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SADDAM IRAQ

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Abstract

This thesis project examines the United States' involvement during the second war in Iraq from 2003-2011. The question that this thesis aims to study is why the Iraq War unfolded the way it did, and to disprove the notion that Iraq was never a winnable war. In reality, this thesis will prove that specific actions taken by the United States further exacerbated the relationship between the two main sectarian groups that resulted in years of revenge killing, which eventually evolved into a civil war. These actions can be boiled down to poor management and staffing, incorrect policies in the early rebuilding stage, lacking a nationwide counterinsurgency plan, and finally failing to recognize the evolution of the conflict into a civil war. Although the United States did experience some success in their postwar efforts in Iraq during the counterinsurgency phase dubbed "The Surge", any efforts achieved during this time was reversed when the US withdrew in 2011, which allowed Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki to revert back to sectarian persecutions. It is hoped that this research will allow the American public to understand why the conflict unfolded the way it did and show the consequences that certain action or inaction can have on a conflict.

Introduction

In March 2003, the United States and coalition forces invaded Iraq with the goal to overthrow Saddam Hussein and establish a free and democratic Iraq. The Iraq War (2003), since the beginning, has been controversial. The war divided the United States politically and caused strained relations between the United States and their international allies. Iraq and the region became destabilized, and the legacy of this conflict is still evident today in Iraq and across the Middle East.

Over the years, a variety of opinions regarding the Iraq War have been expressed by many different authors attempting to understand what went wrong and why Iraq is still a primary focus of American foreign policy. Two major theories have emerged regarding the American endeavor in Iraq. Authors, like Andrew Bacevich, present the first theory¹. This theory proposed the idea that the conflict was a failed operation from the start and that regardless of the policy actions taken, the United States would have failed in their endeavor to free and stabilize Iraq. This assertion is based on the internal political struggle between the different religious sects and ethnic identities and Iraqi society's inability to rectify the divisions between these groups.

The second theory has been put forward by those who served overseas and directly experienced Iraq firsthand (in a military or journalistic point of view), like

¹ Andrew Bacevich graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1969, and served in both Vietnam and the first Persian Gulf War in the 1990s. Shortly, after the Persian Gulf War ended Bacevich retired at the rank of Colonel and went on to teach at West Point, Johns Hopkins, and now Boston University. Andrew Bacevich's son, 1st LT. John Bacevich, was killed outside Samarra by an improvised explosive device in March 2007. Some of Bacevich's past work includes *America's War for the Greater Middle East: A Military History*, *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War*, and *American Empire*.

author Emma Sky². Her argument asserted that the operation in Iraq was not destined to fail, even with the political, religious, and ethnic tensions that arose during the conflict. Instead, this argument is based on the notion that, from the onset of the conflict, the United States took incomplete and wrongheaded policy actions towards Iraq, which resulted in the violence and the destabilization of the country.

After an examination of the competing theories regarding the possible outcome in Iraq, the conclusion conveyed is that Iraq was a winnable conflict and was not destined to fail from the start based on predisposed ethnic and religious characteristics. Instead, a large degree of difficulty that the Americans faced was not because of sectarian and cultural differences within Iraq, as Bacevich suggested. Instead, the larger problems that arose from the conflict came from policies that were self-inflicted on their mission, the establishment of a democratic and stable government in Iraq, which would become capable to control the security and safety within, while shaping a new identity for the future of Iraq. Therefore, if the United States had instituted the correct policies from the start, the US would have successfully been able to cultivate a stronger relationship between the two primary sectarian divisions within Iraq from the start. Instead, their decisions divided the sects; and the violence that escalated into a sectarian civil war would have been dealt with much earlier and with more success.

Consequently, policymakers failed to understand the conditions on the ground and the history and culture of Iraq, which put the Iraq project in a strenuous situation to

² Emma Sky, author of *The Unraveling*, is considered an expert regarding the Middle East. She served overseas in the Middle East in several different capacities, including in Israel and the West Bank and several assignments in Iraq throughout the US Iraq conflict from 2003-2011. Most notably, she served for the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) from 2003-2004 and as a political advisor for General Ray Odierno from 2007-2010.

succeed, which further strained the relationship between the Sunnis and Shi'a. The most prominent obstacle that the Americans faced during the postwar rebuilding process was the creation of a new secular Iraqi national identity, which would have helped unite Iraqis and shift away from their different sectarian beliefs that divided the people. The division was mainly due to Saddam Hussein's leadership. During Saddam's reign, he was able to keep Iraq's sectarian relationships relatively stable using fear, patronage, and other authoritarian practices to ensure the continuation of his regime. Therefore, when the United States removed Saddam and positioned the Shiites into power, the opposing sectarian group to Saddam's Sunni-led government, violence was almost guaranteed to erupt between the Sunnis and Shiites at some point.

Knowing this, the United States could have limited the damage and engaged both the Sunnis and the Shiites as equal partners in the rebuilding process from the beginning, but the Americans did not follow this policy actions until years into the conflict. Therefore, the inability to understand Iraq made it difficult for the Iraqi people to establish a new sense of identity during the timeframe of the conflict, which would have provided a stronger likelihood of long-term success. The process of transitioning a government and country into a new identity is a long and difficult process that must happen organically and cannot be forced or it will not last.

This idea of a new Iraqi nationalism would have taken time to achieve, but there were positive signs and actions taken by both the Americans and the Iraqi government that demonstrated this was possible in 2007-2011. Sectarian violence decreased between the Sunnis and the Shiites, and a new Iraq began to emerge from a sectarian civil war. This was possible because of American engagement with the Sunni populace

and tribal regions, in addition to the increase of American personnel, which will be outlined in further detail in Chapter 4.

In spite of this, in 2011, all remaining American forces withdrew from Iraq, and shortly thereafter, the Iraqi government reversed course and continued their practice of sectarian persecutions and violence, and chaos eventually ensued once again. This showed that Iraq was on the correct path but needed further American involvement and supervision to ensure it would not revert to sectarian persecutions and instability once again. This diminished the potential success in Iraq to create a new sense of Iraqi identity and establish a stable and democratic future.

This paper will seek to answer the question of what caused this conflict to become so complicated that the United States efforts are still bogged down today in 2018. The main question that needs to be answered is: Could the United States have achieved their objectives, and if not, was the result of this conflict and its aftermath the result of predisposed characteristics prior to the conflict, or were these problems the result of the United States' own missteps and blunders?

Going forward, Chapter 1 will discuss the importance that the West has had in shaping Iraq's future and the significance Iraq has had in United States foreign policy since the mid-20th century. This chapter will attempt to explain the relations and reveal the tension buildup between the two countries that eventually led to war and the removal of Saddam in 2003. Chapter 2 will discuss the specific policies that harmed the United States' effort to rebuild Iraq. It will also discuss why these policies hindered the creation of a new culture in Iraq and a shift away from sectarian divisions. Chapter 3 will look at the problems the US faced because of these policies. Chapter 4 will look at

the success that the United States experienced when US forces began to incorporate the Sunnis back into the new Iraqi government, which showed that victory in Iraq was possible. Finally, Chapter 5 will examine the mistakes of the conflict that ultimately resulted in a failed conflict for the United States up until 2017. The goal in this paper is to lay out an explanation for why the American government failed to achieve their goals in the attempt to stabilize and democratize Iraq.

Chapter 1:

Lead Up to the Iraq War

The Shaping of Modern Iraq

Modern involvement by the West in Iraq can be traced back to World War I. The West became involved in the Middle East directly after the end of World War I, which influenced the history and future of the Middle East. This section will discuss precisely how foreign involvement shaped the future of Iraq.

The British invaded the Ottoman Empire, specifically in the land referred to as Mesopotamia, modern-day Iraq, in June 1915. The British army moved towards Baghdad to protect their interests and advance their efforts against the Ottoman Empire. Several years and roughly 20,000 British casualties later, the British conquered Iraq. Following the end of World War I, the British expanded their empire and directly influenced the foundations of Iraq.³ At the conclusion of WWI, the British and the French, under the tense of the League of Nations, divided the Ottoman Empire into several regions, called mandates. The British controlled Palestine (modern day Israel), Transjordan, and Iraq, while the French controlled Syria and Lebanon. This period of Iraq's history is known as the British Mandate Period within Iraq.

This period of Iraqi history was crucial in shaping the future of Iraq. During the interwar period, the British created the borderlines of Iraq based on three different regions within the Mesopotamian region administered by the Ottomans. The three areas brought together to form Iraq were Mosul (north), Basra (south), and Baghdad (central).

³ William R. Polk, *Understanding Iraq: The Whole Sweep of Iraqi History, from Genghis Khans Mongols to the Ottoman Turks to the British Mandate to the American Occupation* (New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 2005), 71-73.

These three geographical regions bordered each other, but these areas shared little heritage, culture, and religion. For example, “the mountainous northern terrain of Mosul was linked economically to Anatolia and the Greater Syria, whereas the central province of Baghdad supported sedentary agriculture and traded primarily with Iran and the southwest, and Basra was oriented toward the Persian Gulf and overseas trade with India”.⁴ This new conception of Iraq included more than different economic systems, but also included vast cultural and ethnic differences within these different regions.

This new Iraq created by the British is ethnically and religiously diverse. Roughly 80% of the population is Arab, but this population is sharply divided along religious lines, while a substantial minority of 20% in the north is Kurdish.⁵ The main breakdown of religious lines in Iraq is composed of Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, with an estimated 60-65% Shiite and 32-37% Sunni.⁶ Those Iraqi Arabs who identify as a Shi'a Muslim maintain close ties with Iran, while the remaining Arabs who identify as Sunni keep stronger ties with countries like Saudi Arabia. The Kurdish people did not identify as a part of this new nation and instead viewed the northern land in Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran as their ancestral homeland and sought to preserve their language, culture, and autonomy.⁷ This showed the vast division within Iraq ethnically and religiously that the British and the Americans encountered when rebuilding Iraq.

In addition to the vast diversity within Iraq, any signs of Ottoman presence in Iraq were limited to the major population centers. This resulted in a decentralized

⁴ William L. Cleveland and Martin P. Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 6th ed. (Philadelphia: Westview, 2016), 195.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook: IRAQ", Central Intelligence Agency, January 12, 2017.

⁷ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 195.

countryside, which resulted in the form of tribal confederations that were accustomed to limited government and relative autonomy. Therefore, it became difficult for the British to impose a more centralized government on the rural parts of the country, which eventually led to an uprising against British rule in June 1920.⁸ Authors Cleveland and Bunton discussed how this rebellion was not a nationalist movement; however, the uprising “inspired anti-British sentiment and became enshrined in Iraqi national mythology as the first rejection of foreign rule”.⁹

During the mandate period, the British placed the Hashemite family in charge of Iraq under the rule of King Amir Faysal, son of Sharif Faysal, the leader of the Arab Revolt in 1916. King Faysal ruled with the guidance of British control until 1932, and finally, Iraq received independence from the British and became an independent state. The Hashemite family maintained power in Iraq until the family under King Faysal II was removed from power as the result of a coup in 1958. The coup resulted in the ousting of the Hashemite family from power. After a decade of instability in Iraq, in 1968 a coup led by General Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr and the Iraqi Regional Branch of the Arab Socialist Baath Party occurred, and brought stability to the country under Baathist rule. Saddam Hussein was a major participant in the 1968 coup. However, in the effort to consolidate power and not lose control, Saddam Hussein in 1979 purged the Baathist party and leadership, which thrusting Saddam into the primary leadership position and solidified his power in Iraq. Saddam, a Sunni Muslim, led Iraq until the United States invaded in March 2003.

