for WMD and not enough for terrorists in Iraq.²⁷²

On the other hand, John Kerry, the Former Secretary of State, stated that Bush’s policies turned Iraq into a perfect land for terrorism, magnetizing the terrorists and leading to the death of more than two thousand American forces. Many senators were upset about Bush’s policies. However, they believed the solution would be sending more troops to Iraq. Further, many Democratic senators thought they should not interfere and let Bush take responsibility for his actions in Iraq.²⁷³ According to Kerry, the war in Iraq made him rethink his choices to focus on other options regarding consuming fuels, such as creating vehicles that save energy, not only a better option for climate change but also to make Washington avoiding send its soldiers to the Middle East, where they could die.²⁷⁴

4.2 Unholy Alliance

Bremer's decision to de-Baathification made recruits ready to rebel. Thousands of trained soldiers were out of work. These former soldiers formed the backbone of the guerrilla

²⁷⁰ “A transcript of George Bush's war ultimatum speech from the Cross Hall in the White House,” *The Guardian*, March 18, 2003.

²⁷¹ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.196

²⁷² Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.222

²⁷³ Kerry, “Every Day,” P: 391

²⁷⁴ Kerry, “Every Day,” P: 415

resistance against the American forces.²⁷⁵ In addition, several former Baath officials had access to significant wealth to fund anti-coalition operations. As a result, they contributed significantly to the Sunni insurgency's escalation in the summer of 2003. They were, eventually, helping sectarian hostility throughout Iraq.²⁷⁶

Moreover, under the reign of Saddam Hussein, the historical trend toward Islamic ideologies increased. Chiefly, the previous state's support and social standing for Sunni clerics placed them in a social position to organize the insurgency after the invasion. Principally, the elimination of Sunni in conjunction with the Shiite occupation of formerly Sunni mosques and the arrest of extremist Sunni clerics by US forces led the clerics toward the insurgency.²⁷⁷

When the U.S. banned the Baath Party members from playing any role in the new government, the Iraqi Sunni population saw it as the “de-Sunnification.” Thus, it fueled terrorist groups to appear, such as Al-Qaeda.²⁷⁸ In addition, the presence of a foreign military force in a region automatically triggers long memories of wars, colonialism, and foreign occupation. Mainly, the American invasion brought all these feelings to a part of the Iraqi population. To clarify, some scholars indicated that the U.S. tried to restructure Iraqi society because the formerly strong Sunni Muslim structure could threaten the pattern of the new Iraqi state.²⁷⁹

Even though the rebellion of the Baathists was similar to an armed popular resistance movement at the beginning, they attracted different groups to fight against the American troops. Although Al-Baath was a secular party, the Baathists exploited the Jihadists, who were coming from other Muslim countries, to fight against the invasion.²⁸⁰

Moreover, in light of the decision of “de-Sunnification,” no political or social actor could legitimately represent all the Iraqi Sunnis. That’s why the clerisy worked as an ideological broker. Therefore, many Sunnis ’including the ex-Baathists who were banned from joining the new Iraqi state involved in the insurgency. The clerisy made the religion “Islam,” the main driver for the insurgency. This rebellion attracted foreign jihadis who travelled to Iraq to fight

²⁷⁵ Dexter Filkins, “Bremer Pushes Iraq on Difficult Path to Self-Rule,” *The New York Times*, March 21, 2004.

²⁷⁶ Meiser, Heye and McKee, “From Anarchy to Civil War,” P.72

²⁷⁷ Stephen Pampinella, “Hegemonic Competition in Intrastate War: The Social Construction of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq's al-Anbar Province,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 35:2, (January 2012): 111, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2012.639060.

²⁷⁸ Lynch, “In the shadow of the cold war,” PP: 132-133.

²⁷⁹ Hartwell, Barkley, “Terrorism,” 151.

²⁸⁰ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 381

against the occupation.²⁸¹ According to Bremer, an “unholy alliance” was made by Wahhabi Muslims from Saudi Arabia, united with the former Baathists. These Wahhabis often connected the Baathists in mosques; they considered all Shiites to be “apostates” and the non-Muslim Coalition forces in Iraq to be a sacrilege.²⁸² Principally, after the occupation, Al-Qaeda found fertile ground in all this discontent and made many attacks in Iraq.²⁸³

From the American point of view, the fault for increasing the terrorism rate lies with the common Syrian border with Iraq. In accordance to Bremer, the Syrian borders, around 600 km, with Iraq, were a primary source of headache. He revealed that the American forces detained among the many foreign fighters held in Iraq, including tens of Syrians. Additionally, he emphasized the number of members of foreign fighters related to Al-Qaeda was increased using Syrian soil.²⁸⁴

In accordance to Rumsfeld, the Syrian regime was worried after the American invasion of Iraq. So, it kept denying the idea of sending terrorists to Iraq and even delivered a message to Rumsfeld. Finally, Bush's administration confirmed that the Syrian regime was responsible for those waves of terrorism.²⁸⁵

Moreover, even though the Iraqi Sunni rebels were deemed to lack organization and power, they gained more control due to the waves of Jihadists across Syria and Saudi Arabia's borders. In addition, the rebellion was based in Sunni cities such as Al-Anbar, which became a core for anti-American Islamic powers.²⁸⁶

In addition, Bremer emphasized that some problems were not fixed. Mentioning that violence came from different sources, looters, die-hard Baathists, and Iran may be playing around a bit. However, Bremer added that the Shiite tribal leaders of Iraq did not want any Iranian influence. At the same time, the Saudi Wahhabi extremists came into the west and north of Baghdad or the Sunni homeland.²⁸⁷

²⁸¹ Pampinella, Stephen. “Hegemonic Competition in Intrastate War: The Social Construction of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq's al-Anbar Province.” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 35 (2012): 101.

²⁸² Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.93

²⁸³ Hamourtziadou. “Fault Lines to Trenches,” P.98.

²⁸⁴ Douglas Jehl, “THE STRUGGLE FOR IRAQ: DETAINEES; Bremer Says 19 Qaeda Fighters Are in U.S. Custody in Iraq,” *The New York times*, September 27, 2003.

²⁸⁵ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 162

²⁸⁶ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 194

²⁸⁷ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.83

4.3 The First Battle of Fallujah

In the west of Iraq, more specifically in Fallujah city, about 60 km west of Baghdad, with a population of around 300,000, the security was steadily going to hell in 2003. Bremer pointed out that the community there is highly conservative. However, Fallujah is not an exception city; it's similar to the whole population of Al-Anbar province, which is connected to Syria through a vast desert. Historically, Fallujah had a long history of rebelling back to the date of the Ottoman Empire. More specifically, the city was the center of a bloody rebellion against the British forces when London had taken over Mesopotamia from the Ottomans after World War I. In addition to that, Hussein's regime had recruited loyal members of his intelligence service and his elite military units from local tribes in Fallujah.²⁸⁸

Post-2003, Al-Anbar province played a significant role in violent incidents after the occupation as the area had long roots in the Baath regime. Many of the Fallujans were related to Hussein's system since the Iran–Iraq war of 1980-88. Later, during the American invasion, its population rejected the arrival of the 82nd Airborne Division, an airborne infantry division of the United States Army specializing in parachute assault operations. Al-Fallujah's residents were highly conservative people who believed that the American army equipped with night vision goggles watched women as they slept on rooftops or in backyards to escape warm evenings inside their houses. Additionally, the American soldiers in Fallujah forcibly entered the homes of suspected insurgents and harshly treated them. The forces exercised those violations before the alleged insurgents' women and children, interrogating and detaining them.²⁸⁹ At that time, Americans expected enmity from all Sunnis; they followed counterinsurgency tactics harshly against them in response to the increasing costs of insurgent mobilization in a defensive way. However, the US forces failed to consider how indiscriminate repression violated tribal Iraqi norms. Thus, it created antagonistic relationships with Iraqis who only wanted to recover social prestige and status by taking vengeful action against the American army.²⁹⁰

On Saddam Hussein's 66th birthday, On April 28, 2003, there was an anti-occupation demonstration in Fallujah. About 200 individuals, including women and children, broke the curfew and participated in the protest. It began in the mayor's office and the former headquarters of the Baath Party, where paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division were staying. The paratroopers began making threats through microphones into the streets. Later

²⁸⁸ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.326

²⁸⁹ Pampinella, "Hegemonic Competition," P.102.

²⁹⁰ Pampinella, "Hegemonic Competition PP.102-103.

that evening, the protesters gathered again and decided to march to a school where another platoon was settling. The school had been out of session since March 2003. The protesters wanted the American soldiers out of the school so that the school could resume. Shots were fired from a crowd of protesters, prompting the school's paratroopers to shoot into the crowd. Eventually, an estimated 15 Iraqi men, women, and children were killed and up to 70 wounded. No American casualties were reported. Six months after the incident, Jamil Karaba, a Fallujan, and former Baathist, was arrested for allegedly planting shooters among the protesters to instigate the American forces to attack.²⁹¹ After this incident, the Sunni population and many prominent leaders in the community called on the people to join the rebellion.²⁹² Especially as the de-Baathification decision turned many of Fallujah's residents into unemployed, prompting many to join the insurgency.²⁹³

Later, Taha Badawi, the pro-coalition mayor of Fallujah, advised the 82nd Airborne Division to leave the city due to the fear of retaliation for Fallujah's death. Eventually, the 82nd Airborne Division was replaced by the 3rd Calvary Armored Regiment. This new regiment carried out night raids, increasing the anti-alliance sentiment among the inhabitants of Falluja. Tensions were exacerbated when the Al-Hassan Mosque was bombed in July of the same year, causing the imam's death and many Iraqis. Residents of Fallujah claimed that an American missile had caused death and destruction.²⁹⁴

On March 31, 2004, four US contractors working for Blackwater Security Consulting provided security for flatbeds sent by a catering company to pick up kitchen equipment. As the small convoy passed through Fallujah, it was ambushed, and a small arms fire killed the four contractors. The American bodies were burned, dismembered, and dragged through the streets. This incident, captured by Western and Arab media, caught the Bush administration's attention. More evidence proved that a different Al-Qaeda leader was in charge, named Ahmed Hashem Abdel-Essawy, a native of Fallujah. Therefore, Bush accepted the recommendation of key advisers and ordered "immediate retaliation."²⁹⁵

The First Battle of Fallujah began on April 4 2004, under "Operation Vigilant Resolve". The battle received a lot of criticism from the international press and foreign leaders, such as British Prime Minister Tony Blair. In response to the complaint, Bush's administration announced on

²⁹¹ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.74

²⁹² Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.75

²⁹³ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.74

²⁹⁴ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.75

²⁹⁵ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.75

April 9 that it would call for a unilateral ceasefire, allowing negotiations to begin between U.S. forces and local leaders. Later, Washington appeared to have agreed with local leaders on April 19. Nevertheless, the fighting continued until May 1, 2004. To clarify, President Bush called on the Marines to retreat due to persistent international criticism of the operation and deteriorating support for the occupation. This being said, many Marines expressed frustration with this decision, believing they had left their jobs half-finished. On the side, the insurgents deemed the departure of U.S. forces as a sign of victory. Throughout the battle, about 600 civilians and fighters were killed. Subsequently, a group of former Baathist generals, now known as the Fallujah Brigade, took control of this city. However, this battle changed the sectarian division temporarily. To clarify, the Shiites sympathized with the Sunnis of Fallujah and supported their defense of the town.