⁸ Ibid., 195-196.

⁹ Ibid., 196.

The British involvement influenced Iraqi politics by the creation of an Iraqi rejection to foreign rule and secondly by dividing the land from the Ottoman Empire into one single entity that had significant political, religious, and ethnic differences, which resulted in major ramifications for the future of Iraq. These conflicts led to internal and external struggles within Iraq and its neighbors that are still evident today.

United States involvement in the Middle East

Early signs of modern involvement in the Middle East by the US government can be traced to President Eisenhower's administration and involved every administration since World War II. These administrations actively conducted operations and established a presence within the Middle East. Some examples of the US's involvement in the region can be traced to the CIA supported Coup attempt in Iran in 1953, the involvement in the creation of the Baghdad Pact, and the US's involvement in the Iran-Iraq War in 1980-1988, to name a few. This section is meant to highlight some of the important events the United States was involved in to help explain the growing importance that the Middle East served to the United States.

In the years leading up to 1979, the United States heavily focused its Middle Eastern relationship with Iran. The United States assisted the British in a coup to replace the newly elected Iranian Prime Minister Mossaddeq in 1953 in an effort to strengthen the Iranian monarchy under Mohammad Reza Shah's rule under Operation AJAX. Mossaddeq, who was feared to have had communist tendencies, worried the United States that Iran could turn communist, and since this was during the first decade of the Cold War, the threat of communism complicated everything. There was a fear with certain Eisenhower administration officials, like the Ambassador of the Soviet

Union Charles Bohlen, who believed that “if Persia goes Communist, then Iraq, and the rest of the Middle East will also... We ought to concentrate on saving Persia from Communism at all costs”.¹⁰ The United States believed it was in their best interest to assist the British in overthrowing Mossaddeq, who wanted to nationalize the Iranian oil production, therefore hurt the British’s oil supply, or risk the consequences of a Soviet takeover that could include loss of prestige in the Cold War and the loss of the Middle East.

A secondary example of a policy action in the Middle East, to ensure an American or Western presence within the region, is the establishment of the Baghdad Pact in 1955. This agreement consisted of Iraq (until 1959), Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and to some degree the United States. Although the Eisenhower administration was involved in the negotiations, the United States never officially joined but did serve in an advisory role.¹¹ The main goal of this agreement was to prevent the spread of communism and attempted to create peace in the Middle East. After the fall of the Hashemite Dynasty, the headquarters was moved from Baghdad to Ankara and the agreement was renamed to the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). This organization did not provide a military defense structure, and therefore weakened the structure of the alliance, and in 1979 shortly after the removal of the Shah in Iran, the alliance disbanded.¹²

¹⁰ Geoffrey Wawro, *Quicksand: Americas Pursuit of Power in the Middle East* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 138.

¹¹ "The Baghdad Pact (1955) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)", U.S. Department of State, January 2009, accessed January 18, 2018, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/lw/98683.htm>.

¹² Ibid.

These are just two specific examples taken by the Eisenhower Administration in the Middle East, but US involvement in the Middle East did not end with Eisenhower. Over the next several decades leading up to the second invasion of Iraq, the United States played an influential role in the Arab-Israeli conflict, in Lebanon, and with the regimes of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq to name a few. Therefore, these actions fully entrenched the United States in the Middle East politically. After the fall of the Shah in Iran during the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the United States, under the direction of President Jimmy Carter, reinforced, with new policy initiatives, the idea of how important the Middle East was as a policy objective for the United States in their fight against communism.

The Carter Doctrine outlined the United States' position regarding the region stating that "an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States", and would be "repelled by any means necessary".¹³ In addition to the change of an American policy abroad, the US also sought to build a more substantial presence in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. As a result of the fall of the Shah in Iran, the Carter Doctrine included the creation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF). The responsibility of the RDJTF was to respond to threats in the Middle East, serve as deterrence for the Soviets within the region, help maintain regional stability, and continue the free flow of oil. The RDJTF eventually morphed into the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) in 1983, which is a theater level combatant command and is responsible for the Middle East, Northern Africa, and parts of Central Asia.

¹³ Andrew J. Bacevich, "The Carter Doctrine at 30", *World Affairs Journal*, April 1, 2010, accessed June 14, 2017, <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/blog/andrew-j-bacevich/carter-doctrine-30>.

After the 1980 US Presidential Election, Ronald Reagan defeated President Jimmy Carter, made an essential addition to the Carter Doctrine that included the guaranteed territorial integrity and internal defense for Middle Eastern allies to the United States, like Saudi Arabia. This addition was known as the Reagan Corollary.¹⁴ The policy doctrine, as a whole, ushered in a significant change for the United States and their presence in the Middle East. Since the United States issued the Carter Doctrine and the Reagan Corollary, Iraq has been a major policy point that the United States has had to contend with in the Middle East.

After the fall of the Shah in Iran in 1979, Saddam became increasingly worried that Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic Revolution would spread into Iraq and awaken Iraq's Shi'a majority. While a Shi'a revolution was encouraged by Khomeini, the tensions between Iran and Iraq were long standing and covered several issues. These issues also included the question over the northern border between Iraq and Iran and the differences between Arab and Persian cultures. Because of the threat Khomeini posed, Khomeini encouraged Iraqi Shiites and the Iraqi military to overthrow Saddam, Saddam with the backing of a majority of the Arab world invaded Iran in 1980. This war would cost hundreds of billions of dollars and took several hundred thousand lives. This conflict became a struggle for regional supremacy; therefore, the outcome of the conflict drew interest from US officials.

Diplomatic relations between the US and Iraq were restored in 1984, after almost two decades of a severed relationship. Understanding the importance that this conflict had on Middle Eastern supremacy and oil flow, the US became involved in the

¹⁴ William Safire, "The Reagan Corollary", The New York Times, October 03, 1981, accessed October 15, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/10/04/opinion/essay-the-reagan-corollary.html>.

conflict on behalf of Iraq, especially after the US lost an ally in Iran after the 1979 revolution. To help ensure an Iraqi victory, after years of stalemate, the US provided Iraq with military intelligence, pressured allies not to sell weapons to Iran, and allowed Kuwaiti vessels (an ally of Iraq) to sail under a US flag, which in turn would make an attack on these vessels equivalent to firing on a US vessel.¹⁵ The United States viewed Saddam as an ally during the 1980s, but two years after the ending of the Iran-Iraq war, viewed Saddam as a hostile. In the 1980s, the main enemy from the Middle East was Iran and Ayatollah Khomeini, not Saddam; therefore, the United States ignored Saddam's regime's brutality and human rights violations in order to prevent the spread of Islamic radicalism and an anti-US sentiment that Khomeini represented to other Middle Eastern or Gulf states.¹⁶ This conflict would set Saddam and Iraq on a future course, which would ultimately lead to his removal from power in 2003.

Buildup to the Iraq War

The second US campaign in Iraq, also known as Operation Iraqi Freedom, was the culmination of a long buildup to conflict between the United States and Iraq since the Carter Doctrine and after the first engagement between the US and Iraq in the First Persian Gulf War. During the first Gulf War, the United States had an international coalition behind them to fight and remove Saddam from Kuwait. Key officials discussed whether to march to Baghdad after Kuwait and remove Saddam from power during the George H.W. Bush Administration in 1991. At that time, former Secretary of Defense to President Bush, Dick Cheney, gave an interview to CSPAN in which he

¹⁵ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 443.

¹⁶ Ibid.

described why the United States and coalition forces did not move north from Kuwait and remove Saddam from power in 1991.

In the interview, Bruce Collins asked the former Secretary of Defense whether the United States and the United Nations (UN) should have moved to Baghdad and removed Saddam from power in 1991. Cheney discussed the ramifications and the lack of international support the United States would have received, especially from the Arab world. Approximately ten years later, this statement turned out to be accurate. Cheney warned that if the US and UN forces had moved north and removed Saddam from power, then the situation would have resulted in a “quagmire”.¹⁷ Cheney believed that if the US or UN removed the central power of Iraq, Saddam’s authority, then the world could have seen pieces of the country fall off and the different states in the region, like Iran and Saudi Arabia, would have competed for territorial claim over parts of Iraq.¹⁸ This action would have resulted in instability and chaos within the Middle East.

Over the next nine years, until the invasion in 2003, relations with the United States and Iraq were very tense. This included the establishment of two different no-fly zones over various regions in Iraq. The goal of the established no-fly zones was to protect the Iraqi Shiites in the South and the Iraqi Kurds in the North from Saddam and his policy of mass killing.¹⁹ These tense relations also included a change in US policy towards Iraq, with the ultimate goal of regime change. In 1998, after Saddam ordered international weapon inspectors to stop working and leave Iraq immediately, President

¹⁷ Dick Cheney, "Quagmire Interview: Do You Think U.S. or U.N. Should Have Gone in", interview by Bruce Collins, CSPAN, 1994.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Leslie Gelb, "Foreign Affairs; Bush Gets Tough on Iraq", The New York Times, August 23, 1992.

Clinton and Congress passed into law the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998.²⁰ This law made it the policy of the US to work towards overthrowing Saddam's Iraq; one strategy taken by the US was to fund Iraqi opposition groups working to oust Saddam with a total of 100 million dollars.²¹

These examples showed that the relationship between the United States and Iraq has been unstable and tenuous during the years proceeding March 2003. A significant motive for the United States going into Iraq was the threat of a weapon of mass destruction (WMD) program. There was a long history of Saddam's use of WMDs in Iraq. During the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, Saddam used chemical weapons against the Iranian military, as well as his own people. In 1988, Saddam attacked the Iraqi Kurdish town of Halabja using mustard and nerve gas; this resulted in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians.²² These actions showed the United States and the international community that Saddam had the capability and the will to use a WMD if he felt his interests or survival had been challenged.

Vice President Cheney outlined in his memoir that Saddam was determined to add nuclear weapons to his arsenal and that after the Gulf War in 1991; we found that his program was much further along than initially believed.²³ Cheney cited an International Atomic Energy Agency report that stated Saddam would have had a nuclear device if the Gulf War had not diverted his attention.²⁴ Over the next decade,

²⁰ Dick Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir*, (New York: Threshold Editions, 2011), 365.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 364.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

following the Gulf War, both American and foreign intelligence agencies agreed that Saddam's goal was to reconstitute its nuclear program covertly.

In 1999, shortly after President Clinton launched Operation Desert Fox, a four-day bombing campaign, the purpose of which was to diminish Iraq's weapon capabilities, the US intelligence community assessed that Saddam had revitalized his biological weapons program. Due to the assessment, Saddam was considered a legitimate threat to the United States, Middle Eastern allies of the US, or those in the Iraqi civilian populace who opposed Saddam's Baathist ideology or religious identity. Vice President Cheney stated after the 2000 election that he and President George W. Bush had received daily intelligence reports, which outlined Iraq's activities and capabilities concerning weapons of mass destruction.²⁵ Vice President Cheney indicated that the content regarding those specific intelligence briefs remained classified, but the title was not. It was called, *Iraq: Steadily Pursuing WMD Capabilities*.²⁶ Cheney would use this information to gain support to invade Iraq.

This belief that Saddam reconstituted his weapons program was not limited to the Bush Administration or even President Bush's Republican Party. Many other important political figures on the opposite side of the aisle to Vice President Cheney or President Bush believed in Saddam's intention to revamp his weapons program. This included a bipartisan congressional letter sent to President Bush in Dec 2001, which outlined the threat Saddam posed to the United States. For example, this letter stated, "Reports indicate that biological, chemical and nuclear programs continue apace and

²⁵ Ibid., 367.

²⁶ Ibid.

may be back to pre-Gulf war status”.²⁷ This bipartisan conclusion paralleled many beliefs within the administration, different intelligence agencies, and congressional leadership at the time.

In addition to the belief that Saddam had attempted to revitalize his weapons program, the US government also believed that Saddam had aided and provided a safe haven for members of al Qaeda after 9/11. This stems partly from the connection of Muhammad Atta, one of the hijackers in the 9/11 attacks, and his alleged trips to Prague. The Czech intelligence community believed that Atta met with Iraqi espionage chief Ahmed al-Ani shortly before the 9/11 attacks. Unverified, the Bush Administration used this alleged connection to help persuade the public for war.²⁸ In addition to the Atta connection, the Bush Administration pushed the Zarqawi connection.

George Tenet, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, testified before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on this subject in 2002 and 2003. In March 2002, Tenet stated, “We continue to watch Iraq's involvement in terrorists' activities. Baghdad has a long history of supporting terrorism, altering its targets to reflect changing priorities and goals. It also had contacts with al Qaeda”.²⁹ This message that al Qaeda and Saddam had a connection was echoed not only by George Tenet, but also by President Bush and others within the administration.

²⁷ John McCain, Jesse Helms, Henry J. Hyde, Richard C. Shelby, Harold Ford Jr., Joseph I. Lieberman, Trent Lott, Benjamin A. Gilman, and Sam Brownback, "Letter Urging Action in Iraq", The Washington Post, December 7, 2001, accessed October 17, 2017, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/iraqletter_120701.html.

²⁸ William Safire, "Mr. Atta Goes to Prague", The New York Times, May 08, 2002, accessed January 28, 2018, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/05/09/opinion/mr-atta-goes-to-prague.html>.

²⁹ "The Rest of the Story: Iraq's Links to Al Qaeda", National Archives and Records Administration, September 15, 2006.

In September 2002 President Bush stated, “The danger is that al Qaeda becomes an extension of Saddam's madness and his hatred and his capacity to extend weapons of mass destruction around the world”.³⁰ Finally, in February 2003, a month before the invasion, George Tenet believed to have confirmed the links between Saddam and al Qaeda, saying, “Iraq is harboring senior members of a terrorist network led by al-Zarqawi, a close associate of al Qaeda”.³¹ The confirmation displayed by Tenet was not an individual belief but a long-standing belief within the US government, that there was a strong connection between Saddam and al Qaeda, and that if Iraq gained the capability to produce a WMD, Saddam would supply al Qaeda with one.

Vice President Cheney stated that after the daily intelligence reports regarding Iraq’s WMD program, the aftermath of 9/11, and the perceived aid to al Qaeda terrorists, the US could not ignore the threat posed by Saddam.³² He believed that the next potential terror attack could potentially come from a nuclear, biological, or chemical threat and Saddam was the most likely culprit to sell and arm al Qaeda with these weapons. Cheney stated in his memoir that “We could not ignore the threat or wish it away...The security of our nation and our friends required that we act. And we did”.³³ The goal was to prevent another attack on the US or our allies’ homelands by any means necessary, even if that meant going to war with Saddam in Iraq.

³⁰ "Senate Intelligence Committee Phase II Report", Senate Intelligence Committee Phase II Report, September 8, 2006.

³¹ Ibid.

It is an important note that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi led al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which was a Sunni Jihadist organization that evolved into the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) after the US withdrawal from Iraq.

³² Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir*, 368-369.

³³ Ibid., 369.

The United States had made it their official policy to seek regime change in Iraq since 1998; however, in November 2001, after the fall of Kabul, the Bush Administration began military preparations to invade Iraq.³⁴ As stated earlier, the Bush Administration outlined for the American public and the international community Saddam's connection to al Qaeda and the reconstitution of his weapons program. As the United States prepared for war in Iraq, Saddam never took the American threat seriously. David Kay, a weapons inspector, stated, "Saddam never believed the US would invade...but more important, he feared the Shiites and Kurds who lived in Iraq. He knew they feared him because they thought he had a WMD".³⁵ Saddam believed that his biggest threat came from within and that his people would attempt to overthrow his regime.

However, despite Saddam's denial of having a WMD program and after repeated, fruitless negotiations between the UN and Iraq, finally, on 17 March 2003, the United States gave Saddam the final ultimatum. President Bush warned that if Saddam and his sons did not leave Iraq in 48 hours, the US would initiate a military conflict unilaterally against Saddam Hussein in Iraq.³⁶ 48 hours later, the United States initiated the second war in Iraq.

The United States initiated the war because they believed that Iraq had a large weapon of mass destruction program and stockpile, especially of chemical weapons, and they believed there was evidence that Saddam was assisting al Qaeda elements that had plans to attack the United States. However, the United States did not find any large

³⁴ Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco*, (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 32.

³⁵ Bob Woodward, *State of Denial*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 279.

³⁶ Bruce Pirnie and Edward O'Connell, *Counterinsurgency in Iraq (2003-2006)*, vol. 2, RAND Counter-Insurgency Study (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2008), 6.

weapon stockpiles that contained or could include a WMD, nor was there any evidence of a strong connection between Saddam and bin Laden's al Qaeda. David Kay outlined that the posturing by Saddam is very common for totalitarian regimes, and "that they fear their people more than they fear external threats".³⁷ As a result of the Iraqis' behavior and the belief that they did, in fact, have a WMD program, the international community improperly assessed the capability of the Iraqi WMD program.³⁸

This assessment and the discovery that the US lacked any tangible evidence led to a political firestorm for the Bush Administration. Many American and other intelligence officials claimed with moderate confidence that it was plausible that Saddam did have WMDs, but on the eve of the invasion, transferred those weapons by truck into Syria.³⁹ James Clapper, the Director of the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency, said, "In 2003 that satellite images showed a heavy flow of traffic from Iraq to Syria "unquestionably" show that illicit weapons were moved out of Iraq".⁴⁰ If chemical weapons were shipped to Syria from Iraq, this would have made it impossible to discover any substantial weapons stockpile in Iraq. However, there are problems with this theory.

Kris Alexander, former Army officer, discussed this theory of Iraq sending him chemical stockpile into Syria and outlined why this theory is incorrect. First, giving up

³⁷ Woodward, *State of Denial*, 279.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 278.

³⁹ Lauren Johnston, "WMD Hunt May Be Back-Burnered", CBS News, October 30, 2003, accessed June 13, 2017, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/wmd-hunt-may-be-back-burnered/>. See also "Former Top Military Aide to Saddam Reveals Dictator's Secret Plans", Fox News, January 26, 2006, accessed June 13, 2017, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/2006/01/26/exclusive-former-top-military-aide-to-saddam-reveals-dictator-secret-plans.html>.

⁴⁰ John Hudson, "Did Syria Receive Its Chemical Weapons from Saddam?" *The Atlantic*, July 27, 2012, accessed January 26, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/07/did-syria-receive-its-chemical-weapons-saddam/325348/>.

his WMD stockpile into Syria would have given Saddam a major disadvantage. Alexander argued, "It made no sense for Saddam to transfer his weapons of mass destruction to Syria. Saddam worked on acquiring WMD for a reason: to stave off an invasion and hold on to power".⁴¹ Secondly, the relationship between the Syrians and the Iraqi governments were less than ideal. Alexander raised the question, why would Saddam ship weapons to Syria who have strong relations with Iran, Iraq's main competitor and rival in the region, and former enemy of the First Gulf War?⁴² These two questions are important and needs to be answered in order to uncover the truth with this potential theory.

Although Alexander posed some important points that question the potential theory regarding the Iraqi and Syrian prewar relationship, there are points that still need to be addressed. As discussed earlier, Director Clapper and others saw a massive traffic buildup between Iraq and Syria in March 2003. This is not direct evidence of any transfer of WMDs or of any illicit activities, however, at the very least, this does challenge Alexander's narrative and raises the question, what did Iraq transfer to Syria on the eve of the Iraq War? In addition, for the defense of Baghdad, Saddam equipped some Republican Guard units with chemical protective gear and authorized the use of chemical and biological weapons, according to intelligence reports.⁴³ This discussion of whether Iraq truly reconstituted their WMD program haunted the Bush

⁴¹ Kris Alexander, "No, Syria Doesn't Have Saddam's Chemical Weapons", Wired, July 27, 2012, accessed January 26, 2018, <https://www.wired.com/2012/07/syria-iraq-wmd-meme/#more-87809>.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Michael R. Gordon, "Threats and Responses: Military Planning; Iraq Strategy Is Seen as Delay and Urban Battle", The New York Times, February 15, 2003, accessed January 26, 2018, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/16/world/threats-responses-military-planning-iraq-strategy-seen-delay-urban-battle.html>.

Administration for years and was the center of political controversy around the ensuing conflict that never left.

With all the questions that have been raised since the invasion in 2003, many considered the assessment of Saddam's weapons capability and the connection between al Qaeda and Iraq as an intelligence failure. So the question raised is how or why the Bush administration failed to receive the correct intelligence prior to leading the United States into war with Iraq. The most plausible answer is that high-level Bush Administration officials saw faulty intelligence by the action of "stovepiping". Stovepiping is the action of "receiving information directly to the top leadership...without the information subjected to rigorous scrutiny".⁴⁴ Former National Security Council Staff Member, Kenneth Pollack, outlined that this action "dismantled the existing filtering process that for fifty years had been preventing policymakers from getting bad information".⁴⁵ Therefore, this raw intelligence made it to key policymakers in the administration, like VP Cheney and President Bush, and together made the argument for war based on unvetted and unverifiable intelligence.

Conclusion

Examining the tense relationship between the United States and Iraq raised the question of why Iraq was so important that Saddam was able to force the United States to invest such a large portion of their time, blood, and treasure over the last three decades. One factor that continued to draw American interest in Iraq was the continued flow and

⁴⁴ Seymour M. Hersh, "The Stovepipe", The New Yorker, October 27, 2003, accessed January 28, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/10/27/the-stovepipe>.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

access of oil from the Persian Gulf.⁴⁶ After the disposal of the Shah in 1979 in Iran, the United States needed to create and maintain partnerships within the region to ensure their and the world's continued access. The United States had built a relationship with not only Saudi Arabia, but also Saddam in Iraq.

The loss of Iran profoundly influenced President Carter to issue the Carter Doctrine and succeeding presidents to enforce this policy and, therefore, make the Middle East a primary policy concern for their administration. When Iraq, under Saddam's leadership, became a danger to the United States and its interests, the Bush administration had to ensure that the consistent flow of goods, specifically oil, continued out of the Persian Gulf and towards the United States' European allies who depended heavily on Middle Eastern oil. Eventually, it became necessary that if the United States wanted to maintain their continued hegemony and security in the world and the region, it served their best interests to invade Iraq.