Additionally, Shiite sheikhs across Iraqi cities asked their followers to donate blood and food for those in Fallujah. Similarly, Sunni insurgents from Fallujah have sent aid to Shiite rebels in places like Najaf, where Muqtada Al-Sadr and Al-Mahdi Army militia were located. In other words, there was common ground between Sunnis and Shiites. But, again, the reason is that the Iraqis were tired of the occupation and the humiliation of American soldiers.²⁹⁶

Meanwhile, Al Qaeda in Iraq, the Iraqi Islamic Army, and the 1920s Revolution Brigades took Fallujah as their home. Subsequently, the rebels began targeting nearby foreign troops alongside the Shiites' areas. Insurgent groups started to export their forces to other cities, such as Ramadi in Al-Anbar province, Baghdad, and Samarra. During the summer of 2004, Fallujah became a no-go area for the American forces.²⁹⁷

Moreover, Bremer worked behind the scenes to ease impatience within the American military command over the standoffs and to give the local Iraqi negotiators more time to reach a peaceful solution. Nevertheless, Bremer believed there could be a need to use force, at least in Falluja, before June 30.²⁹⁸

Meanwhile, the rebels in Fallujah and Najaf cities didn't show any sign of communication, breaking a week of silence on the confrontation with Moqtada Al-Sadr in Najaf and Sunni Muslim insurgents in Fallujah. Bremer said that he had wanted to bring an early end to the

²⁹⁶ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.76

²⁹⁷ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.77

²⁹⁸ Burns, Hauser, "Bremer Raising."

standoffs in order to return Baghdad to the political path Washington had mapped out, starting with the formal return of sovereignty on June 30.²⁹⁹

However, the situation in Najaf was slightly different; American commanders favored a solution that disarmed Al-Sadr's militiamen without requiring American troops to enter the city. More specifically, Najaf is sacred to Iraq's religious Shiites. That said, Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani and other influential Shiite clerics intervened with Al-Sadr to spare the city an invasion and have him back down.³⁰⁰ In accordance to Bremer, as the diplomacy failed, Tehran, which supported Al-Sadr, indicated that the American iron fist policy in Iraq and a lack of security had spoiled Iranian mediation efforts to end the stand-off in Najaf. Meanwhile, Washington officials indicated that Tehran provided material support for attacks on American troops in Iraq. Revealing that the U.S. knew Iran was meddling in Iraq. Nevertheless, the atmosphere in Fallujah was more complex; American calculations favored military action if the Sunni Muslim insurgents didn't leave the city.³⁰¹

4.4 The Second Battle of Fallujah

Before the January 2005 elections, the Bush administration claimed that it needed to secure the Sunni stronghold of Fallujah to ensure that the elections would be free and fair. On November 4, 2004, Bush ordered the Marines to re-intervene the city in Operation Phantom Fury, the Second Battle of Fallujah. Some claimed that this operation was a punishment for the incomplete process in April. However, many reports argued during this battle that the United States used more indiscriminate tactics and made little effort to distinguish the rebels from other civilians, fueling anti-Americanism. Therefore, hundreds of thousands of Fallujah residents fled to Baghdad and the surrounding areas. Meanwhile, a curfew was imposed as electricity, and water was cut off in the city. Furthermore, the United States banned men of military service age (under 45) from leaving Fallujah.³⁰²

As the level of violence against Fallujah was extremely high, U.N. Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi was close to abandoning his mission in 2004. The Algerian diplomat was concerned about possible bloodshed in Fallujah. However, Bremer stressed that Brahimi's presence was essential and that continued U.N. engagement provided a powerful contrast to Muqtada Al-

²⁹⁹ John Burns, Christine Hauser, "Bremer Raising Pressure to End Iraqi Uprisings," *The New York Times*, April 19, 2004.

³⁰⁰ Burns, Hauser, "Bremer Raising."

³⁰¹ Burns, Hauser, "Bremer Raising."

³⁰² Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.77

Sadr's plan for Iraq. Furthermore, Bremer wanted to keep the political process grinding forward through the efforts of the U.N., even though it was slow.³⁰³ Blaming former members of Hussein's forces, such as his secret intelligence agency, his Republican Guard, the mukhabarat, alongside members of Al-Sadr's militia force for causing this crisis. He also indicated that they had attempted "to stop the process that leads to elections, to a government that respects the rights of all."³⁰⁴ In 2006, American intelligence reports indicated that up to 2,000 members of the Al-Sadr's militia, "Al-Mahdi Army", and other Shia militias related to Tehran had been trained in Lebanon by Hizballah. These training tactics included bombmaking, weapon handling, assassinations, and intelligence. Even though most Al-Mahdi Army members are profoundly nationalistic and have little affinity with Iranians, the Sadrists deemed Hizballah a model for emulation. Meanwhile, the Iranian regime played a dangerous balancing game by supporting the different Shia Iraqi militias.³⁰⁵

Meanwhile, many Iraqi Sunni officials were angry during the American mission, and the tension escalated. For instance, Minister of Human Rights Abdel Basit Turki announced his resignation. Turki was a moderate Sunni with family and clan ties in Al-Anbar Province. Additionally, Adnan Pachachi, the senior GC member, was outraged by the American operation there, which he labelled as "collective punishment." He also was on the verge of announcing his resignation.³⁰⁶

This second battle lasted until December 23, 2004, causing the deaths of 1,200 people and the displacement of 250,000 out of 300,000. Proving the "fragile alliance" between Shiites and Sunnis against the occupation was short-lived. Although some Shiite leaders maintained their support for the Sunni, subsequently, the support collapsed, and sectarianism increased. More specifically, some Shiites believe that the Sunnis in Fallujah deserved their fate for harboring characters such as Al-Zarqawi, who openly used sectarian rhetoric and targeted Shiite communities. At the same time, the movement of Fallujah's displaced to western Baghdad occurred in conjunction with the beginning of the "cleansing of Shia". To clarify, Fallujah's refugees needed homes, and Shiites in Sunni neighborhoods were instructed to leave by Sunni militias or civilians to make room for new arrivals. In addition, the insurgents used tools of coercion such as kidnappings and murder.³⁰⁷

³⁰³ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.339

³⁰⁴ Burns, Hauser, "Bremer Raising."

³⁰⁵ Wehrey, Kaye, Watkins, Martini, Guffey, "The Iraq Effect," P.135

³⁰⁶ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.346

³⁰⁷ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.77

If de-Baathification was used more reasonably and parts of the military had been reactivated, reducing the violence and de-escalating its escalation in 2004 and beyond would have been much more accessible. Instead, violence in Fallujah escalated from a bloody confrontation between US soldiers and Iraqi protesters on April 28, 2003, to daily attacks on coalition forces. The conflict in Fallujah led to an escalation of violence in Iraq for three main reasons. First, Sunnis increasingly saw themselves under attack by American troops. Furthermore, the Sunnis saw the Shiites as increasingly supportive of the American occupation, and the Shiites' approval of the destruction of Fallujah during the second battle made it very clear.³⁰⁸ As a result, this failure will lead to more devastating events during the American approach regarding the war on terror and democratizing the Iraqis. One of the most disastrous events was the civil war. What is the civil war, and why did it break out while Al-Maliki held power in 2006?

4.5 The Civil War

In his book, Bremer warned of civil war in Iraq less than three years after the invasion due to the lack of establishment of professional uncorrupt and attentive to human rights in Iraqi forces.³⁰⁹ What is a civil war, and how does it occur?

According to scholars, civil wars don't come from a peaceful society; mostly, they are reflections of low-level political violence that escalates later.³¹⁰ They are usually an escalation of violence due to severe state weakness or collapse. Therefore, the incentive for violence exists if a state cannot secure the population opponents of the state might seek to build up the capacity to challenge the state by banding together and arming themselves for self-defense to gain power.³¹¹ Intentionally, violent entrepreneurs escalate violence to influence state policy or systematically subvert and destroy governmental capacity and legitimacy.³¹² When a state collapses, the absence of central authority forces individuals to provide for their security. More specifically, those individuals became self-defense groups based on stronger societal ties.

In the early stages of the campaign of violence, “non-systematic”, the violent entrepreneurs mobilize public support to undermine the faith in the new government. When sufficient mobilization is achieved, the insurgents can carry out a more systematic campaign of violence,

³⁰⁸ Meiser, Heye and McKee, “From Anarchy to Civil War,” P.73

³⁰⁹ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.217

³¹⁰ Meiser, Jeffrey, Lydia Heye, and Kelsie McKee. “From Anarchy to Civil War: The Escalation of Violence in Iraq, 2003-2006.” *Special Operations Journal* 4, no. 1 (2018) :P.63.

³¹¹ Meiser, Heye and McKee, “From Anarchy to Civil War,” P.64

³¹² Meiser, Heye and McKee, “From Anarchy to Civil War,” P.65

which begins the process of the armed overthrow of the existing political system.³¹³ Leaders can be more successful by adopting strategies focusing on framing grievances and courses of action from an ethnic group. In other words, insurgencies grow dependent on the successful mobilization of social groups by persuading them that they are being mistreated and that justice can be achieved through collective action against the state.³¹⁴ But what about Iraq?

In the Iraqi scenario, the motives are often based on tribe, ethnicity, or religious sect. Moreover, some sectarian groups could consider the collapse or weakness of the state as an opportunity to settle old scores or seize resources. Nevertheless, it should be noted that violence can happen due to the absence of higher authority to end it. As the duration of the violence last longer, the group identities most probably become more entrenched.³¹⁵ As the first wave of violence is not suppressed, it will likely escalate into a cycle of revenge killing.³¹⁶

Before the outbreak of the civil war in Iraq in February 2006, a long cycle of events had led to it. Firstly, US leaders were unable and unwilling to fill the security vacuum during the early days of the invasion. As a result, American forces stood idly by as looting and revenge killings spread across Iraq. Secondly, the American actions in Falluja, directly and indirectly, intensified sectarian violence and the Sunni insurgency. The events surrounding the First Battle of Fallujah in April 2004 and the Second Battle of Fallujah in November of the same year deepened the sectarian divide. In other words, the Sunnis considered Shiites and Americans enemies. Additionally, the displacement of Sunnis from Fallujah to Baghdad caused sectarian conflict and ethnic cleansing.³¹⁷

Moreover, many scholars indicated that the fighting in Fallujah led to many Sunnis moving to Baghdad, displacing Shiites from mixed neighborhoods. This led to tit-for-tat violence when Shiites resisted. Therefore, launching an ethnic cleansing campaign against Sunnis in Baghdad.³¹⁸ Furthermore, as a quick reaction, the Shia violence entrepreneurs responded by forming death squads to carry out revenge attacks on Sunnis. Shia death squads were often associated with one of the main Shia militias, such as the Badr Corps of SCIR, “the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq”, or the Mahdi Army led by Muqtada Al-Sadr. In addition, members of these Militias were often also members of the Iraqi security forces,

³¹³ Meiser, Heye and McKee, “From Anarchy to Civil War,” P.65

³¹⁴ Meiser, Heye and McKee, “From Anarchy to Civil War,” P.66

³¹⁵ Meiser, Heye and McKee, “From Anarchy to Civil War,” P.64

³¹⁶ Meiser, Heye and McKee, “From Anarchy to Civil War,” P.65

³¹⁷ Meiser, Heye and McKee, “From Anarchy to Civil War,” P.68

³¹⁸ Meiser, Heye and McKee, “From Anarchy to Civil War,” P.73

especially police forces controlled by the Interior Ministry, led by SCIRI member Bayan Jaber Solagh who is related to Iran.³¹⁹

It is worth mentioning that the post-2003 era triggered a security problem. Leading the Iraqi population to tribal and ethnic groups to provide protection.³²⁰ Sunnis' fear of rising Shia power after the de-Baathification led them to look increasingly to foreign jihadis for security. Meanwhile, Shia militias led by Al-Mahdi Army waged an offensive war against Sunnis when it was clear that the Sunni resistance had reconciled with Al-Qaeda, and Iraqi nationalist groups, including the Association of Muslim Scholars, began supporting Al-Qaeda's attacks on security forces and sheltering Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi's men in late 2005.³²¹ However, Al-Zarqawi was a part of the broader Sunni insurgency that escalated in violence against Iraqis and coalition forces from 2003 to 2007. Al-Zarqawi and his group Al-Qaeda attempted to achieve "a sectarian civil war and the collapse of the state."³²² To clarify, Al-Zarqawi's vision revolved around an intense sectarian civil war that forced Washington to withdraw, followed by the victory of the Sunnis over the Shiites. Eventually, the establishment of the Al-Qaeda caliphate in Iraq.³²³

Al-Zarqawi, who was able to mobilize extremist Sunnis successfully, justified the terrorist tactics by citing the 13th-century Salafi authority Ibn Taymiya who confirmed that the Shia sect had betrayed the Muslim nation to invaders throughout history. Justifications for targeting the Iraqi Shia had been matched by genuine fears about the Iranian regime's expansionist plans.³²⁴

In February 2004, Al-Zarqawi said in a letter:

*"If we succeed in dragging them into the arena of sectarian war, it will become possible to awaken the inattentive Sunnis as they feel imminent danger and annihilating death at the hands of these Sabeans."*³²⁵

The idea that Shiites supported the American occupation was escalating among extremist Sunnis. Al-Zarqawi stated that "the battle of Fallujah removed the ugly mask of the damned "Rafidah", a derogatory term for Shiites. Additionally, he declared war on Shiites in September

³¹⁹ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.78

³²⁰ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.65

³²¹ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.79

³²² Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.66

³²³ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.74

³²⁴ Wehrey, Kaye, Watkins, Martini, Guffey, "The Iraq Effect," P.117

³²⁵ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.77

2005, even though the Sunni community quickly condemned this war. However, Condemning Al-Zarqawi's call for war did not satisfy extremist Shiite actors such as Muqtada Al-Sadr, who refused the Sunni leaders to apologize unless they labelled Zarqawi "an infidel." None of the Sunni leaders responds to his request. Thus, tension and sectarian polarization increased, causing more death among the civilians from both sects.³²⁶ Eventually, the United States failed to take any action that would change Fallujah's perception of it as a hostile occupying power. Furthermore, it reinforced the perception in the Sunni insurgent narrative of the Shia-led government and Washington as an anti-Sunni alliance. Causing more sectarian violence.³²⁷

4.5.1 Al-Askari Mosque Bombing

From various scholars' points of view, Iraq reached the peak of its civil war when the Al-Askari mosque in Samarra city was destroyed in February 2006. The Samarra bombing was a declaration of war against the Iraqi Shiites.

According to Rumsfeld, the radical Sunnis, principally Al-Qaida, exploded the Al-Askari mosque, representing a high value to the Shiites. Meanwhile, the Iraqi were wondering why the U.S. could not stop such an attack even though they had modern technology. Therefore, this attack led to a different stage of sectarian violence. In addition, the Shiite Militias were involved in ethnic cleansing campaigns against Sunni. As a result, these events delayed the American forces' withdrawal from Iraq in light of the unpreparedness of the Iraqi troops.³²⁸

In accordance to the Pentagon, the Al-Askari mosque explosion led to a new era of violations. Even Moqtada Al-Sadr militias were involved in numerous cases of abuse against the Sunni, who were killed through different weapons, including the drill bit. In addition, many civilians lost their lives during that time because their names only represented their sect as Sunnis. Subsequently, many Sunnis advocated Al-Qaida attacks against the Shiite militias and civilians.³²⁹

Due to the Al-Askari mosque bombing, the sectarian civil war reached its highest level through kidnappings, death squad killings, sectarian cleansing, suicide bombings, and various other forms of deadly anarchy.³³⁰ As a result of violence escalation, the number of civilian deaths increased from 7,300 in 2003 to 16,800 and 2,200 in 2004 and 2005, respectively, peaking at

³²⁶ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.78

³²⁷ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.78

³²⁸ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 363

³²⁹ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 388

³³⁰ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.79

34,500 in 2006. This sectarian war was a direct response to the collapse of the state instead of an inevitable result of regime change.³³¹

After the end of the civil war, other negative consequences of the system appeared, such as systematic political corruption. In addition, the Al-Maliki government could not deliver even essential state services such as water and electricity.³³² In 2012, the return of violence was primarily due to the failure to restrain sectarianism in the previous decade.³³³ This research will spotlight this issue later.

4.5.2 The American Policies During the Civil War

One of the fundamental reasons for this chaos was the lack of American planning for "post-conflict" stability operations. In addition, the inability of political and military leaders to adapt to the growing chaos encouraged decentralized violence. More specifically, the chaos that followed the American invasion marked the first stage in the collapse of the Iraqi state and the emergence of a "security vacuum." Subsequently, the decision to implement de-Baathification exacerbated Iraq's insecurity, creating grievances among the Sunnis.³³⁴

Furthermore, The American failure to restore order quickly after removing Hussein's regime created an atmosphere of chaos and a permissive environment for violence. More specifically, de-Baathification facilitated increased violence by reducing state capacity while increasing Sunni grievances. Additionally, the United States heightened this issue by its response to the April 28 protests and the first battle of Fallujah. Later, the Second Battle of Fallujah escalated sectarian tensions and marked the beginning of the rampant decentralized violence in Baghdad. Forcing the Nationalist and Sunni Islamist insurgents to wage war against the foreign forces and their local collaborators.³³⁵

The two battles of Fallujah provoked Iraqi hostility toward Washington, which soon turned into sectarian violence. Initially, American forces intervened in Fallujah to prevent further mobilization of violent entrepreneurs. Still, the consequences of their intervention led to the continued legitimacy of the various rebel groups in the area. Moreover, the abrupt end of the

³³¹ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.79

³³² Dodge, Mansour, "Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization," P:58.

³³³ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.80

³³⁴ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.67

³³⁵ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.79

first Fallujah battle gave a platform for the rebel leaders to recruit. If the American forces didn't withdraw quickly from Fallujah, it might not become a hub for sectarian groups.³³⁶

According to Rumsfeld, in 2006, U.S. State Department and Condoleezza Rice suggested that the American troops should not involve in the Iraqi sectarian war. Moreover, those forces should also withdraw from the major Iraqi cities such as Baghdad.³³⁷

Moreover, in accordance to the Pentagon, Bremer refused to support the programs which intended to make the American military leaders create projects for Iraqis. The central concept of these programs was based on enhancing Iraq's economy and letting the civilians be involved by completing small projects to reduce the chances of joining the rebels.³³⁸

Meanwhile, many scholars indicated that the United States was not ready for crisis after the invasion. The military forces weren't trained or prepared to deal with civil disturbances and law enforcement.³³⁹

Moreover, the American-led coalition was supposed to prevent any spark of ethnic strife, but it did not, as the goal was to fight terrorism at any cost. They ignored the fact that in a country such as Iraq, religious sects could turn the country into potentially endless chaos out of the necessity of revenge.³⁴⁰

Politically, the U.S. failed to build a successful new regime as it was already based mainly on sectarianism. Even though the distribution of state resources to ruling parties is meant to tie them to the state and a peaceful status quo. However, this system could not prevent the civil war that raged.³⁴¹

Al-Anbar Province was proof of the Al-Maliki government's violence against civilians, especially in both Ramadi and Fallujah cities. Principally, the residents accused government forces of illegally detaining innocents, torturing and raping them. Moreover, different NGO workers accused the government of committing war crimes. Additionally, The Iraqi army was reportedly preventing medical supplies from entering Fallujah and Ramadi cities.³⁴²

³³⁶ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.78

³³⁷ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 407

³³⁸ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 179

³³⁹ Perito, "Establishing the Rule," P.1.

³⁴⁰ Perito, "Establishing the Rule," P.2.

³⁴¹ Dodge, Mansour, "Sectarianization and De-Sectarianization," P:58.

³⁴² Hamourtziadou. "Fault Lines to Trenches," P.104

4.6 American Tools to Fight the Radical Sunnis

A- Supporting the Shiite Militias

Washington estimated that there were 60,000–100,000 fighters in 2003. Principally, those fighters belonged to nine different groups, each attached to a political party in Iraq. As a result, the United States knew that it had to take a step and do something about the militias that had evolved out of Kurdish and Shiite resistance to Hussein's regime.³⁴³ Consequently, Bremer wanted Sayyid Abdul Aziz Hakim, one of the leaders of the Shiite Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), to reinforce the new Iraqi army after demobilizing Hussein's Army. Mainly, Bremer asked for drawing some of the Hakim party's 10,000 members Badr Corps militia. He also promised Hakim that the commander of the first battalion would be a Shiite.³⁴⁴

However, exiles like Hakim claimed to have support from Iraq's neighbors, especially Iran. To clarify, they indicated that Tehran had a beneficial influence. Nevertheless, no Arabic country wanted to embrace Saddam's opponents openly. In comparison, Tehran was keen to keep a secret distance between itself and SCIRI operations and other Shiite militias.³⁴⁵ During that time, the American private channel had sent some concerning reports showing Shiite cleric Muqtada Al-Sadr. Asserting that Al-Sadr, a surviving son of Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq Al-Sad, who was assassinated in 1999, had the capacity, possibly from the "Iranians," to create disturbances. In other words, he was able to influence dangerously large numbers of passionate followers in many Iraqi cities like Karbala, Najaf, and even Baghdad against the coalition.³⁴⁶ He also was a suspect in the assassination of the Shiite Grand Ayatollah Abd al-Majid Al-Khoei, who had just returned from exile to Najaf to assume the city's spiritual leadership in April 2003.³⁴⁷

When Al-Kohei was murdered, the chaos was deadly in the holy city of Najaf. The Shiite leader was not only an important figure for the Shiites but also for the American coalition. The American officials hoped Al-Kohei could help maintain peace in Najaf and among the Shiite clerics. Additionally, US officials wanted to form a post-Baathist government in Najaf depended mainly on the leadership of this Shiite cleric.³⁴⁸ Moreover, in accordance to Bremer,

³⁴³ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.288

³⁴⁴ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.71

³⁴⁵ Yaphe, "Iraq before," P.11

³⁴⁶ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.212

³⁴⁷ Bremer, Malcolm, "My year in Iraq," P.135

³⁴⁸ Meiser, Heye and McKee, "From Anarchy to Civil War," P.70

the coalition led by the U.S. faced another obstacle related to leading Al-Sadr who had announced plans to form an “Islamic Army” independent of the government Immediately after the invasion.³⁴⁹

However, in accordance to Rumsfeld, Bush decided to hold talks with the Iranian regime through official and secret channels post-2003. However, it failed. In contrast, Iran increased the process of its illegal weapons program, constantly supported Hizballah in Lebanon, suppressed the opponents inside Iran, threatened to erase Israel from the map, and escalated the attacks of its militias in Iraq.³⁵⁰

Nevertheless, at the peak of the civil war in 2007, the Bush administration agreed to support the Iraqi militias financially to stop attacking the American troops through a strategy of General David Petraeus, the commander in chief of US forces in Iraq. However, later, these militias agreed to attack Al-Qaida in Iraq. As a result, Moqtada Al-Sadr ordered his militia to retreat. Meanwhile, the Americans financially supported Sunnis who attacked Al-Qaida.³⁵¹ Moreover, during the war on ISIS, both of pro-Iran Shiite militias and Washington were united again, which this research will explain later.

B- Supporting Sunni Militias Al-Sahwa “the Awakening”

The insurgency in Iraq has taken different forms. Fighting against the occupying forces, the Iraqi government, as well as a fight against another faction. However, sometimes they fought even against former members of the same faction, such as the Al-Sahwa militia. More specifically, the Awakening was a movement in which Sunni tribe members who had formerly fought against U.S. troops eventually realigned themselves to help counter other insurgents, especially, Al-Qaeda.³⁵²

Furthermore, according to Rumsfeld, in October 2006, the U.S. supported Al-Sahwa, which gathered around 100 thousand members who significantly defeated Al-Qaida in Al-Anbar province.³⁵³

This movement was a principal factor in the declining violence in 2007. The American support for Sunnis to defeat the radical groups was one the best tactics that enabled Washington to end

³⁴⁹ Bremer, Malcolm, “My year in Iraq,” P.135

³⁵⁰ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 338

³⁵¹ Hamilton, “American Caesars,” P: 712

³⁵² Hamourtziadou. “Fault Lines to Trenches,” P.102

³⁵³ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 414

the civil war and decline the violence in Iraq, even though it was temporary. More specifically, after the American withdrawal in December 2011, a renewed wave of antigovernment and sectarian insurgency swept Iraq in light of the potential Iranian support to the militias.³⁵⁴

C- Exploiting the Brutality of Al-Qaida

Even though Al-Qaida could take advantage of Iraq as the primary outlet for defensive jihad after the American invasion, it has lost public support due to its brutal tactics in the country.³⁵⁵

In addition, the American invasion had attracted the resistance of multiple regional audiences whose immediate local grievances might have been unrelated to Iraq. More specifically, many volunteers did not abide by the "typical" terrorist profile; some were students or professionals. In other words, Iraq became the focus of anti-Western sentiment and a center for new volunteers. For instance, as it's tough to access the borders of Gaza to fight against Israel, many young Jordanians went to Iraq because it was an easy target.³⁵⁶

Nevertheless, even though Al-Qaida had a strong presence in Iraq, it faced other hardships than other organizations, such as Hezbollah and Hamas, which have an established nationalist agenda and are territorially based. In other words, Al-Qaida has successfully partnered with domestic Islamic groups. Still, these relations fail when the domestic groups realize that they can't achieve their nationalist goals, unlike Al-Qaida, which has global agenda.³⁵⁷ Furthermore, 90% of suicide volunteers in Iraq were foreigners; they were willing to sacrifice themselves in the name of jihad rather than their concept of the nation. The difference in both jihadists' and nationalist groups' agendas indicated that the movement's prospects for gaining a long-term foothold in Iraq and other states are limited to "lands of savagery" when the state structure collapse.³⁵⁸ Moreover, Al-Qaida was targeting Muslim civilians unconnected to the American occupation; it cost the Muslim public support and sympathy alongside the hardships that the terrorist organization faced related to the cooperation with Iraqi nationalist resistance. A 2005 Pew Survey found that, in Lebanon, support for suicide bombings had fallen from 73 per cent in the summer of 2002 to 16 per cent, and in Morocco, the support level decreased from 40 per cent in 2004 to 13. However, in Jordan, support rose from 43 per cent in 2002 to 57 per cent in 2005. Nevertheless, a fall in mainstream public support for terrorist tactics does not necessarily

³⁵⁴ Hamourtziadou. "Fault Lines to Trenches," P.102

³⁵⁵ Frederic Wehrey, Dalia Dassa Kaye, Jessica Watkins, Jeffrey Martini and Robert A. Guffey, *The Iraq Effect: The Middle East After the Iraq War*, (RAND Corporation, 2010), P.105.

³⁵⁶ Wehrey, Kaye, Watkins, Martini, Guffey, "The Iraq Effect," P.109

³⁵⁷ Wehrey, Kaye, Watkins, Martini, Guffey, "The Iraq Effect," P.120

³⁵⁸ Wehrey, Kaye, Watkins, Martini, Guffey, "The Iraq Effect," P.131

reflect a recruitment drought for the ranks of terrorist groups.³⁵⁹ But the question is, did the terrorism wave affect the national security of Iraq's neighbor countries before 2014?