In April 2003 with one of the most iconic images of the war, the Iraqi civilians alongside US personnel tore down the statue of Saddam located in the center of Baghdad; this was the symbolic end of the Saddam regime in Iraq. The actions that followed the toppling of Saddam gave rise to the insurgency in Iraq, which eventually evolved into a sectarian civil war that the US military would have to deal with for the next eight years, which slowed down their peace and rebuilding efforts. Unfortunately, most problems that arose during the conflict escalated because of bad policy, which further highlighted the sectarian divisions within Iraq.

⁴⁶ Nafeez Ahmed, "Iraq Invasion was about Oil", The Guardian, March 20, 2014, accessed October 06, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/earth-insight/2014/mar/20/iraq-war-oil-resources-energy-peak-scarcity-economy>.

Chapter 2:

Postwar Planning and Reconstruction

What is Postwar Planning and Reconstruction?

The United States whether at home or abroad has a long record of rebuilding nations after conflict; an example is after World War II in Japan and Germany. The Allied Powers planned and had a goal for how postwar Europe would take shape before the defeat of Nazi Germany. These plans, like the Yalta Conference and the Potsdam Conference, set the groundwork, which preceded an Allied Victory to ensure a smooth transition of power and relative stability during this process.

The postwar planning definition utilized throughout this chapter will be useful to understanding the process. The definition of postwar planning to be understood going forward is the planning stage before a resolution to a conflict occurs that has established clear goals regarding a general outlook for what the intervening power hopes the occupied nation will look like as a result of the engagement.⁴⁷ This refers specifically to how their government takes shape and what it will look like (from the top down). However, it is not just limited to a planned change in government, but can also pertain to a planned shift in the host nation's culture and general make-up of their society.

Reconstruction is more than the actual physical act of rebuilding the damaged structures of a country, but also includes the society or social structure that may have been destroyed during the conflict. This key term will have the same general understanding and application of reconstruction as postwar Japan in 1945. The Iraq

⁴⁷ Geoffrey Roberts, "Stalin at the Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam Conferences", *Journal of Cold War Studies* 9, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 10-14.

War reconstruction period includes both the physical rebuilding of tangible objects in Iraq but also the actual rebuilding and repairing of the Iraqi political and cultural structures of society. This was done in Japan (the integration of Japan back into the world, not just economically, but politically and culturally as well), and the United States government also engaged in other reconstruction efforts, such as Panama and Kuwait.⁴⁸ The difference between postwar planning and reconstruction is that postwar planning merely consists of the plans intended for the future; reconstruction is the execution of those proposed plans.

It is often stated that the United States may have won the war in Iraq, but lost the peace. This chapter will discuss several key policy and decisions that will highlight how the Americans mishandled the planning in Iraq, within the lead up to the conflict and the immediate months after the fall of Saddam. These failures by the United States increased the difficulty to cultivate a new Iraqi nationalism or identity and shift away from their sectarian ideology. Instead, they highlighted the differences, which further exacerbated the negative relationship between the Sunnis and Shiites that already existed.

Early Postwar Planning and Early Reconstruction Efforts

The Americans and their international partners had to create an effective strategy for a post-Saddam Iraq. Shortly after 9/11, Secretary Rumsfeld ordered the review of the current war plans that existed for Iraq. Rumsfeld did not order the additional planning of “Phase IV” or the reconstruction phase, because he did not plan for a lengthy

⁴⁸ US State Department, U.S. Department of State, accessed April 13, 2017, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/japan-reconstruction>.

occupation after Saddam's regime fell while any plan for the reconstruction period was presumed by Rumsfeld to have been handled by the Department of State.⁴⁹

During the planning phase both State and DOD produced assessments for possible unforeseen problems during the reconstruction phase. During this phase Sec. Rumsfeld, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Gen. Richard Myers, Vice Chairman Gen. Peter Pace, Deputy Sec. Wolfowitz, and Under Sec. Feith developed a document dubbed the "Parade of Horribles". The "Parade of Horribles" memo presented 29 potential problems that the US could encounter during the rebuilding process.⁵⁰

Rumsfeld at an NSC meeting shared this memo with the President, Vice President, Sec. State, the National Security Advisor, and the CIA Director. The fears that this group believed could hinder their ability to build a new Iraq proved to be accurate. For example, some of the points within the memo included the fear that there were no WMDs; a sectarian and ethnic conflict between the Sunnis, Shi'a, and Kurds, postwar involvement lasting longer than 10 years; and the fear that the cost of postwar Iraq would drain the US economy and become too expensive.⁵¹ Similarly to the "Parade of Horribles" memo, the State Department participated in their own formulation of how postwar Iraq would or could take shape.

The project funded by the State Department, The Future of Iraq Project, attempted to determine before the invasion what tasks needed to be completed to ensure a smooth transition, therefore attempting to predict the potential problems the US could

⁴⁹ Stuart W. Bowen Jr., *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*, First ed. (US Independent Agencies and Commissions, 2009), 7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

encounter during the reconstruction phase. The Future of Iraq Project drew on the knowledge of Iraqi exiles and international experts to predict the issues that the US could encounter.⁵² These problems consisted of widespread looting, the threat of disbanding the military quickly, the need to rebuild the electric grid and water supply, and finally, other potential security threats; however, the warnings from the State Department's study were largely ignored by those in the Pentagon and by some in the Executive Branch.⁵³

The project failed to get the attention of DOD or senior State Department policy makers for two reasons. First, The Future of Iraq Project was over 1,000 pages long, so it became difficult for policy makers to absorb the information; secondly, the release date of the study prevented any influence during interagency deliberations of postwar Iraq.⁵⁴ The lack of cooperation between DOD and State frustrated those involved in the project because many of the threats the study warned about proved to be accurate, similar to the "Parade of Horribles" memo.

Even with these early signs of contingency planning, within several layers of government, the planning for a postwar Iraq was fragmented and missed key discussions with different US agencies. Stuart Bowen discussed in his book, *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*, the loose coordination that the NSC (National Security Council) had over the separate State and DOD efforts. This poor

⁵² US State Department, "Future of Iraq Project", May 12, 2003, 4.
<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB198/FOI%20Overview.pdf>.

⁵³ Eric Schmitt and Joel Brinkley, "State Dept. Study Foresaw Trouble Now Plaguing Iraq", The New York Times, October 18, 2003, accessed June 23, 2017,
<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/19/world/struggle-for-iraq-planning-state-dept-study-foresaw-trouble-now-plaguing-iraq.html?src=pm>.

⁵⁴ Bowen Jr, *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*, 15.

coordination did not just occur between State and DOD but also occurred when this effort did not seek the assistance from postwar conflict experts within the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), specifically within the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).⁵⁵ OFDA gained significant experience rebuilding after natural disasters but additionally gained experience through operations involving Iraq during Desert Storm and Operation Provide Comfort. Relations between the civilian and military planners were fragmented throughout the interagency planning process, and even as officials moved to integrate the overall plan, Bowen described the integration process developed in a piecemeal fashion and therefore made it difficult to combine the different plans as one.⁵⁶ This poor coordination made it difficult to achieve a unity of effort between the different agencies and the overall reconstruction effort suffered as a result.

In addition to the poor coordination within the different agencies, there were major differences within the NSC as to what a postwar Iraq should look like. Once the removal of Saddam was completed, the next order of business would be the installation of a new government to control and operate Iraq. Two major competing opinions emerged. This first opinion came from within the Secretary of Defense's office, specifically with Douglas Feith and Paul Wolfowitz, who wanted to announce an interim government before the invasion. That plan would have appointed Ahmed

⁵⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Chalabi as head of the new Iraqi provisional government and other exiled anti-Baathist Iraqis as heads of other major positions.⁵⁷

The Americans within the NSC staff that supported an immediate Iraqi-led interim government argued two points. First, that it gave an Iraqi-led face to the postwar government; especially since there was no international support, which would have helped to prevent the appearance of a Western occupying force.⁵⁸ After the long history of Western involvement since World War I in Iraq, any further interference would result in adverse side effects for any Western nations. The second argument, as stated earlier, was that an Iraqi-led postwar government without Saddam would be filled with exiled anti-Baathists that have been inundated with Western democratic culture.⁵⁹ This would give the Iraqis control of their government, specifically Iraqis with pro-western ideals and values that they could teach and could instill in the Iraqi population.

To the contrary, some members of the NSC staff also had their disagreements regarding instituting an Iraqi government immediately following the fall of Saddam's government. One of the problems with this idea centered around the United States' Iraqi contact, Ahmed Chalabi. The first problem with instituting a Chalabi led government was Chalabi was not trusted among some of the US agencies, particularly in the State Department and in the Central Intelligence Agency. These agencies believed Chalabi had a reputation for being unreliable and fraudulent and did not want to put someone into power that these agencies did not trust.⁶⁰ Secondly, those within

⁵⁷ Stephen Benedict Dyson, "What Really Happened in Planning for Postwar Iraq", *Political Science Quarterly* 128, no. 3 (2013), 461.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid.

State and the CIA were unsure if the Iraqi people would view that government as legitimate because the anti-Saddam exiles have not lived in Iraq for decades.⁶¹

The second argument called to establish a government of non-Iraqis for an extended period of time; this plan originated in the State Department and State outlined a plan for a Transitional Civil Authority (TCA).⁶² The goal of the TCA was for the exiled Iraqis to return to Iraq and establish political parties, which would help build democratic institutions in Iraq.⁶³ Under this plan, the Bush Administration would have been able to avoid the unreliable and potentially fraudulent exiles, while using the full resources and expertise of not only the US but also the United Nations. Dyson outlined the two significant drawbacks to this solution of governance. Dyson discussed a TCA style government would have gone against the recommendation of the Iraqi exiles that wanted self-governance immediately and opposed direct foreign rule and it was unclear how much international support the United States would receive.⁶⁴

The different personalities divided the Administration. These camps divided mostly between the different Deputies at State and Defense, each of whom pushed a different policy option and agenda. In Defense, Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and Under Secretary of Policy Douglas Feith argued for a provisional government led by the Iraqi exiles. At State, Deputy Secretary Richard Armitage and Under Secretary Marc Grossman pushed for a TCA concept. Dyson argued that the two sides inherently disagreed on the concept for a postwar Iraq government and the relationship between

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 462.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

the personalities was too much to overcome.⁶⁵ Therefore, these meetings were ultimately unsuccessful between the Deputies and were unable to provide any type of recommendation to the Principals Committee (PC).

The decision to resolve the competing views for postwar Iraq was left to the Principals Committee/NSC. The PC reached two conclusions regarding postwar Iraq. The first was that the PC decided to reject the notion of the installation of an Iraqi provisional government using Iraqi exiles and instead to adopt the TCA concept. This decision was supported by the PC, and involved Sec. of Defense Rumsfeld to go against his number two and three positions at Defense, and side with the State Department and the CIA. Rumsfeld believed that, “if you have a provisional government...you would put an enormous amount of power and resources in the hands of these people and they may not prove themselves competent or honest”.⁶⁶

The second decision decided by the PC was that the Department of Defense was going to be the lead agency in the postwar. This included a civilian component headed by a non-military “Iraq Coordinator” in addition to a three star.⁶⁷ There was some debate over this structure, but eventually the PC agreed on this policy because the DOD was the most capable agency to handle the rebuilding of a postwar Iraq. Sec. of State Colin Powell stated, “State does not have the personnel, the capacity, or the size to deal with an immediate postwar situation in a foreign country that’s eight thousand miles

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 466

⁶⁷ Ibid., 467.

away”, therefore the State Department agreed with the PC’s decision to make DOD the lead agency.⁶⁸

With the prospect of an extended occupation in Iraq, the United States had to prepare for an interim government; therefore, the Bush Administration established the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) in December 2002, led by Army Lt. General (retired) Jay Garner.⁶⁹ The goal of ORHA was to integrate the postwar preplanning between the various agencies and deploy to Iraq to implement the plan and establish immediate humanitarian aid after the fall of Saddam’s government.⁷⁰ However, most of the planning was not integrated by the time ORHA was created. Garner outlined in a Frontline interview that “most of it started in October 2002, but they were all done in vertical stovepipes of those agencies...integration of those plans have not occurred”.⁷¹ Therefore, ORHA had to integrate the plan between the different agencies prior to the invasion of Iraq to ensure a smooth transition to the first government after the toppling of Saddam. ORHA operated and controlled Iraq immediately after the removal of Saddam in conjunction with the different military divisions acting with relative autonomy within the different zones of occupation, and remained in control until the establishment of Iraq’s first government the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA).

⁶⁸ Bowen Jr, *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*, 49.

⁶⁹ Jay Garner retired as US Army LT. General, who operated throughout Iraq extensively during his career. He operated in Iraq, after the First Persian Gulf War, as Major General and commanded all ground forces during Operation Provide Comfort. After Garner’s retirement, the LTG worked for a defense contractor regarding missile defense and developed a relationship with Donald Rumsfeld. After giving post conflict planning direction to USDP Feith, Rumsfeld named Garner to develop the actual plan and implement it. From April 21-May 12, 2003, Garner led Office for Reconstruction and Human Assistance (ORHA) in Iraq until the creation of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA).

⁷⁰ Dyson, "What Really Happened in Planning for Postwar Iraq", 472.

⁷¹ "Frontline Interview with Jay Garner", PBS, July 17, 2003, accessed February 09, 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/truth/interviews/garner.html>.

ORHA was crucial when deciding key plans for Iraq during the early prewar planning process. President Bush and his administration were consulted and eventually approved these plans by ORHA. These decisions included to only deBaathify the top layers of the Iraqi government and not disband the Iraqi army, but instead have them go home and await the orders to be recalled. While the decision making process will be expanded upon further during each section, it important to note that the government that replaced ORHA, the CPA, overturned both of these key decisions and would have a lasting impact on how Iraq would unfold.

Before an Iraqi government was founded, the Bush Administration instituted a civilian lead to direct the selection of a transitional government and overtake the governmental duties currently responsible by ORHA and the military. The administration selected Paul L. Bremer to take the civilian lead job in Iraq under the creation of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Bremer was a former Reagan counterterrorism director, ambassador to the Netherlands, and worked for the Kissinger consulting firm. This selection was acceptable by both State and Defense, even though Bremer had minimal experience in Iraq and did not speak Arabic; however, Bremer's appointment is considered a victory for the State Department.⁷²

As mentioned earlier, there was a division or rivalry between the different personalities at the State and Defense Department, and each competed to push their agenda for the future of Iraq. The two rival agencies competed for who would control the rebuilding of Iraq, and one avenue was who would control the head leadership

⁷² Steven R. Weisman, "U.S. Set to Name Civilian to Oversee Iraq", The New York Times, May 2, 2003, accessed February 10, 2018, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/02/world/aftereffects-postwar-planning-us-set-to-name-civilian-to-oversee-iraq.html>.

position. DOD's argument to retain control of the occupation was between a military and a civilian lead within the same department, their efforts would be more efficient and effective, instead of outsourcing a key component to the equation.⁷³ For this position, key administration names were suggested by DOD like Wolfowitz, but these names were ultimately rejected for Bremer. However, the State Department believed that Iraq needed a civilian leadership, away from the DOD, in order to garner respect from the Iraqis, other Arabs, and the international community.⁷⁴ The State Department's argument was ultimately successful and the Bush Administration replaced Gen. Garner with Bremer and the CPA.

The difference between the personalities within the top level of the Bush Administration is critical to understanding why the postwar efforts for Iraq unfolded the way they did. Competing opinions and personalities divided the administration and made it unclear which direction the administration wanted to move in. This confusion resulted in an unstable Iraq and only became worse during the CPA's reign, under Bremer. The following sections will highlight the effects of the poor communication between the Bush Administration's objectives and the CPA/military and the ultimate negative effect this relationship had on encouraging further violence in Iraq.

Security and the Breakdown of Services

The first area of focus is the breakdown of security and the access to essential amenities in Iraq. This section will examine how the United States lost control of the security situation in Iraq during the early days of the conflict before the CPA took over as the provisional government. In addition, the section will highlight how the conflict resulted

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

from poor policy and management, by the Bush Administration, the military, ORHA and into the CPA.

The main units involved in the invading force of Iraq were the 3rd Infantry Division (3rd ID), 4th Infantry Division (4th ID), 1st Marine Division, and the 101st Airborne Division. The occupation was divided into different regions or zones in which each unit would operate, very similarly to post-WWII Germany. Each unit was able to operate with relative autonomy within their zones in Iraq. The British took control of Basra in the South, the 101st Airborne under Major General David Petraeus controlled Mosul, and Tikrit was initially occupied by the 1st Marine Division under Major General James Mattis but eventually replaced by the 4th ID under Major General Ray Odierno.⁷⁵

The 3rd ID had a difficult job within Baghdad compared to other units which achieved relative success within their zones. For example, the British were greeted as liberators as they took Basra and freed the Shi'a majority city from Saddam's tyranny.⁷⁶ Similarly to the 101st and the 1st Marine Division, both utilized their past knowledge and their branches' historical doctrine to prevent an insurgency before one began.⁷⁷ However, after the 4th ID replaced the 1st Marine Division on April 19, 2003, the tactics and policy within Tikrit, which is a Sunni majority city where a majority of Baathist originated from, including Saddam, was treated drastically different. The 4th ID came into Tikrit hard and aggressive, and treated many of the Iraqi civilians as the enemy; therefore, this created ill will towards the Americans throughout Iraq and filled the Iraqi

⁷⁵ John T. Fishel, *American National Security Policy: Authorities, Institutions, and Cases* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 206.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

prison system. Many of these policies and tactics used by the 4th ID were adopted throughout the early stages of the conflict by accompanying units, which only garnered further ill sentiments towards the Americans.

These tactics were permitted because of the US military's command structure and how Lt. General Ricardo Sanchez, who was the commander of coalition forces from 2003-2004, implemented a hands-off approach to policy that allowed the generals the freedom to operate with almost full autonomy. Fishel outlined, "General Sanchez did not exercise strong control, so each division operated largely on its own and ran the occupation its way".⁷⁸ The military across the board lacked one cohesive nationwide strategy under General Sanchez's leadership; therefore, the different generals operated with autonomy and control over their regions. This resulted in different perceptions of Iraq by coalition forces along with varying perceptions of coalition forces by the Iraqi populace, therefore it became difficult to know how to effectively deal with the Iraqi people. Additionally, the Iraqi people viewed the American troops differently based on the region of the country, therefore, different perceptions formed about the American occupation by the local populace. This relationship became a vicious cycle and further hindered trust and the growth of a strong relationship between the Americans and Iraqi people. It was not until Army General George Casey relieved General Sanchez that one nationwide policy was adopted.

One of these critical perceptions of the early aftermath following the removal of the Saddam government came from the 3rd ID. The experience with the 3rd ID in Baghdad is a clear example of the perceived disconnect between the Bush

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Administration's plan for a post-Saddam Iraq and the military executing those plans. The 3rd ID's after action report (AAR) stated, "The President announced that our national goal was regime change...However, there was no timely plan prepared for the obvious consequences of a regime change".⁷⁹ The absence of a Phase IV plan was clearly present in the AAR for the 3rd ID. Because the top leadership failed to provide the 3rd ID with guidance, the conditions on the ground deteriorated and a power vacuum formed, which allowed violence and chaos to fill it.

The inability to provide effective command and control from the American leadership resulted in an increase of violence that became uncontrollable. Violence in Baghdad occurred, to a degree, because of the refusal of the American military to acknowledge occupier status in Baghdad. This refusal was unusual because every divisional commander is supposed to be familiar with the Law of Land Warfare Field Manual FM27-10, which states the troops on the ground are responsible for the protection and well being of the civilian population.⁸⁰ Regardless, this inaction tied the arms of the American military to protect the Iraqi citizens and rebuild Iraq. According to the 3rd ID report, there was no civilian administration to oversee the operation and there was no real plan to deal with a post-Saddam Iraq.⁸¹ A 3rd ID Captain outlined the situation as "No one had talked about what would happen when we got there...there was no plan for that. They told us once we got there they would pull us back out and

⁷⁹ 3rd Infantry Division, "Third Infantry Division (Mechanized) After Action Report Operation IRAQI FREEDOM", Global Security, July 2003, 289-290.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2003/3id-aar-jul03.pdf>.

⁸⁰ Department of the Army, *The Law of Land Warfare* (Washington, D.C. Department of the Army, 1956), 144-147.

⁸¹ 3rd Infantry Division, "Third Infantry Division (Mechanized) After Action Report Operation IRAQI FREEDOM", 290.

take us home”.⁸² This was consistent with the reporting from the 3rd ID across the board from their leadership.

Although different divisions reported different circumstances in other regions in Iraq, the Bush Administration still had to deal with the problems of violence and chaos addressed by the 3rd ID AAR. The report by the 3rd ID acknowledged that “Without a true civilian authority on the ground, commanders were reluctant to move...as they were concerned that their actions might be inconsistent with ORHA efforts which either did not exist or had not been shared with the leaders in the 3rd ID”.⁸³ That report suggested the Bush Administration needed a plan to fill the void that Saddam’s government once held and bring stability back to Iraq. The United States during the postwar planning and reconstruction period attempted to do this with the creation of a provisional government, but this was largely unsuccessful.

The 3rd ID commented in regards to the whole operation that “Despite the virtual certainty that the military would accomplish the regime change, there was no plan for oversight and reconstruction, even after the division arrived in Baghdad”.⁸⁴ While the 3rd ID report was their perception of the situation in Baghdad, the reality was that the US government did plan for a transition post-Saddam but it was fragmented and somewhere the disconnect between the military and the Bush Administration became apparent. This made it difficult for the 3rd ID to accomplish their mission in Baghdad.

This perception from the 3rd ID could have been influenced by the fragmented planning or the lack of a universal plan by the different agencies in the postwar

⁸² Ricks, *Fiasco*, 151.

⁸³ 3rd Infantry Division, "Third Infantry Division (Mechanized) After Action Report Operation IRAQI FREEDOM", 290.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

planning process. The 3rd ID's recommendation was that "State, Defense, and other relevant agencies needed to do a timelier job planning occupation governance and standing up a new Iraqi government".⁸⁵ The fear from the 3rd ID was that Iraq would destabilize further and fall into an insurgency; this was in part because of this belief that the Bush Administration lacked any sense of urgency in rebuilding Iraq.