The simple answer is No because it didn't spread primarily to them after the invasion but to the more-distant states such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, North Africa, and Yemen to a lesser extent.³⁶⁰ Conversely, Rumsfeld asserted that the U.S. should not focus only on radical Islam by fighting terrorist groups in Iraq and Afghanistan only. He also indicated that to guarantee the ultimate win against "Islamic terrorism," his country should wage an ideological war against it. He noted that this war would prolong, such as the Cold War against the Soviet Union.³⁶¹ As radical Islam represents an ideological challenge for the U.S., the American mission to defeat that danger through being proactive rather than defensive similar to the previous approach against the Soviet Union. The American goal will be clear for the moderate Islamists who will fight the radical Islamic groups and will find that the purpose of "Al-Khalifa" is not attainable. Moreover, Washington recognized that fighting terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan won't only be over through the military card.³⁶²

From the Pentagon's point of view, Washington has a clear advantage over the Islamic radical groups: the U.S. can provide the Iraqis with a better future, independent rule, and national values. Conversely, those groups were cutting civilians' heads to control the country. Moreover, according to Rumsfeld, by providing such an honest government through fair elections; then the population would be assured that the invaders did not attack their country for its oil.³⁶³ In order to expose the brutality of radical Islam, Washington should find a way to make Muslims before the Western population talk about the brutal actions of the radical groups who have succeeded in humiliating a superpower such as the USSR.³⁶⁴

4.7 Terrorism in Numbers Before the Emerge of ISIS

Various studies indicated that terrorism levels rose sharply after the American invasion of Iraq. However, most of them showed Iraq is not considered a conclusive causal factor. According to the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center, there was a sharp rise in the number of terrorist attacks worldwide from 3,255 in 2004 to 11,088 in 2005.³⁶⁵ However, establishing a ground

³⁵⁹ Wehrey, Kaye, Watkins, Martini, Guffey, "The Iraq Effect," P.114

³⁶⁰ Wehrey, Kaye, Watkins, Martini, Guffey, "The Iraq Effect," P.141

³⁶¹ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 375

³⁶² Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 439

³⁶³ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 383

³⁶⁴ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 440

³⁶⁵ Wehrey, Kaye, Watkins, Martini, Guffey, "The Iraq Effect," P.106

for terrorism in Iraq devastated its population throughout the following years. For instance, in 2006 alone, the terrorist attacks killed more than 29 thousand.³⁶⁶ Additionally, from March 2003 to September 2006, the attacks on Western citizens and interests worldwide outside Iraq and Afghanistan rose by 25 per cent. In contrast, the results differ from other studies, such as the Simon Fraser University in Canada published in May 2008. It indicated that the casualties related to terrorism outside Iraq declined in 2003 by more than 40 per cent.³⁶⁷ However, there is considerable debate over what should be considered terrorism. For example, some parties deemed Iraq a war zone; thus, it is misleading to include attacks there. In other words, war zones have not been identified as terrorism in some government-funded terrorist databases.³⁶⁸

Nevertheless, the over-commitment of George Bush's years of using military powers exposed the limits of American power in Iraq and the region. Principally, the American forces' interventions failed to achieve their goals and fostered hostility to the U.S. and its allies on which radical Islamic groups prospered. Thus, it contributed to the further destabilization of the area.³⁶⁹ In other words, Bush's revolution in foreign policy has led to a generation-long conflict between Washington and the radical social forces within a vast community of Islam.³⁷⁰

In a related context, some scholars believe that the U.S. did not reach its final aim with the war in Iraq. They assume that from Obama's perspective, Iraq's 2003 invasion and occupation was a "war of choice", not a "war of necessity". Thus, direct intervention should occur when there are direct security threats such as the danger of Al-Qaeda, challenges to Israel's existence, or a nuclear Iran, not Iraq. The authors concluded that the associated difficulties with the resilience of global terrorism, alongside the unfixed issues of Iraq, raise the question about the effectiveness of the U.S. military and economic power in achieving international peace and security in the Middle East.³⁷¹

In addition, by his decision to disarm the Iraqi army, Bremer has shown the failure to involve Iraqis more deeply in their recovery. Principally, sorting out nominal Baathists from notorious ones is not a new issue for the United States. Washington had faced similar occupation

³⁶⁶ Hamourtziadou, "Fault Lines to Trenches," P.100

³⁶⁷ Wehrey, Kaye, Watkins, Martini, Guffey, "The Iraq Effect," P.107

³⁶⁸ Wehrey, Kaye, Watkins, Martini, Guffey, "The Iraq Effect," P.108

³⁶⁹ Mario Del Pero, "*Dollars, Arms, Words: Barack Obama and the Dilemmas of American Hegemony*," *European Review of International Studies* 5, no. 2. (2018): 32-33. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26593733>.

³⁷⁰ Golub, "Imperial politics," 764.

³⁷¹ Quero, Dessì, "Unpredictability," P.8.

problems in postwar Germany when there was the role of former low-level Communist Party members in Eastern and Central Europe after the year 1989. Some people were cleared who probably shouldn't have been included; however, their numbers were not large enough extent to threaten the established democracies.³⁷²

4.8 Fighting Terrorism or Feeding it?

The United States declared its war on terrorism in 2001 and considered Iraq a supporter of those extreme powers, despite the lack of tangible evidence of that relationship. Nevertheless, Iraq became the leading center for attracting Sunni extremists worldwide to fight the occupier after the invasion.

Many factors led to the turn of Iraq into a terrorist ground; Chiefly, the impact of the de-Baathification decision was disastrous for the Sunnis, which from their perspective, were victimhood in a country whose previous regime was already based primarily on secular principles.

The United States resorted to an arbitrary decision to eliminate the former regime at any cost. Still, it fueled feelings of division and sectarianism among the components and sects of the population. Moreover, after Afghanistan, the American military presence in another Islamic country attracted extremist Islamic groups, mainly Al-Qaida, from several countries, especially Saudi Arabia and Syria, to fight it. Therefore, under an "unholy" alliance, the occupation caused an unprecedented union between the former Iraqi army, "with a nationalist and secular orientation," and "Sunni extremist forces."

In addition, Washington committed violations in several Iraqi cities, such as Fallujah and resorted to lethal force to eliminate terrorism. However, its battles in Fallujah caused large waves of displacement of Sunnis, exacerbating hostility among the Sunnis against the Shiites, who saw them as allied with the occupying forces. Thus, it caused one of Iraq's worst civil wars, reaching its climax in 2006 and 2007.

After the invasion, the United States attempted different tools to eliminate terrorism. Firstly, it resorted to the Shiite militias to prevent opening two fronts during the war. Eventually, Washington succeeded in shifting the role of those militias "supported by Iran" to fight against Al-Qaida rather than its forces. This step was a primary reason for eliminating many extremist

³⁷² Rebuilding Iraq with Iraqis," *The New York Times*, June 29, 2003.

Sunni forces, as Washington and Iran had common enemies. However, this was a temporary solution.

Moreover, financial support enabled the United States to turn an old enemy into an ally. More specifically, supporting Sunni forces "Al-Sahwa" against Al-Qaida in 2007 was a cruel point to eliminate the radical Sunni groups and a significant step to end the civil war.

After it turned Iraq into a terrorist ground, the U.S. attempted to impose its ideology there, as in the rest of many countries, by showing the extent of the horror of "Sunni terrorism". According to the data, Washington has been fighting terrorism on all military, economic, and media levels. However, as Obama described, this "unnecessary invasion" stirred the sentiments of many Muslims worldwide against the U.S. More importantly, the American administration has created a political system in Iraq based primarily on sectarian lines, which threatens to lead to more violent waves later, as happened with the emergence of ISIS in 2014. Eventually, with exact causes and factors remaining, the results will not change. Therefore, terrorist organizations will likely emerge in Iraq due to the sectarian political system, the elimination of Sunnis, and the violations of pro-Iranian militias.

CHAPTER V

The Iranian Role

5.1 The Iraqi-Iranian Shared History

Iran and Iraq share a long history due to their geographic locations and religious factors, and they had several wars throughout the previous centuries. However, during the 1980s, both countries witnessed one of the longest wars of the last century. Subsequently, Iran of Al-Khomeini, which attempted to spread its Shias ideology, sponsored its framework of Iraqi refugees to fight against Iraq under Hussein's regime, which represented nationalism and secularism values. Principally, the eighth-year war forced up to one million Iraqi, "Shias", to seek refuge in Iran. Therefore, the Iranian regime gave special treatment to those refugees and encouraged them to support toppling Hussein's regime.³⁷³

There are different reasons beyond Iranian regime policies toward Baghdad. Tehran initially made Iraq the first country to receive its revolution due to the Iraqi Shai majority. According to the Iranian regime, since 1920, the Shia have suffered oppression and severe discrimination under various Sunni-dominated authorities in the Middle East.³⁷⁴

During the 1980s, Iraq's Shia was split into two different factions. More specifically, the first faction was represented by those who followed Ayatollah Al-Hakim, and the second one was those who followed the top Iraqi Shi'a cleric Ayatollah Baqir Al-Sadr. Principally, those two Ayatollahs led the Shi'a Islamist movement in Iraq before the war started with Iran. Nevertheless, most of their followers supported the new Iranian revolution.³⁷⁵

Additionally, Badr Corps members who lived in Iran or had closer connections to its regime often supported Ayatollah Abu Baqir Al-Hakim. Moreover, Al-Hakim and the SCIRI Party had close ties to the Iranian government and adopted the Khomeinist doctrine of Velayat-El Faqih.³⁷⁶ Chiefly, Al-Hakim's supporters began to organize on both sides of the border when the war between Baghdad and Tehran broke out. Moreover, Iran helped the group initiate a corresponding militia and a new political party called "the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and the Badr Brigade." Meanwhile, Al-Hakim subscribed to Khomeini's

³⁷³ Joseph H., Fishman, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq," P:19.

³⁷⁴ Meir Litvak, "Iran in Iraq: An Area of Strategic Influence," Institute for National Security Studies, No. 173. (March 2018): 41.

³⁷⁵ Joseph H., Fishman, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq," P:19.

³⁷⁶ Joseph H., Fishman, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq," P:23

doctrine of Velayat-El Faqih, similar to Hizballah in Lebanon, and abandoned Al-Sadr's traditional approach to Iraqi Shi'a doctrine.³⁷⁷ Despite Al-Sadr's assassination, many Iraqi Shia deemed him a spiritual leader. More specifically, Al-Sadr had not subscribed to Velayat-El Faqih, which made it difficult for his followers to do so. Moreover, even though the Dawah Party had received massive support from the Iranian regime and its militia was funded by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps "IRGC," there was a split between Dawah's leaders on doctrinal issues.³⁷⁸

Tehran called its war against Iraq an "imposed war." It drastically shifted Iran's foreign and domestic priorities in September 1980. Principally when Saddam Hussein attacked the southwestern part of Iran, according to Tehran's official story. Suddenly, Khomeini needed to mobilize Iran's resources to fight against Iraq. Principally, the eight years' war strengthened the post-revolutionary Iranian regime domestically. However, Tehran did not wholly neglect its plans to export its ideology. More specifically, Tehran took advantage of regional conflicts, such as the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. To clarify, Iranian revolutionaries trained in Lebanon to learn guerilla tactics and established strong support among the Lebanese Shia using the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps "IRGC." Eventually, Iran organized a Shia militia, its loyalty to Khomeinist ideology. This militia, which later became Hizballah, followed Khomeini's ideological doctrine, including Velayat-El Faqih.³⁷⁹

Furthermore, during its war against Iraq and after, Tehran maintained its support for SCIRI/Badr and Dawah's political and military activities, including terrorist attacks. For instance, Dawah's most infamous attack was the 1983 bombing of the American and French Embassies in Kuwait. Those attacks had compelling ties to Tehran and the Lebanese Hizballah. Despite that, the Badr Corps was the major Iranian-backed Iraqi militant organization inside Iraq backed by the Quds Force's Ramazan Headquarters. It also played a critical role in the 1991 uprisings against Hussein's regime following Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War after the invasion of Kuwait. According to Iraqi intelligence reports, the Badr Corps was provided approximately \$20 million annually until at least 2001 by the IRGC-QF. Additionally, the Badr Corps often established offices in hospitals, businesses, and NGOs operating in Iraq.³⁸⁰ Primarily, when the Iranian-Iraqi war ended, the IRGC became more active outside the Iranian

³⁷⁷ Joseph H., Fishman, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq," P:19

³⁷⁸ Joseph H., Fishman, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq," P:20

³⁷⁹ Joseph H., Fishman, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq," P:15

³⁸⁰ Joseph H., Fishman, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq," pp:20-21

borders. In other words, it had access to extensive support networks in Iraq and Lebanon through different militias, such as SCIRI/Badr and Lebanese Hizballah. According to an Iraqi intelligence document, the Quds Force's structure consists of other Corps, one known as the "Ramazan Headquarters," which is dedicated to Iraq. Principally this one operated three camps along the Iraqi borders. It is worth mentioning that, during its war with Iraq, Iran lost over 200,000 people, and some 700,000 were wounded. In 1988, Iran was forced to agree to a ceasefire, essentially a return to the pre-war situation without gaining its objectives. As a lesson of the war and to prohibit any threat from it in the future, the Iranian regime has enhanced its influence in Iraq.³⁸¹

Furthermore, in the 1990s, the IRGC transferred all its activities to a new branch called the Quds Force. Operating under Supreme Leader Al-Khomeini's direct supervision, led by Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi, who Qassem Suleimani replaced in 1998. Principally, Suleimani had a long history of militancy and was accused of committing the 1994 bombing of a Jewish Community Center in Argentina. Meanwhile, the Quds Force expanded into new countries, particularly in the Balkans and the former Soviet Bloc.³⁸²

5.1.1 The Iranian Influence After the American Invasion

Since the arrival of radical Islam to Iran in 1979, Tehran has been responsible for the death of many American troops by different attacks in different countries, such as Lebanon in 1983. Later, in 2004, the Iranian regime provided the Iraqi Shiite militias with military equipment and trained those militias to attack the American forces during the invasion. Nevertheless, Washington was exhausted with the war against the jihadists in different areas such as Iraq and Afghanistan, whereas Iran was not a priority to the U.S. More specifically, according to Rumsfeld, the Bush administration looked for different options to deal with the Iranian danger, but not the war card again. However, the Iranian regime could not ignore that more than 200 thousand American troops were close to the Iranian borders. Furthermore, the economical option of imposing sanctions on the Iranian energy department was a better choice, alongside isolating Tehran even more from the international community.³⁸³

³⁸¹ Maria-Louise Clausen, "IRAN'S SUCCESSFUL TRANSNATIONAL NETWORK, Iranian foreign policy utilizes partners," Danish Institute for International Studies (2020).

³⁸² Joseph H., Fishman, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq," pp:16-17

³⁸³ Rumsfeld, "Known and Unknown," P: 337

As discussed earlier, Iran supported Iraqi opposition groups during its war against Iraq. Moreover, it contained the anti-Saddam opposition since the 1980s, but what steps did Tehran take to achieve its near-total control of Iraq after the American occupation?

After the invasion, Iran quickly transferred its best officers from the intelligence ministry and the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards to Iraq. This step was a necessary reaction for the Iranian regime as Former American President George W. Bush declared that Iran was part of an "axis of evil". As a result, Iranian leaders believed Tehran would be the next victim on Washington's list after it changed the regimes of Afghanistan and Iraq. Nevertheless, Iran has become the primary strategic beneficiary of this invasion over time. Firstly, the United States toppled Saddam Hussein's regime or ended the end of a bitter strategic foe and rival. Secondly, the American invasion prompted the shift of power to the Iraqi Shia after a thousand years of Sunni hegemony. Thirdly, most Iraqi new leaders after 2003 had been exiled to Iran. To clarify, those leaders were not only grateful to Teheran; they also realized the need for Iranian support in light of the Sunni dissatisfaction with their loss of influence and the feud of some Sunnis Arab states toward the newly established Iraq. Thus, the Iranian regime has worked on three interconnected levels intending to boost its influence there.³⁸⁴

Furthermore, Iraq has also been an opportunity for Iran to expand its sway into the Arab world. It is advantageous for Iran to wield influence in Iraq, especially broken Iraq clawing toward a new political equilibrium since 2003. However, Iran prefers to operate secretly with less noise; what has been known about Iranian activities could represent only a fraction of its real exertions in a country such as Iraq.³⁸⁵

After 2003, Iran invested time, energy, workforce, money, and other resources into Iraq in order to secure its goals. In other words, Tehran needed a friendly Iraq that did not represent any threat to it, a country that is not dominated by other foreign interests. More specifically, Tehran did not want other foreign powers considering them threatening to control Iraq, such as the United States, rivals such as Saudi Arabia, or anti-Shia terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida. In addition, Tehran does not want to see a separate Iraq where Kurds could represent an inner issue to its system. Even though Iran still wants a unified Iraq, it would probably prefer a weak country heavily dependent on Tehran. Thus, it could be expected to use that strength on Iran's behalf, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon.³⁸⁶ Since 2005, Lebanon could embody a model of how

³⁸⁴ Clausen, "IRAN'S SUCCESSFUL," P.42

³⁸⁵ Pollack, "Iran in Iraq," P.1

³⁸⁶ Pollack, "Iran in Iraq," P.2

such an Iraqi-Iranian relationship might work in practice, whereas Hezbollah controls the joints of the state. In other words, many Iranian policymakers would love to see Iraq reduced to an Iranian vassal. As a result, Iran focused on different dimensions to control Iraq.³⁸⁷

5.1.2 Iranian Tools to Control Iraq

After the invasion, the Iranian regime took different decisions to influence the new Iraqi government. These actions aimed to reduce the danger of the American policies towards it and achieve its national interests on different levels.

- A. The inter-state level: Tehran convinced the Iraqi leaders to sign a long list of cooperation agreements in economics and security. It signed to create many reconstruction projects, schools, and power stations. In return, Iraq supported Iran's foreign policies in Syria and Lebanon. Additionally, Iraq helped it circumvent the economic sanctions imposed on it.³⁸⁸
- B. The party-movement level: Iran gave asylum and assistance to the Iraqi opposition organizations led by Muhammad Bakr Al-Hakim, and the Da'wah Party during Hussein's reign. After 2003, Tehran stepped up its activity and exerted enormous pressure on the different Shiite parties to form a unified bloc in Iraq. Moreover, the Iranian regime also trained and armed the Shiite militias that operated under the patronage of Iraq's different parties. However, Tehran did not only support the Shiite sector but was active with Arab-Sunni and various Kurdish parties, especially the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Jalal Talabani. As a result, Iran established itself as an arbitrator among the multiple parties and even affected the decisions of the different Iraqi governments.³⁸⁹
- C. The military-strategic level: Since 2003, Iran's three ambassadors in Baghdad have been senior officers in the Revolutionary Guards. This move reflects the importance of Iraq to the Iranian regime and sends a military message to different actors.³⁹⁰

Nonetheless, from a different angle, Iran has four primary cards to play regarding exerting its influence in Iraq.

- A. The "Tyranny of Time and Distance." To rephrase, Iran will always be right next door. Meanwhile, the Western countries' forces, especially the Americans, will leave a year, a

³⁸⁷ Pollack, "Iran in Iraq," P.3

³⁸⁸ Clausen, "IRAN'S SUCCESSFUL," P.42

³⁸⁹ Clausen, "IRAN'S SUCCESSFUL," P.43

³⁹⁰ Clausen, "IRAN'S SUCCESSFUL," P.43

decade, or a century later. Reminding Iraqis of Iran's permanent proximity also serves as a threat. It warns Iraqis that Tehran can wait to take its revenge or Iran will punish the Iraqis for taking the wrong side. Additionally, Iran can respond quickly when needed. It has local knowledge because it is part of the Middle East. Therefore, it could provide better help and more culturally appropriate ways than those outside the region.³⁹¹

- B. The “Do Anything, Pay Anyone” rule. To clarify, Iran's willingness to reward or punish. Some Iraqis were killed or kidnapped, never heard from again, or lost their properties to militia under Iranian control. In addition, according to American intelligence, Tehran financially supports the militias associated with Iraqi politicians who seem to have money to spend on campaigning.³⁹² On the other hand, even though Washington and other Western partners have far greater wealth and power than Iran, they are handcuffed by bureaucratic and political restrictions that mean they deliver far less than they theoretically could and less than Tehran.³⁹³
- C. The “Personal Touch.” Iran prefers to invest in people rather than Iraqi institutions. In other words, while the United States disbanded the solid Iraqi institutions: the army, the intelligence services, and the judiciary after the occupation, Iran has invested heavily in some institutions. More specifically, Shia militias like Badr and its leader Hadi Al-Ameri, Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq (AAH) and its leader Qais Al-Ghazali. In addition to Khata'ib Hezbollah (KH) and its leader, who is a full-blown Iranian agent Abu Mehdi Al-Muhandis. In sum, Iran's focus on Iraqi people over institutions magnifies Iranian influence because people can be bribed, rewarded, punished and threatened in ways that institutions cannot.³⁹⁴
- D. “Shia Solidarity.” The last card that Iran plays is religion. Some Sunnis consider the Shia apostates. Moreover, many Shias feel oppressed by their governments; they do not believe their governments respect, protect, or promote them, such as in Iraq during Hussein's reign, Saudi Arabia, or Bahrain. In the modern era, Iran has been the most powerful Shia state by far; Shia has looked to Iran for help against their “oppressive governments.” Subsequently, a new element was added to the mix: sectarian civil wars such as what happened in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan.³⁹⁵ However, Iran has been able to appeal to non-Shia groups, most notably the Hamas movement in Palestine. This highlights Iran's ability to rely on a network of state and non-state allies to further its foreign-policy goals, which cannot be fully grasped

³⁹¹ Pollack, “Iran in Iraq,” P.4

³⁹² Pollack, “Iran in Iraq,” P.4

³⁹³ Pollack, “Iran in Iraq,” P.5

³⁹⁴ Pollack, “Iran in Iraq,” P.5

³⁹⁵ Pollack, “Iran in Iraq,” P.6

through the lens of sectarian conflict. Furthermore, Iran's foreign policy also draws on core Shia themes; Tehran embodies itself as an anti-imperialist power.³⁹⁶

5.1.3 Iran's Proxies

Initially, there is a significant difference between political parties and proxies. Firstly, Political parties can represent the electorate in the political system and act as the primary agents of citizen principals in the chain of delegation built into parliamentary democracies.³⁹⁷ Moreover, political parties are active and influential throughout the policy-making process, from the agenda-setting stage to decision-making, and may thus play an essential role in policy representation.³⁹⁸

Conversely, proxies are non-state actors known to act clandestinely on behalf of states – or in conjunction with the state's armed actors, sometimes as formal or informal contract employees. Recently, there has been a clear distinction between acting on behalf and acting in conjunction. There is a relationship involving a benefactor, a state or non-state actor external to the dynamic of an existing conflict, and their chosen proxies who are the conduit for weapons, training and funding from the benefactor. However, in a proxy relationship, the agent wages war against a target in the benefactor's name. This effectively induces the proxy agent, a third party, into a conflict between the benefactor and the target, where they intervene indirectly. Here, the distinctiveness of the proxy agent rests through its ability to carry out violence through delegation from the benefactor.³⁹⁹

Who are Iran's proxies, and how can Tehran fully control them?

Initially, the proxies are actors that depend on Iranian resources and financial support. Thus, they are loyal to the Iranian regime both domestically and regionally. Firstly, as Tehran has restricted resources, Iranian client relationships are most robust when the client has limited access to alternative external funding, making the Iranian regime the peerless patron. Secondly, the proxies cannot effectively further a domestic plan if they receive some internal support and legitimacy. Thirdly, the client shouldn't only engage with the Iranian regional program and

³⁹⁶ Clausen, "IRAN'S SUCCESSFUL," P.2

³⁹⁷ Frida Boräng, Daniel Naurin, Jonathan Polk. "Making space: citizens, parties and interest groups in two ideological dimensions, *Journal of European Public Policy*," (February 2023): 11. DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2023.2182819.

³⁹⁸ Boräng, Naurin, Polk, "Making space," 5.

³⁹⁹ Rauta Vladimir, "Proxy agents, auxiliary forces, and sovereign defection: assessing the outcomes of using non-state actors in civil conflicts," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 16:1, (March 2016):13, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2016.1148416>

back its domestic political agenda. In 2014, Iran channeled support to Iraqi Shia groups with former ties with her, exploiting the advance of ISIS in Iraq and tapping into a broader narrative of Shia persecution in the Middle East. A briefing that in the idea of the “Axis of Resistance”, whose core members are Iran, the Iraqi militias, Hezbollah, and the Syrian regime, who share the struggle against the United States, Israel, and their allies such as Saudi Arabia.⁴⁰⁰

On a broader strategic level, Iraq has become the main link in Iran’s efforts to initiate such a strategic axis from its western borders toward the Mediterranean Sea to control more expansive territories of the region.⁴⁰¹ Additionally, Iraq has become an essential source of Shiite volunteers recruited that Iran can use whenever and wherever it wants. More specifically, the Iranian regime sent those fighters to Syria to help Al-Assad’s regime in 2012, which has been fighting the armed opposition for years. A clear example of those Iraqi Shia militias that can be a puppet to Iran are leaders such as Akram Al-Ka’bi, who split from the ’Asa’ib Ahl Al-Haq militia and set up the Iraqi Islamic Resistance Hezbollah Movement. To clarify, Al-Ka’bi stated that his men would fight to defend the Houthis militia in Yemen against not only Saudi Arabia but even against Iraq if Khamenei asked them to do so.⁴⁰² Furthermore, all the Iranian-backed militias announced their resistance to the US military presence in Iraq. Therefore, in 2009, Washington designated some militias, such as Katai’b Hezbollah (KH), a terrorist organization based on its history of targeting American interests in Iraq.⁴⁰³

There is an urgent question about why Iran did not use its army directly instead of proxies in Iraq. One of the main factors is that Tehran saves the Iranian soldiers' lives. In addition to avoiding triggering the Iraqi national opposition to the presence of foreign forces. Aiming to send an image as a state that does not harbor expansionist goals. However, Hujjat Al-I am ’Ali Yunesi, adviser to the Former Iranian President Rouhani, stated that:

"Iran today has become an empire as it was throughout history, Baghdad its capital, and it is the center of our civilization, culture, and identity today as in the past," referring to the restoration of the Sassanid Persian Empire "Mada'in," near Baghdad.⁴⁰⁴ Even though his statement aroused Iranian and Iraqi criticism, it represents a large part of the Iranian vision for

⁴⁰⁰ Clausen, “IRAN’S SUCCESSFUL,” P.2

⁴⁰¹ Clausen, “IRAN’S SUCCESSFUL,” P.50

⁴⁰² Clausen, “IRAN’S SUCCESSFUL,” P.47

⁴⁰³ Clausen, “IRAN’S SUCCESSFUL,” P.3

⁴⁰⁴ “Iran: We have become an empire; our capital is Baghdad,” *Al-Arabiya TV*, March 8, 2015.