Therefore, the real questions to discuss from the 3rd ID report is what caused the sharp disconnect between the military and the Bush Administration. Why was the plan created by the Bush Administration and the different segments of State and DOD not communicated effectively to the 3rd ID? Who was to blame for this breakdown of communication? Was it the fault of the 3rd ID, Gen. Sanchez, allowing too much autonomy and not a single plan? Was it Garner or the bureaucracy as a whole? These questions are difficult to answer and as more time passes maybe the American populace will uncover these answers, but for now, there can only be speculation. However, what we do know is that the result of this disconnect escalated the violence and chaos, especially in Baghdad, which created the early foundations of an insurgency.

The civilian side of the operation appeared to be just as disorganized in the process to rebuild Iraq as certain Divisions within the military. Key officials misread the situation as it unfolded and therefore continued the administration down the wrong policy agenda. For example, Rumsfeld and the Bush Administration misread the conditions on the ground. Instead of viewing events as they were, which was an absence of control and any sense of the rule of law; they read the situation as the Iraqi people exercising their right to free will and freedom. This was a fundamental

⁸⁵ Ibid., 289.

misunderstanding of the rise in violence and loss of law and order early into the reconstruction phase and not only set the US military back tactically, but it also damaged the US when trying to rebuild Iraq strategically and therefore created a power vacuum that the United States had to fill.⁸⁶

One of these early signs that the situation in Iraq started to erode was the increase of looting, vandalism, and mob attacks on former Baathist government buildings in April 2003. The situation on the ground was described by a Special Operations officer as “not hell breaking loose, but it was more of the situation was eroding”.⁸⁷ As the situation began to erode, senior Bush Administration officials had a different perception of what this meant. For example, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s response to the looting and the slow unraveling of Iraq was “Stuff happens!”⁸⁸ Rumsfeld described the situation in Iraq by saying, “freedom is untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes”.⁸⁹

The result of looting and the lack of law and order played a crucial role in the early stages of Iraq. The failure to address the situation from the onset established a weak relationship with the Iraqi people and created a power vacuum that Sunni and Shi’a insurgent groups attempted to fill. The commanders and the CPA did not take initial measures to stop the violence and chaos; therefore, this created confusion on the ground between coalition forces and the Iraqi civilians. Examples of these actions would have included an imposed curfew on the population, civilians directed back to

⁸⁶ Emma Sky, *The Unraveling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2016), 72.

⁸⁷ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 136.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

work, and a tighter control of local governments and the populace.⁹⁰ Because the US failed to acknowledge the role as an occupier in Iraq, and only as a liberator, the US took a hands-off approach to the governing of Iraq and as a result, Iraq plunged into chaos.

In addition to the looting, one issue not accounted for was the actions of the Iraqi civilians. Coalition forces tried to provide electricity and water to the Iraqi people but experienced troubles delivering those essentials. For an intervening power to gain the support of the local populace, the intervening power needs to provide essential goods and services to maintain support within the region. Larry Diamond, an academic advisor to Bremer at the CPA noted, “Electric grids could not be revived, oil facilities could not be repaired, reconstruction jobs could not be commissioned, supplies could not be delivered... moreover, a transition to democracy could not move forward because of the pervasive criminal and insurgent violence”.⁹¹ Therefore, when security conditions on the ground deteriorated, this negatively influenced the socio-economic condition of Iraq and created unnecessary obstacles for the Americans to overcome.

The Americans were unable to provide these essential services to the Iraqi people consistently not only because of the confusion within the US government’s bureaucracy but additionally because of saboteurs and criminal insurgents within Iraq. American and coalition leadership became frustrated with the lawlessness in Iraq, and every time American and other coalition contractors repaired Iraq’s infrastructure

⁹⁰ 3rd Infantry Division, "Third Infantry Division (Mechanized) After Action Report Operation IRAQI FREEDOM", 289.

⁹¹ A. I. Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 245.

capability, saboteurs blew up the installations and stole the copper piping.⁹² What made matters worse was that the Americans within the Green Zone, the governmental district of the CPA and the remnants of any international presence, did not have this problem. There was a clear difference between those who lived and operated within the Green Zone and those who did not.

An example of this disconnect between those who lived and operated in the Green Zone and those who did not was a civilian named Walid Khalid. Khalid owned and operated a pizzeria right outside of the Green Zone, and his story showed a stark difference between these two places. Khalid's store, because of the electricity rations, would only receive 12 hours of power per day, once the Americans arrived. He outlined with his fellow business neighbors that the electricity problem "was never like this before".⁹³ He alluded that his company operated better when Saddam was in power compared to after the arrival and establishment of the Green Zone by the United States. This ruined his business venture. The Iraqis who watched the Americans have unlimited access to electricity and air conditioning, especially on those days that reached 130 degrees, lacked the same luxuries, creating discontent between the people and the Americans.

In addition to the lack of consistent electricity, the Iraqis' food and water were in short supply from April to June 2003. This led to mass starvation and a percentage of the population getting sick from unpurified water sources; most alternative sources,

⁹² Sky, *The Unraveling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, 12.

⁹³ Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 148.

such as bottled water, became too expensive for the average Iraqi.⁹⁴ This added to the eroding situation on the ground in Iraq, which was discussed earlier by Special Operations forces and others in Iraq and made it difficult for the Iraqis to trust the Americans in the early beginning years.

What can effectively be determined at the conclusion of this section are the early foundations that began to build an insurgency, which would eventually evolve into a sectarian civil war. The chaos; the inability to provide essential services and goods, like AC, water, and electricity to the Iraqi populace; and a poor command structure all set the stage for the policy blunders committed by the CPA under Paul Bremer's leadership.

DeBaathification

When ORHA ended, the United States and coalition forces established the CPA to fill the power vacuum created after the removal of Iraq's central authority, Saddam Hussein. An American, Paul Bremer, led the CPA; and he held this position until the CPA stepped down from power and handed the government over to the provisional Iraqi government. Paul Bremer only led Iraq for one year, but within that year, Iraq became unstable, and the US and coalition forces had to contend with an insurgency by the end of his term.

When Bremer took control of the CPA and control of Iraq, the CPA issued 100 orders. However, the first two caused the most damage to the coalition's efforts in Iraq. Order number I issued by Bremer was the CPA's decision for deBaathification of the Iraqi government. DeBaathification was a very similar process to what the Allied

⁹⁴ Polk, *Understanding Iraq: The Whole Sweep of Iraqi History, from Genghis Khans Mongols, to the Ottoman Turks, to the British Mandate, to the American Occupation*, 171-172.

Forces did to the Nazis after their surrender in World War II; this process is known as de-Nazification.⁹⁵ DeBaathification was the process of “removing the holders of public office” in Iraq who held the same political ideology as a member of the same political party as Saddam.⁹⁶

Saddam, a Baathist, outlined his government structure by enforcing the condition to Iraqi citizens looking for state employment that they had to be a member of the Baathist political party to obtain employment. This gave Saddam the ability to manipulate the population and made it easier to kill dissidents when necessary. For this reason, Bremer and others like Feith and Wolfowitz went against the previous decision established before the war began and decided that a process of radical deBaathification was needed going forward in a post-Saddam government.

Many believed that the deBaathification process would follow the successful path that the Americans and Allied forces did during the deNazification process within Germany. Many similarities between the two scenarios pushed Bremer into instituting this policy to the degree he ordered. Saddam and the Baathists controlled both the political life in Iraq and Iraq’s society through a police state and a mismanaged corrupt command economy.⁹⁷ There were other similarities within the structure and recruitment process. Members were expected to attend weekly indoctrination meetings and were required to recruit children as informers first (to inform on friends, family, neighbors)

⁹⁵Jens Meierhenrich, *"The Foundations of Constitutionalism: An Analysis of Debaathification"*, *Constitutional Political Economy* 19, no. 4 (2008), 283.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 278.

⁹⁷ Paul L. Bremer and Malcolm McConnell, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, (London: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 38.

and then eventually into the party itself.⁹⁸ This was very similar to how the Nazis and the Soviets operated. However, these cases followed different paths and were not similar because of their internal divisions.

Initially, the Bush Administration gave the perception to coalition forces and the exiled Iraqis that the plan was to remove those who violated human rights or those considered to be weapons abusers; this was the focus compared to those Baathists just deemed to be corrupt.⁹⁹ The general understanding was that the coalition would retain a significant number of Iraqis in their current position. This would allow Iraq to keep their bureaucratic structure and operate a functional government to provide basic amenities to the people, but would remove those who was believed to still have loyalty to Saddam and the Baathist ideology.

Jens Meierhenrich discussed the initial postwar deBaathification plan by the United States in the article. Largely, the plan was that the “broad structures of bureaucracy would remain in place...the coalition would cut off the head of the snake but leave the body”.¹⁰⁰ This was the initial plan because the exiled Iraqis argued that although the infrastructure was aging, they were still serviceable; therefore, this came as quite a shock to the coalition postwar planning organization when the action to eliminate all of the Baathists was accepted as policy.¹⁰¹

The initial plan regarding the deBaathification of the Iraqi government was to allow the Iraqis to take control of the situation themselves. Colonel Paul Hughes,

⁹⁸ Ibid., 39.

⁹⁹ Jens Meierhenrich, "The Foundations of Constitutionalism: An Analysis of Debaathification", 284.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

Garner's strategy chief, recalled the original plan, on which Garner briefed both President Bush and Rumsfeld. Col. Hughes recalled, "Let the Iraqis sort out their own deBaathification, the Iraqis will either kill them or force them to leave".¹⁰² This appeared to be the plan going forward until Bremer arrived in Iraq and implemented the Office of Special Plans'¹⁰³ (OSP) policy and deBaathified the entire country.

However, the directive for deBaathification was introduced and created in the Office of Special Plans, led by Douglas Feith and Deputy SECDEF Paul Wolfowitz. This order was created before Bremer's appointment, but Bremer implemented the plan. At the time, Paul Wolfowitz was the Deputy Secretary of Defense (the number 2 position in Department of Defense), and Douglas Feith was Under Secretary of Defense of Policy (USD-P). Bremer decided to issue the directive, which is why he is the highlight of the discussion regarding the deBaathification of Iraq and not Feith or Wolfowitz. However, instead, Bremer disbanded the government's infrastructure and removed state employees not considered under this category.

In an interview with PBS Frontline, Bremer defended his action of issuing the deBaathification. In the interview he stated, "I did that because I thought it was absolutely essential to make it clear that the Baathist ideology, which had been responsible for so many of the human-rights abuses and mistreatment of the people in their country over the last 40 years, had to be extirpated finally and completely from

¹⁰² Ricks, *Fiasco*, 159.

¹⁰³ The Office of Special Plans was an office within the Pentagon from 2002-2003, created by Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith (OSP was headed by Feith). The goal of this unit was to provide senior Bush Administration officials with raw intelligence regarding Iraq.

society”.¹⁰⁴ Bremer claimed that the directive only focused on the top Baathists who were clear violators of Iraqi human rights; however, the reality of the situation and the intended goal of the directive resulted in two different outcomes.¹⁰⁵

Both Garner and the CIA station chief urged Bremer to reconsider the overreaching deBaathification process, but Bremer’s response was simply, “Absolutely not, I have my instructions, and I am going to issue this”.¹⁰⁶ This made Garner believe Bremer was not responsible for the content of the policies produced by the CPA, but instead just followed DOD directives. In the hopes of avoiding confusion, President Bush agreed to “give Bremer supreme authority over all US actions in Iraq; Bremer was, in effect, the US Viceroy in Iraq”.¹⁰⁷ However, even with this declaration and support given by the President, another problem with the CPA was the disorganization of the power structure between the military and the CPA.