Iraq.⁴⁰⁵ It is worth mentioning that Mada'in was the capital of the Sassanid Persian Empire in 637 AD before the Arabic Rashidun Caliphate defeated the forces of the Sassanid Empire.

Moreover, the Iranian ambassadors in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon are appointed from the senior ranks of the Revolutionary Guards, not the foreign ministry. In other words, the intelligence ministry runs its foreign policies in these countries. This policy suggests that Iran has the upper hand in information gathering in those countries and directing its proxies through those ambassadors.⁴⁰⁶

5.2 The Consequences of the American Withdrawal

Before diving into the ramifications of the American withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, why would the U.S. withdraw its forces from such an unstable country?

According to John Kerry, when Obama held power in 2009, his administration was under pressure because the Iraqi government was not ready to make any deal to maintain many American forces in Iraq. In addition, the cost of the war against Iraq was severe. Meanwhile, Washington returned to Afghanistan, where the war broke out again against Al-Qaida.⁴⁰⁷ However, even though the U.S. declared 2011 the withdrawal of all its troops from Iraq, it kept a few military bases there, alongside the world's largest embassy in Baghdad and thousands of contractors.⁴⁰⁸

Nevertheless, when the U.S. withdrew its forces from Iraq in 2011, the course of events took a different turn until it reached its climax in 2014 when ISIS occupied a third of the Iraqi territory. However, regarding the Iranian role, George Bush admitted that, even before the American withdrawal, he had lost Iraq to Iran due to its massive influence there. Especially under the reign of Nuri Al-Maliki, the Iraqi prime minister from 2006-2014.⁴⁰⁹ Many reports show that Al-Maliki showed a more sectarian orientation against Sunnis after the American withdrawal. He even issued an arrest warrant against the Iraqi Vice President, Tariq Al-Hashemi, a Sunni member of the Iraqi coalition, in December 2011. Accusing him of financing attacks targeting security and government officials during the bloody insurgency in Iraq.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁵ Clausen, "IRAN'S SUCCESSFUL," P.48

⁴⁰⁶ "The Iran Cables," The New York Times.

⁴⁰⁷ Kerry, "Every Day," P: 424

⁴⁰⁸ Doran, "Making the world," 85.

⁴⁰⁹ Lynch, "In the shadow of the cold war," P.43.

⁴¹⁰ "Iraq elections," BBC Arabic.

Since 2011, Tehran has exploited the weaknesses of other states to expand its influence through relationships with state and non-state actors or “proxies” which form the backbone of her foreign policy in Iraq and other Arabic states such as Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen.⁴¹¹ After that year, sectarianism destroyed the cohesion of the already weak Iraqi security forces. Simultaneously, Tehran had strengthened the Shiite militia groups' ties in Iraq. It's worth mentioning that those militias are better equipped and better trained than the Iraqi Army. According to Iraqi official sources, Iran introduced around 100,000 of them.⁴¹²

Moreover, according to the American news website “the intercept”, there were leaked Iranian documents, including hundreds of reports and cables written in 2014-15 by Iranian officers in the Ministry of Intelligence and Security. Those reports offered a detailed portrait of just how aggressively Tehran has worked to embed itself into Iraqi affairs. The documents revealed the total Iranian domination of the southern part of Iraq since 2011 and its spying on Baghdad airport, snapping pictures of American soldiers, and keeping tabs on coalition military flights.⁴¹³ Further, the documents showed that after the American withdrawal, the C.I.A. had left many of its longtime secret agents out on the street, jobless and destitute in a country still shattered from the invasion and in great danger of getting killed by Iran. However, Tehran took advantage of this situation. More specifically, those agents were happy to inform Iran of the secret information they knew about the C.I.A. operations in Iraq, details of the coalition’s weapons, names of other Iraqi agents, and where they were gathering. In addition, they saved their lives and were protected by Iran, which supported them financially. Further, the documents revealed that since 2011, Tehran has added former C.I.A. informants to its payroll. It also began recruiting a spy inside the State Department. More specifically, Tehran had started meeting with the sources and offered to reward the potential asset with a salary, gold coins, and other gifts. Furthermore, leaked reports showed that the primary tasks of the Iranian intelligence ministry were:

- A. Preventing Iraq from falling apart.
- B. “Breeding” Sunni militants on Irani’s long borders.
- C. Avoid descending into sectarian warfare, which could make Shia Muslims the targets of violence.

⁴¹¹ Clausen, “IRAN’S SUCCESSFUL,” P.1

⁴¹² Clausen, “IRAN’S SUCCESSFUL,” P.48

⁴¹³ “The Iran Cables,” The New York Times.

D. Preventing spinning off an independent Kurdish country which could lead to a direct threat to Iranian stability and territorial integrity.

Moreover, Iran has thoroughly infiltrated the Iraqi political process. According to the leaked files, as top American diplomats met behind closed doors with their Iraqi counterparts in Baghdad, their conversations were routinely reported back to Iran. For example, even though Salim Al-Jabouri, the Iraqi Parliament speaker (2010-14), is Sunni, he was known to have a close relationship with Iran. Still, the files revealed that one of his top political advisers was an Iranian intelligence asset. The political adviser said in the leaked files, "*I am present in his office daily and carefully follow his contacts with the Americans.*" However, Al-Jabouri, in an interview, said he did not believe that anyone on his staff had worked as an agent for the Iranian regime.⁴¹⁴

In addition, one report from the Al-Jabouri adviser revealed that Washington wanted to gain access to a rich natural gas field in Akkas, near Iraq's border with Syria. According to the source, the Americans might eventually attempt to export natural gas to Europe. In a cable to Tehran, the intelligence ministry officer wrote, "*It's recommended to exchange this information with the Russians and Syria.*" Moreover, the files exposed that Nechervan Barzani, the Former Prime Minister of Kurdistan (1999-2018), informed the Iranian officials immediately about his meeting with top American and British officials and Al-Abadi, the Former Iraqi prime minister, in Baghdad in December 2014.⁴¹⁵

5.3 Exploiting the War Against ISIS

Iran topped the scene after ISIS took control of many Iraqi territories. It is unsurprising, as Iraq is an essential neighboring country to Iran. Apart from the political influence, the two countries have a border over 1,400 kilometers long. In addition, their two societies are deeply connected and have long connections. After the invasion, their annual trade exceeds \$12 billion regarding economic relations, and Iran sends nearly 15% of its non-oil exports to Iraq. Furthermore, many of Iran's 90 per cent Shia Muslims are deemed the Shia clerical establishment; the Hawza of Najaf is the most important in the world. This holy city and Karbala attract millions of Iranians for religious pilgrimages yearly.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁴ "The Iran Cables," The New York Times.

⁴¹⁵ "The Iran Cables," The New York Times.

⁴¹⁶ Pollack, "Iran in Iraq," P.1

In light of the collapse of the Iraqi army in Mosul during Al-Maliki's reign in 2014, more than 100,000 Iraqi Shiites answered the call of their religious leaders, led by Al-Sistani. Creating different militias, known collectively as the Popular Mobilization Forces “PMF”, aiming to eliminate ISIS. Meanwhile, the commanders of the three largest militias, such as Asa'ib' Ahl-Haqq, "AH", the Badr Organization, and Katai'b Hezbollah “KH”, are considered Iranian proxies in Iraqi politics. More specifically, those different militias receive their salaries from the Iraqi government. Nevertheless, the administration of the payments was given to the militia commanders, who have close ties to Iran, instead of giving them directly to its fighters.⁴¹⁷ Furthermore, PMF, including non-Shia and Shia groups, comprised approximately fifty militias, which was a critical factor in the war against the terrorist organization. Still, the most vital groups are Shia with strong ties to Tehran. KH has publicly announced its absolute loyalty to the Iranian Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and supported the Iranian Shia notion of guardianship (Wilāyat El-Faqīh). In addition, KH accepted Khamenei as their spiritual leader instead of the Iraqi Ayatollah, Ali Al-Sistani.⁴¹⁸

Moreover, the Iranian hegemony exceeded the Shia militias and included the Kurdish region. The Western countries were undecided over the proper response after ISIS defeated the Kurdish Peshmerga forces and threatened Irbil in 2014. Meanwhile, Tehran quickly took action when General Qassem Soleimani visited Irbil to assist the Kurds and reorganize their forces. Tehran also sent intelligence information and weapons to Irbil to halt the advance of ISIS fighters. This assistance was considered an indirect political message to the Kurds, namely, that they were too fragile without Iranian help.⁴¹⁹

Furthermore, by offering support to Shia militias, Tehran wanted to reflect an image of being the protector of the Shia against Sunni terrorism. When ISIS started controlling Iraq on June 2014, Iran sent Iraq arms, money, and the commander of Iran's Quds Force, General Qassem Soleimani. On the other hand, the Arab countries offered even less, sending only token military contingents to the US-led “Anti-ISIS” coalition. This contrast between Iran and U.S. - Arab responses reflected an Iranian message that only they could be counted on to aid fellow Shia, especially when needed. Moreover, the advance of ISIS helped Iran exploit this event to boost its support to the Syrian regime for allegedly fighting Sunni terrorists and not against a popular revolt.⁴²⁰ In the 1990s, Syria reinforced its relations with Iran and depended on it for financial

⁴¹⁷ Clausen, “IRAN'S SUCCESSFUL,” P.46

⁴¹⁸ Clausen, “IRAN'S SUCCESSFUL,” P.3

⁴¹⁹ Clausen, “IRAN'S SUCCESSFUL,” P.48

⁴²⁰ Pollack, “Iran in Iraq,” P.7

and military support. Both of them supported Hizballah, which received a lot of Iranian weapons, and kept the Iranian and Syrian policies in the region. Moreover, Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad and previously his father, Hafiz, “Alawis”, could not control their country where the majority are Sunnis unless there were solid reasons. More specifically, the Al-Assad family used different slogans, including fighting Israel and reinforcing national values to strengthen its rule over the Syrian people during the past decades. Subsequently, Syria became the core of Jihadists that have moved to Iraq to fight against the American invasion before the emergence of ISIS. Nonetheless, Iran had to support its main ally in the region Al-Assad to fight against Sunni terrorism through its Shiite militias.⁴²¹

5.4 A Common Enemy

The success of ISIS in seizing control of key cities in northwest Iraq is a failure of three leading players.

- A. The government of Al-Maliki, which was deemed authoritarian and corrupt, excluded the Sunnis.
- B. It’s a significant failure for the U.S., which built sizeable ineffective security forces in Iraq and failed to impose law and order. More specifically, those Iraqi forces didn’t promote stability and could not deal with the attacks by the much smaller Sunni militia.
- C. It’s another failure for Iran, which became Iraq’s most important external actor after the American withdrawal in 2011.⁴²²

This being said, ISIS was a plain common enemy for both Washington and Tehran, but can they collaborate to defeat it?

Even though there is limited cooperation between Iran and the United States in Afghanistan, there is still a deep suspicion between the sides regarding Iraq. Nevertheless, both countries have a similar goal: eliminating the Sunni extremists in Iraq with different strategies, if not contradictory. To clarify, Washington demands three goals in Iraq. Firstly, building a democratic government with strong ties to the U.S. and Secondly, reassuring the Sunnis after what happened to them following the occupation. Thirdly, reducing the Iranian influence on

⁴²¹ Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown,” P: 339

⁴²² Kam, Ephraim. “*The Turbulence in Iraq: The Iranian Angle*,” Institute for National Security Studies, (June 2014). 1-3.