This policy action by the CPA had a devastating result on Iraq but also on US and Iraqi relations. Because the Baath Party was so deeply engrained into the Iraqi workforce, this resulted in an increased level of mistrust and dissatisfaction by the Iraqi populace towards the United States and the CPA, which laid the foundation for a cause of the insurgency. Therefore, the decision to clean house from the CPA eventually destabilized the newly freed Iraq. Specifically, the CPA “introduced a sweeping, indiscriminate deBaathification process intended to rid the country of the Baath party's

¹⁰⁴ Paul L. Bremer, "Truth, War, and Consequences", interview, PBS: FRONTLINE, August 1, 2003, accessed June 22, 2017, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/truth/interviews/bremer.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 159

¹⁰⁷ James P. Pfiffner, "US Blunders in Iraq: De-Baathification and Disbanding the Army", *Intelligence and National Security* 25, no. 1 (February 2010), 77.

influence”.¹⁰⁸ This process removed people from their positions at all levels based on party affiliation, rather than the actual conduct of the individual.

The result of the deBaathification devastated Iraq’s economy and society. Bremer’s action led to the unemployment of tens of thousands, which led to hatred and disdain towards the American government and Bremer. One of the largest departments affected by the CPA’s deBaathification process was the Ministry of Education. It was reported, “The Ministry of Education was staffed by more senior party members than any other department, and suffered 16,149 dismissals by June 2004. Another 1,355 were removed over the next 16 months”.¹⁰⁹ This caused many Iraqis to become unemployed, and to the Iraqis, the Americans were to blame.

This policy affected Iraqi families and communities and eventually led to the rise of social and political disturbances in Iraq. An example of Iraqi displeasure was Zalmay Khalilzad¹¹⁰ in April 2003; a senior State Department political appointee and was a leader in a State Department project called the Future of Iraq Project discussed earlier. Khalilzad voiced his displeasure, which echoed throughout Iraq by stating, “Iraqis, as a society, must decide how to treat differently those who led the crimes of the past regime...those who joined the Baath party at the lowest levels and are not

¹⁰⁸ Miranda Sissons, Abdulrazzaq Al-Saiedi, "Iraq's De-Baathification Still Haunts the Country", Al Jazeera English.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Zalmay Khalilzad has been a dominant figure in the foreign policy realm for the Republican Party in the United States. Khalilzad began his service to the Bush Administration as the ambassador to Afghanistan from 2003-2005, and because of his success in Afghanistan and his strong comprehension of the region President Bush replaced the current ambassador of Iraq at the time, Negroponte, where Khalilzad served as ambassador of Iraq until 2007. Khalilzad was able to bring a better cultural understanding to situation in Iraq and was one of the first people to warn the Bush Administration of a sectarian change in the insurgency. Khalilzad served in this position until 2007 when Ambassador Ryan Crocker replaced him and he went on to hold the position as Ambassador to the UN for the last two years of the Bush Administration.

necessarily culpable for any crimes".¹¹¹ Khalilzad believed that those Iraqi civil servants who in the past had done their best to serve their country, not Saddam's tyranny, should not have been let go for merely having the same party identification as Saddam, which was mandatory.¹¹² Even though Khalilzad's opinions had major influence within the Bush Administration and the Republican Party, because of his regional expertise, his concerns went largely ignored at the time.

An important question is why were influential players like Khalilzad and Garner ignored during the deBaathification decision? One theory is that exiled Shiites had a strong influence on key figures, like Feith and Wolfowitz, and were able to push the administration towards the removal of anyone who could challenge their new vision for Iraq. It was clear that Feith and Wolfowitz wanted the exiles to take power, especially under Chalabi's leadership; therefore, it is not a reach to believe that even after the decision to create the CPA was made, Chalabi still had the ear of important figures within the Administration. Nir Rosen, author of *Aftermath*, argued the decision to deBaathify Iraq was very political from the beginning and that Chalabi in effect used the process to target political opponents and de-Sunnified Iraq.¹¹³ Chalabi believed that this would have helped him become Prime Minister of Iraq, however, the exiles and Chalabi had very little support in the new Iraq.

A second theory regarding why Iraq was deBaathified the way it was an attempt to rid Iraq of a Baathist ideology. Bremer and Wolfowitz often compared the Baathist Party to the Nazi Party and said that Saddam had modeled his regime after Hitler's

¹¹¹ Jens Meierhenrich, "The Foundations of Constitutionalism: An Analysis of Debaathification", 284.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Nir Rosen, *Aftermath: Following the Bloodshed of America's Wars in the Muslim World* (New York: Nation Books, 2010), 31.

regime. Rosen put in his book *Aftermath*, that “there is no proof or mention in any literature about Iraq” regarding the connection or model of Iraq and the Baath Party after Nazi Germany.¹¹⁴ Therefore, Rosen argued this belief is partly why Bremer performed so poorly in Iraq; he viewed Iraq through a distorted lens.¹¹⁵ These two theories might help explain why the CPA Order I was issued that caused so much destabilization in Iraq’s managerial and working class.

This process of deBaathification affected all of Iraq and was an influential factor in the Iraqis becoming disenfranchised, which then made many join the insurgency. This type of policy pushed Sunnis out of government and out of power and replaced them with Shiites, and this made it difficult for the Sunnis to accept this new Iraq. Therefore, Iraq became near impossible during the early years to cultivate a new Iraqi sense of nationalism for all Iraqis to support, which would have helped repair the relationships between the Sunnis and Shiites that decades of persecution and violence created. This policy action by the CPA increased the level of mistrust and dissatisfaction by the Sunni Iraqis towards the United States and the CPA. The result of the American government picking different sectarian groups as winners and losers set the foundation for mistrust that expanded the insurgency, which eventually morphed into a sectarian civil war.

Disbanding the Iraqi Military

During the rebuilding of Iraq, the United States had to decide how to handle the current Iraqi military. This section will look into how the CPA issued Order Number II, attempt to answer how this policy changed and contradicted the initial policy

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 19.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

established by ORHA and the Bush Administration, and finally examine the overall effects that this policy had on Iraq in the early postwar phase. Bremer's second order was the official disbanding of the Iraqi military, not just Saddam's top military and police enforcers like the Republican Guard (which President Bush approved of in the March meetings). In hindsight, one can observe the clear negative effects that this policy had during the early years rebuilding Iraq. Therefore, in addition to poor policy, the disbanding of the military lacked the appearance of coordination, cooperation, or even a unified message between the CPA and the Bush Administration.

The Bush Administration, initially in their postwar planning phase, prepared to employ several hundred thousand former Iraqi military members on the United States payroll to help provide security, ensure order, guard the Iraqi border, repair roads, and perform any other unforeseen tasks in Iraq.¹¹⁶ Pfiffner outlined how "many officers in the Army were professional soldiers, and the rank and file enlisted soldiers constituted a source of stability and order. The disbanding threw hundreds of thousands out of work and immediately created a large pool of unemployed and armed men who felt humiliated and hostile to the US occupiers".¹¹⁷ Therefore, when Bremer's order ignored the recommendation of the postwar planners, the US Army, the Army War College, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, all of which advised against officially disbanding the Iraqi military, left many questioning Bremer's decision and how the decision became reversed.¹¹⁸ This order had real implications for the future of the occupation and in the early days after the order caused an eruption of

¹¹⁶ Peter Slevin, "Wrong Turn at a Postwar Crossroads: Decision to Disband Iraqi Army Cost U.S. Time and Credibility", *The Washington Post*, November 20, 2003, 1.

¹¹⁷ Pfiffner, "US Blunders in Iraq: De-Baathification and Disbanding the Army", 80.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

violent demonstrations that resulted in the wounding of American soldiers in the attempt to put down the violent demonstrations.¹¹⁹

Officials within the CPA, like Walter Slocombe, Senior Advisor for Security and Defense to the CPA, believed that this was necessary to establish a new Iraq.¹²⁰ Slocombe argued that “the move was necessary to establish an Iraqi military not tainted by corruption and was acceptable to ethnic groups that had long been repressed by Saddam Hussein's military’ ...He also says that ‘it was the only possible course because so many Iraqi soldiers had fled their posts and drifted back into the population’”.¹²¹ The goal of the CPA was to leave little doubt to the Iraqis that there would be any traces of Saddam left, and two important policies that needed to be enacted according to Bremer and Slocombe is a clearing of Iraq’s public sector (deBaathification) and the disbanding and rebuilding of Iraq’s military/police force.

Bremer and Slocombe believed that the Iraqi Army would be tough to reconstitute, because they had deserted their posts and surrendered to the Americans on arrival. This idea could have been correct, but many disagree with this notion presented by Bremer and Slocombe, and instead believe it offered as an excuse. This theory regarding that statement existed because this order was such a critical miscalculation by Bremer and the CPA and that the perceived difficulty is used as a possible defense to protect themselves and their reputation for the effects of this bad policy.

¹¹⁹ Michael R. Gordon, "Debate Linger on Decision to Dissolve the Iraqi Military", The New York Times, October 21, 2004, accessed January 29, 2018, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/21/world/debate-linger-on-decision-to-dissolve-the-iraqi-military.html>.

¹²⁰ Walter Slocombe was the former Under Secretary of Defense of Policy (USD-P) for former President Bill Clinton from 1994-2001 (this role was succeeded by Douglas Feith in 2001) and after the change of the administration, Slocombe took a role in the rebuilding process of Iraq with the CPA in 2003.

¹²¹ Michael R. Gordon, "Debate Linger on Decision to Dissolve the Iraqi Military", The New York Times, October 21, 2004.

Bremer and Slocombe were correct in that the Iraqi military did disband and returned to their homes armed; however, Slocombe and Bremer misunderstood two important facts about the Iraqi military and the situation on the ground. First, the general structure of the military would have still been intact with the help of key Iraqi military officers. Many within the Iraqi military returned home immediately after the invasion, and this had a lot to do with American psychological operations (PSYOPs) that started about a year before the invasion. Pfiffner tells us that the US “dropped leaflets over the country that warned the Iraqi army not to fight the US invasion or destroy the oil fields. The leaflets promised that if Iraqis refused to fight for Saddam, the soldiers would be accepted back into a post-Saddam Iraq army”, but this was not the case.¹²²

In addition to the leaflets, leading up to the war senior American military leadership met with former Iraqi officers to discuss the best way to rebuild and recall the Iraqi military. General Abizaid approached former Iraqi generals about returning to duty and assisting in the postwar security, Pfiffner pointed out that Gen. Abizaid received a positive response.¹²³ In fact, Col. Paul Hughes began negotiations with the former members of the Iraqi Army and former officers and by mid-May (prior to the order) had 137,000 former Iraqi soldiers registered to join in the postwar security force.¹²⁴ However, Bremer instituted the CPA Order II, and ordered a cease to all negotiations with the Iraqi military. Col. Hughes stated, "We changed from being a liberator to an occupier with that single decision...By abolishing the army, we

¹²² Pfiffner, "US Blunders in Iraq: De-Baathification and Disbanding the Army", 81.
Also See: Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 111.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 81-82.

destroyed in the Iraqi mind the last symbol of sovereignty they could recognize and as a result created a significant part of the resistance".¹²⁵

Lieutenant General David McKiernan, the Joint Force Land Component Commander (JFLCC) during the time of the Iraq invasion (post-invasion Gen. McKiernan was replaced by General Sanchez), believed that the desertions did not mean the Iraqi military had disbanded. In reality, Gen. McKiernan believed the military could be reconstituted if the US recalled the soldiers and key leaders who commanded them.¹²⁶ Pfiffner pointed out that Tenet in his book, *At the Center of the Storm*, believed that "Intelligence estimates indicated that the majority of the army could have been recalled within a two-week period and put to useful work".¹²⁷ This challenged the notion presented by Bremer and Slocombe and this idea was the idea of many others within the Administration.