Iraq and its government's decisions. Conversely, Iran seems to strengthen the Iraqi Shiites to expand its influence there and distance the country from Washington.⁴²³

However, ISIS's threat created partial interests and indirect cooperation between Tehran and Washington. Khamenei approved tactical collaboration with the U.S. regarding fighting ISIS. Nevertheless, he rejected any strategic alliance, accusing both the U.S. and Israel of responsibility for forming the Islamic State.⁴²⁴

Eventually, in August 2014, Obama ordered the American air forces to attack ISIS, and he focused on three critical points. Firstly, enhancing the governance in Iraq. Secondly, creating a regional coalition against ISIS. Finally, a comprehensive diplomatic strategy. Later, the United States formed a united Islamic Front to fight the Islamic reference that ISIS claimed. However, it wasn't an easy mission to get the Islamic Sunni countries' support to fight against ISIS, as they wanted to eliminate Al-Assad first, then fight the Jihadists.⁴²⁵

Moreover, the Obama administration kept quiet on the revealed campaigns which attempted to reduce the participation of Shiite militias in the battle against ISIS. While allowing the Iranian regime and its proxies to play a more significant role in fighting might have short-term benefits. However, this step will give Tehran a more considerable influence in the Middle East, triggering sectarian violence. Additionally, the American green light to the Shiite militias allowing them to attack Sunni cities might erode the U.S. interest in persuading the Sunnis to turn against ISIS, as more Sunnis might join extreme group organizations.⁴²⁶

However, Iraq is not Syria; moving forces from Iran to Iraq is simple as Tehran won't face international criticism for helping Baghdad as it does for providing military aid to the Syrian regime. Regarding that, there was also some cooperation between Washington and Tehran, especially when the Former Secretary of State Kerry stated that the Obama administration was open to a discussion on cooperating with Iran on Iraq as long as it is a constructive move that aids stability in the country. In the same vein went President Obama, who noted that Tehran could play a constructive role in Iraq. Simultaneously, Former Iranian President Rouhani stated that his country is prepared to consider cooperation with Washington if it takes steps against terrorist organizations in Iraq. However, Ali Shamkhani, Secretary of the Supreme National

⁴²³ Kam, "The Turbulence in Iraq," P.3

⁴²⁴ Clausen, "IRAN'S SUCCESSFUL," P.45

⁴²⁵ Kerry, "Every Day," P: 611

⁴²⁶ Mark Moyar, "FPI Bulletin: Iranian-Backed Militias Endanger Iraq," Foreign Policy Initiative. (August 2015): 1-2, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep07250>.

Security Council, commented that the American Iranian cooperation on the Iraqi issue is unrealistic, denying the need for direct talks between the two sides.⁴²⁷

Nevertheless, any American- Iranian cooperation would trigger the fears of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. In addition, the Iranian regime would want compensation for cooperating with the United States against ISIS, primarily in the form of an acceptable deal regarding the nuclear issue. However, regardless of the immediate goals, any American attempt to cooperate with Iran in Iraq could be a grave mistake.⁴²⁸ Iran's primary goal in Iraq was to build a weak, non-threatening, stable, and unified country. Mainly, a country with stability across its borders is led by a Shiite majority connected to the Iranian regime. On the regional level, the Sunni extremists who are opposed to Al-Assad's government, an ally of Iran, made it necessary for Tehran to intervene and support the Syrian government with military aid.⁴²⁹

To conclude, the Iranian regime has succeeded in achieving its main strategic goals in Iraq by exercising its influence on Iraq's political system. Iran also has reached that level of dominance due to its control of the Shiite militias and its influence over the different Shia parties. However, all of that influence happened in the light of indirect American approval. Nevertheless, Iran didn't achieve complete control over Iraq because of the ethnic tension between Arabs and Iranians and the deep rift among the Shiite parties in Iraq.⁴³⁰

5.5 The Consequences of the American Iranian Cooperation

Even though there was an American green light to eliminate ISIS, Washington knew Iran was not a trusted country to collaborate fully. So, simultaneously, the U.S. wanted to reduce the Iranian influence in Iraq during the war against ISIS. More specifically, the Obama administration encouraged Former Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi to retake Sunni areas using the Iraqi Army rather than the Shiite militias. However, as the Iraqi Army took the lead in Anbar province, the militias have played a leading role in other Sunni cities such as Tikrit, where the Iranian General Qassem Suleimani led the Iraqi militia forces. Initially, Washington refused to provide air support at Tikrit. Nevertheless, the Iraqi government eventually convinced the Obama administration to intervene by agreeing to remove the militias from the fray. However, in the absence of American forces on the ground, the pro-Iranian pro militias took a leading role in the battle of Tikrit city. Ultimately, these militias committed many

⁴²⁷ Kam, "The Turbulence in Iraq," P.2

⁴²⁸ Kam, "The Turbulence in Iraq," P.3

⁴²⁹ Kam, "The Turbulence in Iraq," P.1

⁴³⁰ Clausen, "IRAN'S SUCCESSFUL," P.49

violations against Sunni civilians, such as murdering and looting in Tikrit, where Saddam Hussein was born, alongside different towns. One clear example was the massacre of the farming community of Jurf Al-Sakhar in Babylon province when these pro-Iran militias kidnapped men and teenagers and killed hundreds of them in 2014. Jurf Al-Sakhar is a critical city for Tehran's regime due to its location. It lies on a road Shiite religious pilgrims use to travel to Karbala during Muharram, the monthlong commemoration of the death of Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Imam Hussein. It's worth noting that Imam Hussein is considered a revered figure by Shiites worldwide.⁴³¹

Furthermore, these kinds of sectarian atrocities were committed by Militias during the whole years of the war (2014-17). More specifically, the Shiite militias managed to take over significant territory around Mosul city after the Iraqi army liberated it from ISIS with heavy American support in 2017. Thus, those militias treated the Sunni population brutally in different cities, such as Diyala, which has a common border with Iran. Exercising violations include expelling tens of thousands of Sunnis from their homes, threatening to deepen the religious-ethnic rift in Iraq for many years to come.⁴³²

However, avoiding committing violations against civilians was not considered a primary goal during the war against ISIS. A clear example of that is when Iraq's Ministry of Defense stated: *"We were concerned about the innocent people in these areas in the past, but we need a victory at any cost for the coming military campaign."* Subsequently, the Iraqi air force bombed suspected ISIS targets in Fallujah without concern for the presence of civilians.⁴³³

Moreover, many refugees who attempted to return to their homes in Tikrit and other cities were blocked and beaten by the militia forces under the pretext of supporting ISIS.⁴³⁴

After the war against ISIS has ended due to the military cooperation between the U.S., Iraq, Iran and its militias, the risk of committing crimes against civilians still exists. More specifically, the pro-Iran militias still have a strong presence in the Sunni cities and the political sphere. For instance, the commander of the 'Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq militia, Qais Al-Khazaali, announced in February 2017 that his militias wouldn't give up their independent status or weapons and would be present in the political arena just as they are present on the battlefield.

⁴³¹ "The Iran Cables," The New York Times.

⁴³² Clausen, "IRAN'S SUCCESSFUL," P.48

⁴³³ Moyar, "FPI Bulletin,"

⁴³⁴ Moyar, "FPI Bulletin,"

Thus, creating a new problem for the Iraqi government by boosting the Iranian influence over the Iraqi government.⁴³⁵ It is worth mentioning Khazali's parliamentary bloc is part of the political alliance established by Nuri Al-Maliki in the 2022 elections. This alliance has close ties to Iran and has formed the new Iraqi government headed by Muhammad Al-Sudani.

Eventually, the American policies in Iraq may make Sunnis believe that the Washington had sold them out. Therefore, they might join revolutionary organizations such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda. For instance, American passivity In Syria has already driven moderate nationalists into the arms of extremists. Moreover, the Gulf Arab monarchies might also support the Sunni extremists in light of the American passivity and Iranian domination in the region. Ultimately, the success of these Iraqi militias will ease the movement of Iranian men and weapons to Syria and Lebanon, increasing the threats even to Jordan and Israel.⁴³⁶ In sum, in the absence of American intention to hold back the militias and rebuild Iraq's army, Iraq's decision will be in the hands of the Iranians.⁴³⁷

Meanwhile, it has become more challenging for the West to launch a war against Iran after the invasion of Iraq. John Kerry indicated that the disastrous results of invading Iraq made the congress members afraid of giving any American president any carte blanche again to launch another war. He elaborated on why the United States didn't militarily interfere in Syria to eliminate the Al-Assad regime. According to him, the results of the invasion of Iraq made the British parliament vote against any military interference in Syria.⁴³⁸ Nonetheless, alongside Russia, Iran and its militias were the main reason for maintaining the Al-Assad regime in power.

5.6 The Obstacles in Front of the Iranian Full- Domination

Almost no one can deny the Iranian influence in Iraq. However, Tehran appears to benefit significantly from its reputation, but is it that strong in Iraq?

A few examples reveal the weakness of the Iranian power regarding Iraq. For instance, in a matter of days, Jaysh Al-Mahdi "JAM" militias fighters led by Al-Sadr fled Basra in March 2008 when they were faced with Iraqi forces backed by American firepower. Principally, JAM was heavily supported by Iran, considered Iran's last major Iraqi client from the civil war 2006-

⁴³⁵ Clausen, "IRAN'S SUCCESSFUL," P.46

⁴³⁶ Moyar, "FPI Bulletin,"

⁴³⁷ Moyar, "FPI Bulletin,"

⁴³⁸ Kerry, "Every Day," P: 599

07. More specifically, Former Prime Minister Al-Maliki initiated Operation Charge of the Knights to drive the (JAM) militia from Basra. During that operation, Al-Maliki brought down Sunni formations from Al-Anbar City to conduct the process. Meanwhile, the Shia of Basra embraced the predominantly Sunni figures, which helped them eliminate the Iranian-followed militia JAM. In sum, it turns out that the JAM fighters or the Iranian dominance in Basra had never been as strong as some people had believed when there was a genuine will.⁴³⁹

Moreover, in 2010 and 2019, Iran's influence in Iraq decreased because of the actions of the Iraqis, not the Americans, when many demonstrations broke out asking for a secular regime in Iraq.⁴⁴⁰

Furthermore, in 2014 Tehran got all the credit for stopping the offensive of ISIS against Baghdad. Nevertheless, it is almost impossible for a few thousand ISIS fighters to take control of 8 million people, mostly Shia. However, the Iranian regime benefitted from the perception that it stopped ISIS until the Shia militias it backed failed to liberate Iraqi cities such as Tikrit, Bayji, and Fallujah, only after the American support to the Iraqi military. As a result, in 2016-17, most Iraqis believed that American permission could only liberate their country, not Iranian help, which illusion Baghdad in 2014-15.⁴⁴¹

Other obstacles have negatively affected the Iranian influence in Iraq besides the military arena. But, principally, three main factors would undermine the Iranian influence.

- A. "Iraqi Arab nationalism." Nationalism was deemed the most influential factor in Iraq that could reduce Iranian influence. To clarify, there is a historical enmity of Iraqis for the Persian Iranians; even among the Iraqis' Shia, their Arab identity has prevailed over religious solidarity. More specifically, most Iraqi Shia fought against the Iranians during the 1980s war. Those Shia did not battle for Hussein as they fought against the Iranian regime.
- B. "The appealing factor." More precisely, most Iraqis would gladly emigrate to the United States rather than live in Iran, which holds little appeal for them regardless of their sect or ethnicity.
- C. "The differences in the religious realm." To clarify, Iraqi Shia fiercely advocates the superiority of the Marja'iyya of Najaf (spiritual leadership), whereas Iran looks firstly to its own Hawza in Qom. In addition to that, most of Iraq's religious establishment rejects the roles of the Iranian

⁴³⁹ Pollack, "Iran in Iraq," P.8

⁴⁴⁰ Pollack, "Iran in Iraq," P.8

⁴⁴¹ Pollack, "Iran in Iraq," P.8

political system, which is based on Khomeini's philosophy and the principle of Velayet El-Faqih.⁴⁴²

Furthermore, even though the Iranian influence in Iraq is undeniable, this expansion might have slowed in Iraq and Lebanon. More specifically, the protests throughout the past decade in Iraq openly challenged the Iranian regime's influence there. For example, in 2020, the protesters attacked the Iranian consulate in Karbala and burned Khamenei's posters in several Iraqi Shia.⁴⁴³ However, the Iranian influence was not huge in Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria before the American invasion of Iraq. In other words, the occupation made Iraq weak and divided, a perfect ground for Iran to practice enormous influence whenever Iraq. For instance, when Washington's policies were "passive" during the Iraqi civil war in 2006, Iran's influence increased and expanded. As a result, many Shias in Iraq were seeking Iran's assistance. Thus, increasing the Iranian domination.⁴⁴⁴

5.7 Analyzing the Iranian Role After the American Invasion

The Iranian foreign policies, which began after the outbreak of the Khomeinist revolution in 1979, played a primary role in destabilizing the region. However, this unrest peaked clearly after the American occupation of Iraq in 2003. More specifically, the American invasion of Iraq represented a turning point for the Iranian regime to extend its influence in Iraq and some regional countries, such as Syria. Iran took advantage of the new weak Iraqi state. Tehran greatly destabilized Baghdad by supporting militias and political powers, including all the prime ministers, since 2005, when the first Iraqi government was formed with American blessing.

Furthermore, through cooperation with the United States, Iran played a significant role that helped in Iraq against some terrorist organizations in the region, such as ISIS in 2014, yet, these terrorist organizations were mainly born through the American marginalization of the Sunnis alongside the unparalleled Iranian support for the Shiite militias.

Directly or indirectly, Tehran's rise as a crucial player in Iraq was linked to the consequence of the absence of American plans after the invasion. Iraq has also become a gateway for Iranian power, connecting its geography to the Mediterranean Sea via Syria. More specifically, the U.S. allowed Iran, directly or indirectly, to enhance its influence over the region significantly

⁴⁴² Pollack, "Iran in Iraq," P.7

⁴⁴³ Clausen, "IRAN'S SUCCESSFUL," P.4

⁴⁴⁴ Pollack, "Iran in Iraq," P.7

by supporting militias and regimes that served the Iranian interests regardless of the devastation that the Iranian agenda could cause.

Eventually, if Washington and its allies do not offer Iraq a better alternative, the country could become the next Lebanon but richer, bigger, and more strategically located. It is a scenario that could terrify most of the American allies, especially in the Gulf area. Thus, this step could have disastrous consequences in the middle east, as those allies have traditionally reacted in destabilizing and aggressive ways to increase Iranian influence, such as the Yemeni scenario.



CHAPTER VI

The Conclusion

This chapter will conclude the research by rephrasing the critical research findings about the study aims and questions and the value and contribution thereof. It will also examine the research's limitations and suggest opportunities for future research.

This study has multiple questions, and throughout the previous chapters, it attempted to collect the required data to answer them:

1. What factors are beyond the U.S. decision to invade Iraq in 2003?

According to the data, various factors affected the American decision, such as:

- A. *Hussein and the American Interests in the Gulf*. The former Iraqi president's policies played a crucial role in this invasion. He posed a genuine danger to Iraq's neighboring countries, such as Iran, Kuwait, and the other Gulf countries. However, he did not represent a real military threat to the U.S. as Washington had failed to prove that his regime had WMD and wasn't tied to Al-Qaida. Even though Hussein attempted to hurt the American economy by converting oil sales into euros instead of dollars. But overall, the U.S. remained dominant in the international arena. Moreover, since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Hussein has represented a "rogue leader." Therefore, Washington and the global society imposed deadly sanctions on Iraq for almost 13 years until the invasion. Meanwhile, as oil is strategically crucial to the U.S., the American protection of the Gulf was embodied in the Carter doctrine since 1980. In other words, if necessary, Washington would use military force to defend its national interests in the rich oil Arab Gulf states.
- B. *Bush factor*. The former American president was a turning point as he came and brought his political team from the far right. His team had affected his decisions. Moreover, the Republic party elections in 2004 played a significant role in maintaining the national interest slogan before the invasion that occurred in 2003.
- C. *The September 11 events Factor*. Bush's administration used it as a pretext to occupy two Muslim countries, Afghanistan and Iraq. His administration claimed that Iraq had WMDs and ties to Al-Qaeda. From an American perspective, those two wars were necessary during the so-called war against terrorism.

D. *The American hegemony factor.* After the cold war, the U.S. was the most dominant superpower. Therefore, Washington practiced pressure on many countries and challenged the U.N. in order to maintain its dominance by launching this war. This invasion represented a clear message to Washington's enemies that the military card could be used whenever necessary to the U.S. to maintain its hegemony.

2 - What are the ramifications of the American invasion from 2003 to 2014 on Iraq?

In accordance to the existing data, the invasion had caused various ramifications during that period. The most notable ones are:

- A. *The Economic Shift.* Before 2003, Hussein's Iraq was under severe international sanctions, and the former Iraqi president put the country's oil under the category of "nationalization". As a result, it was difficult for foreign companies to invest in Iraqi oil. However, the occupation brought many international companies to invest in that oil. Moreover, post-2003, Iraq has not suffered from any economic sanctions that could affect this vivid section. Nevertheless, the Iraqis still suffer from poverty, injustice, and marginalization. But overall, the country's financial system became within the framework of capitalism. Moreover, Iraq used the dollars again to sell its oil instead of euros as Hussein's regime used to do.
- B. *Pro-Iranian government.* The Bush administration brought exiled politicians with strong ties to Tehran and opposed the regime of Saddam Hussein. Moreover, the pro-Iranian militias have dominated Iraq's military and political field after the civil war, the war against Al-Qaida, and the War against ISIS. Therefore, Tehran increased its influence drastically in Iraq after the invasion.
- C. *An Ally Regime to the U.S.* Even though the new Iraqi government leaned on Iran in one way or another, but still did not represent directly challenge the United States. Washington took different steps to ensure that the Ba'ath Party would not return in any way through the policy of so-called "de-Baathification." A decision that has many negative repercussions in the political and security arena.
- D. *A Fragile Democracy Under a Sectarian Political System.* Washington has unprecedentedly deepened sectarian feelings among the Iraqi people and politicians by building a political system based on purely sectarian foundations. Shiites and Kurds dominated the new political system to guarantee the elimination of any ties of the Al-Baath Party or Sunni extremists during

the peak of the American war on terror. The feelings of marginalization among Sunnis worsened during the reign of Nuri Al-Maliki from 2006 to 2014.

- E. *Civil War and Terrorist Organizations.* Those were a reaction to the previous elements, especially the marginalization of Sunnis and the strengthening of the Shiite-corrupted parties and militias.

3 - What were the American tools to fight terrorism in a Middle Eastern country such as Iraq? And how effective were they?

Initially, even though Iraq had no ties with terror organizations before 2003, it became a hub for terrorism after the American invasion. The United States fueled feelings of division and sectarianism among the components and sects of the population. The American military presence attracted extremist Islamic groups, mainly Al-Qaida, from several countries, especially Saudi Arabia and Syria, to fight it. Washington committed violations in several Iraqi cities, such as Fallujah and resorted to lethal force to eliminate terrorism. Furthermore, the United States attempted different tools to eliminate terrorism which appeared to be successful even for less than a decade, including:

- A. *The Shiite support.* Washington succeeded in shifting the role of pro-Iranian militias to fight against Al-Qaeda rather than the American forces. This step was a primary reason for eliminating many extremist Sunni forces.
- B. *Financial Factor.* The U.S. support enabled Washington to turn an old enemy into an ally. More specifically, supporting Sunni forces "Al-Sahwa" against Al-Qaida in 2007 was a cruel point to eliminate the radical Sunni groups.
- C. *The Appeal Factor.* The U.S. attempted to impose its ideology by showing the extent of the horror of "Sunni terrorism". This war against terror included military, economic, and media levels.

However, the invasion of Iraq stirred the sentiments of many Muslims worldwide against the U.S. Moreover, the sectarian political system in Iraq threatens to lead to more violent waves later, as with the emergence of ISIS in 2014.

4 - How has the American invasion magnetized other foreign players in Iraq, such as Iran?

Regardless of the Sunni terror organizations, Iranian influence has been the most vital foreign element after the American invasion. Since the Khomeinist revolution in 1979, had been the

main enemy of Iraq. However, the American invasion paved the way for Tehran to extend its influence in Iraq and some regional countries, such as Syria. Iran took advantage of the new weak Iraqi state by incredibly destabilizing Baghdad through supporting militias and some political powers, including all the Iraqi prime ministers, since 2005. Moreover, Iran played a significant role in helping Iraq against terrorist organizations, such as ISIS in 2014. Nevertheless, these terrorist organizations were mainly born through unparalleled Iranian support for the Shiite militias.

Additionally, the American lack of any post-invasion plan has raised Iranian influence in Baghdad. Eventually, Iraq has become a gateway for Iranian power, connecting its geography to the Mediterranean Sea via Syria.

The Research's Arguments

1. The occupation of Iraq occurred to confirm the American hegemony globally after the Cold War.

According to the data, the occupation occurred due to different factors, including removing Husein's regime. The former Iraqi president was deemed a rogue leader who attempted to challenge the American hegemony through failed attempts such as selling the oil in euros instead of dollars. However, he did not represent a severe threat from a military perspective.

Nevertheless, during the war against terror, invading another Islamic country, apart from Afghanistan, and changing its regime could represent a clear victory for Washington. This step could convey an indirect message to other countries, such as North Korea, Venezuela, Syria, and Iran, that Washington can challenge the UN's decision to achieve its national goals.

2. The American failure to establish a democratic regime in Iraq has exacerbated the waves of terrorism.

In accordance with the data, Washington created a fragile democratic system in Iraq after the invasion. The political system was mainly based on sectarianism and eliminated the Sunni from the political and military arena. Therefore, this marginalization led to an alliance between some Iraqi Sunni groups, who did not have ties to terrorism, and radical terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaida and ISIS.

Moreover, creating a political system in Iraq in which Shiite and Kurdish parties have dominated developed a sense of exclusion among the Sunnis. It has made an impression of a

secret alliance between the pro-Iranian Shiite and the United States. Thus, Iraq attracted extremist organizations from several countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Syria. Eventually, Iraq turned into a hotbed of terrorism.

3- The American invasion paved the way for Iran to expand its influence over Iraq and the region.

In accordance to the previous information, Iraq has become a weak country. More specifically, Washington brought exiled pro-Iranian Shiites, who have played a crucial role in consolidating Iran's influence in Baghdad. Later, Shiite leaders such as Nuri Al-Maliki strengthened the Iranian position in Iraq, especially after the American withdrawal from Iraq in 2011. In addition, Washington and Tehran fought ISIS in 2014. This cooperation has legitimized, in one way or another, the pro-Iranian militias.

Furthermore, the war against ISIS played a significant role in widening Tehran's influence in the Middle East. This war was the pretext for Iran to reach the Mediterranean Sea directly through the Iraqi gate. In other words, the Iranian support and influence over the Syrian regime and Lebanon have become more robust after the American invasion of Iraq.

- This study aims to investigate the causes and consequences of the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. The results indicated that the Former Iraqi president had attempted to provoke Washington in order to maintain his reign. However, the U.S. was able to remove Husein. It also shifted Iraq's economy from a nationalist form to a capitalist, regardless of the claims of the country's ties to terrorism or WMD. Moreover, the study suggests that the invasion did not bring stability to Iraq or the region as the country became a hub for extreme Sunni groups and pro-Iranian militias. This study discussed the American interest beyond invading Iraq and its consequences between the years 2003 to 2014. It also spotlights the factors that played a significant role during that period, such as the American hegemony, the war on terror policy, the new political system in Iraq, and the Iranian influence.

The Contribution of the Study

This study achieved its aim by attempting to answer the previous questions and discuss the above arguments. The overall findings intersect with the research aims and questions.

Moreover, this study attempts to contribute to the field of international relations by answering several questions and arguments by viewing different sources. It also built the final results after

showing tens of other sources and a wide range of points of view. This study's conclusion can be applied in further research and could help to form a supportive academic perspective.

Furthermore, this thesis has attempted to fill the gaps in other research papers. It achieved to highlight the shape of the new Iraqi economic system after the invasion. It has also spotlighted different reasons beyond the invasion rather than one factor or two discussed in the previous studies.

Further, as many studies showed the cruelty of Hussein's regime against his people, this study highlighted the humanitarian side of the deadly international embargo on Iraq from 1991 to 2003 to fill that gap that many scholars neglected.

This work attempted to explain how the American invasion changed the facts regarding the terrorism waves and American interests in the region. It also showed how the current political system in Iraq, which is based on sectarianism and Sunni marginalization, has played a significant role in escalating the terrorism waves. It denies the estimates of some studies indicating that the Iraq war contributed to reducing terrorism globally.

In addition, this study concentrated on various political and regional factors that have played a significant role in Iraq after 2003. Moreover, it highlighted the Iranian role carefully by showing the shared history of wars before 2003 and cooperation after the invasion. Furthermore, this study attempted to explain the deep ties between Tehran and its proxies in Iraq and the region. Eventually, it also examines how Tehran and Washington can collaborate to formulate different Iraqi governments since 2005 or even defeat a common enemy such as "ISIS" rather than showing Iran and the U.S. as entire enemies without any cooperation, as some studies indicate.

The Limitations of the Study

Although this research presented several functional theoretical pieces of information, it is still not free from limitations that give rise to new future studies.

- **The Time Element.** Even though this research required almost two years, the area it has covered is vast. Therefore, more time was required in order to evaluate more sources to reinforce the overall findings.

- **The Financial Element.** As an individual researcher, I faced difficulties gaining each source I needed to justify my claims. If a group of researchers did this study, they would get access to more sources.
- **The Variety of Language Element.** Even though this study discussed the case of an Arabic country, it had a few Arabic sources, and most of the references were written in English. Moreover, this study did not contain any Iranian sources, despite a part of it discussing Iranian policies.
- **The Theories Element.** This study did not apply any theory related to international relations, such as neo-realism or neo-liberalism theories. More specifically, those theories could build a unique framework. Unfortunately, this factor was related to the time element.

Despite those limitations, this study has followed strict academic structures and was built by various academic sources. Further, this study attempted to overcome all the above-mentioned limitations by demonstrating the final results from an unbiased perspective.

Recommendations and Further Work:

This study attempted to reveal the reasons and consequences of the American invasion of Iraq. Therefore, based on the findings and conclusion presented, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

1. Since the deadly consequences of this invasion have been proven, policymakers should not involve in such a destructive action as long as there is a chance to avoid such a war, especially in the Middle East. Furthermore, violence and marginalization are not always the correct answer to fight terrorism worldwide.
2. Policymakers in Washington and Baghdad should initiate the right foundations to bring democracy to Iraq. This step could play a significant role in improving the geopolitical circumstances in the region continually.
3. Future studies can apply more sophisticated methods to the course of the American invasion in order to add more educational value.
4. Future studies could also spotlight Iranian-American relations before 2003 and after 2003 by selecting Iraq as a case study.

5. Future studies could tackle to what extent the consequences of the American invasion of Iraq have played a role in the hesitation of Washington to launch another war against countries such as Syria and Iran.



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