For example, Colin Powell believed that "The troops might have been gone, but there was a structure there, there were units, there was an infrastructure. Get rid of the officers who were Saddamites, and rebuild it from a structure that existed, not from ground zero".¹²⁸ Additionally, Bob Woodward in *Plan of Attack* outlined how senior officers in six key Iraqi divisions agreed to stay out of the fight and surrender their forces upon the United States' invasion and that this act created high hopes in the capitulation strategy in which these units would be used for stabilization efforts.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Gordon, "Debate Lingered on Decision to Dissolve the Iraqi Military", *The New York Times*, October 21, 2004.

¹²⁶ Michael R. Gordon, "Fateful Choice on Iraq Army Bypassed Debate", *The New York Times*, March 16, 2008.

¹²⁷ Pfiffner, 82.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹²⁹ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 352.

Both of these add more credence to the idea presented by Tenet, Hughes, and Pfiffner while detracting credibility away from Bremer and Slocombe. Therefore, if the United States successfully commissioned the Iraqi military, as planned, this would have given the US a key ally in the rebuilding process immediately, helped answer the troop-level concerns proposed by some within the military, and provided the occupation with a much-needed Iraqi presence. However, the CPA reversed this order.

Secondly, Bremer and Slocombe misunderstood how the Iraqi government had built the military. The Sunnis may have controlled Iraq during Saddam's reign; however, Iraq still had a heavily dominated Shiite population, which meant many within the military were Shiites. Rosen in *Aftermath* pointed out that why the Sunnis and the Baath Party controlled Iraq, the Iraqi population was proud of their military and viewed the military as a nationalistic icon, one that predated the Baath Party.¹³⁰ Another claim by Bremer that Rosen attempted to debunk was the idea about Shiite advancement in the military. Rosen claimed that while the Sunnis overrepresented the officer corps and that many Shiites felt that there was a glass ceiling in promotions, roughly one third of the famous deck of cards of Iraq's most wanted were Shiites.¹³¹ This showed that while the Shiites were underrepresented, Shiites still had some mobility in the military and that the regular military was not just a Sunni haven and a tool for Saddam's persecutions.

The next problem with the CPA's order is this order directly contradicted the plans established by the Bush Administration and ORHA on March 10-12, 2003. This breakdown of communication began when Bremer arrived in Iraq in May to replace Jay

¹³⁰ Nir Rosen, *Aftermath: Following the Bloodshed of America's Wars in the Muslim World*, 19 and 30.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

Garner who oversaw the situation in Iraq before the fall of Saddam's government to the implementation of the CPA in May. While Garner was in Iraq, Garner and Bremer were tasked to rebuild Iraq together. Garner and Bremer quickly developed a negative relationship with each other, which made it difficult to accomplish the mission. Because of their relationship, Garner, who had originally told Rumsfeld that he would be willing to stay in Iraq until July 2003, left early. Garner outlined how "Bremer did not want my advice...He cut me out the first day, and did not have me attend any of his meetings".¹³² This relationship is not productive when trying to rebuild a nation, and Iraq suffered because of Bremer's actions not only with Garner but also with many people in the military and the Bush Administration.

One of the clearest examples of the disunity and delicate relationship between Garner and Bremer and Bremer and the Bush Administration was the disbanding of the military. The Bush Administration decided on March 10-12th during postwar discussions not to officially disband the military, but the CPA under Bremer's leadership decided that was the best option, and went ahead and implemented this policy to the shock of many within the administration and military sector. In an interview regarding postwar Iraq, former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage stated regarding the policy decision of Bremer, specifically referring to the disbanding of the military, "That was not the decision the administration reached" before the invasion.¹³³

¹³² Ricks, *Fiasco*, 158.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

This shock was discussed with important figures within the principals committee. For example, Secretary of State Colin Powell was surprised, and so was National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice. Powell is quoted to have said, “I talked to Rice and said, ‘Condi, what happened?’...And her reaction was: ‘I was surprised too, but it is a decision that has been made, and the President is standing behind Jerry’s decision. Jerry is the guy on the ground. And there was no further debate about it’”.¹³⁴ This change in policy excluded key members of the Bush Administration, like Powell and key leadership in the military, which caused additional problems for the administration and created confusion over who had approved Bremer to disband the military.

Pfiffner claimed that this order did not clear the normal policy process and that “Feith admitted he did not bring it (disbanding the military) up in the deputies meetings but said that he had received detailed comments back from the JCS. But Richard B. Myers, Chair of Joint Chiefs then, said: I don’t recall having a robust debate about this issue, and I would have recalled this”.¹³⁵ Pfiffner goes on through his article, *US Blunders in Iraq: De-Baathification and Disbanding the Army*, to discuss the other important policymakers or military personnel who should have been consulted with and were not or personnel that have lingering questions remain over their involvement in the policy decision. For example:

Army Col. Greg Gardner, was tasked by Slocombe to get General McKiernan’s reaction to the plan the day before it was issued...Gardner said that a member of McKiernan’s staff told him over the phone that

¹³⁴ Michael R. Gordon, "Fateful Choice on Iraq Army Bypassed Debate", The New York Times, March 16, 2008.

¹³⁵ Pfiffner, 84.

McKiernan accepted the policy decision. McKiernan, however, denies that he was consulted: 'I never saw that order and never concurred. That is absolutely false'. Gen. Peter Pace, vice chair of JCS said, 'We were not asked for a recommendation or for advice'. Central Command in Florida was also surprised by the decision. Paul Pillar, National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia, said that the intelligence community was not consulted about the decision.¹³⁶

Therefore, Pfiffner and others showed an overall lack of communication across the entire government. This shocked not only key principals like Colin Powell but key members in the military who were responsible for planning Iraq during the postwar period. It is impossible to tell, however, my belief is Bremer, Slocombe, and Feith were motivated by egotistical and personality reasons, which blinded their view on strong policy.

However, since that decision Bremer wrote a New York Times Op-Ed piece in September 2007 in which he painted a much different story regarding the debate over the disbanding of the military. Bremer discussed in his Op-Ed that after consultation with American officials in Washington and Baghdad the only viable course of action was to disband the military and create a new professional force open to the hire of former Iraqi military. Bremer added how Walter Slocombe drafted an order to accomplish these objectives. Bremer stated how he "sent a preliminary draft of this order to the Secretary of Defense and the next day sent the draft to the Defense Department's general counsel, William J. Haynes, as well as to Mr. Wolfowitz; the under secretary for policy, Douglas Feith; the head of Central Command, Gen. Tommy

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Franks; and to the coalition's top civil administrator at the time, Jay Garner, asking for comments".¹³⁷

The Op-Ed continued to outline exactly how the decision to disband the military was deliberated and thoroughly discussed before the order became official. Bremer claimed to have had meetings with President Bush regarding this issue, but President Bush did not recall any these meetings or agreeing to this change. Additionally, Slocombe claimed to have received comments on the draft, which incorporated the views of both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, which would have made it clear that both top civilian and military staff in the Pentagon reviewed the proposal.¹³⁸ Additionally, Bremer claimed to have given the New York Times letters that show President Bush approved the order to disband the military, however the Times disproved that claim.¹³⁹ Regardless, whatever the case may potentially be, critical staff members across the Bush Administration either lied regarding their knowledge of the directive or were left in the dark. Both are unproductive during an attempt to rebuild and restructure a government and military and this communication breakdown started with the Bush Administration and went all the way down the chain of command. However, the more likely truth is that Bremer, Feith, and Slocombe decided to contradict initially agreed upon decisions and when the three were caught, lied about their actions.

¹³⁷ Paul Bremer, "How I Didn't Dismantle Iraq's Army", The New York Times, September 05, 2007, accessed October 17, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/06/opinion/06bremer.html>.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ John Hay, "The Deciders", The American Conservative, October 27, 2015, accessed February 16, 2018, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/the-deciders/>.

The chain of command in Iraq was a major concern in the post-planning effort. On May 9, Bremer received an order from Sec. Rumsfeld with the position of “Presidential Special Envoy to Iraq” as described earlier. This power gave Bremer “full authority over US government personnel, activities, and funds”, which was very similar but meant to exclude control over major military operations.¹⁴⁰ The second designation issued was Sec. Rumsfeld’s appointment of Bremer to be the Administrator of the CPA, which gave him full executive, legislative, and judicial authority in Iraq.¹⁴¹ However, due to the ambiguity of the designations to Bremer, conflict arose between himself and Sanchez over who had command of the military within Iraq (very similar to the conflicts that arise in the military about the role of an ambassador in a conflict zone). Sec. Rumsfeld could have easily resolved this problem if he had offered a clear chain of command between the military and the CPA, but he failed to do so.

Fishel outlined that because these posts were given to Bremer, it resulted in two separate and independent chains of command within the DOD structure. He stated, “The first was the chain of command structure from the president through SECDEF and Feith to Bremer. The second was the president through SECDEF and CJCS to the CENTCOM commander to Gen. Sanchez as commanding officer of the Combined Joint Task Force-7 (CJTF-7)”.¹⁴² Because both chains of command were independent within the DOD, this resulted in disputes between Bremer and Sanchez over who was in charge of the military component within Iraq.

¹⁴⁰ Fishel, *American National Security Policy: Authorities, Institutions, and Cases*, 205.

¹⁴¹ Paul L. Bremer and Malcolm McConnell, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 13.

¹⁴² Fishel, 205.

Bremer eventually reversed the decision and decided to rebuild the military slowly and methodically battalion by battalion. However, the damage was already done, and when the order to disband of the military was issued, those formerly in the Iraqi military joined the newly formed insurgency, which gave a new sense of legitimacy to the insurgency. What were once initially a few Saddam Fedayeen fighters eventually turned into a full-blown insurgency, with the armed Iraqi regulars looking to oust the Americans from Iraq.¹⁴³ Therefore, after the effects of this policy were noticed, the blame game among policy makers began for the implementation of a policy that legitimized the insurgency.

Overall, this situation regarding the disbanding of the military revealed that the United States did not have a unified message, did not have accountability within the Administration, or did not have a proper discussion between the administration, the military, and the CPA. For example, Bremer claimed that President Bush knew prior, but Bush claimed not to have remembered, and Bremer claimed to have received support from the Defense Department but the Secretary of Defense barely dealt with Bremer. Therefore, this added more confusion during the early months of the war in Iraq and this is just one example where proper communication lacked throughout this decision making process.

Examining this decision making process several questions come to mind, such as whether or not Bremer made this decision on his own. Second, if Bremer did not make the unilateral decision to disband the military, who else was involved? Finally, why was there such poor coordination between the military, the CPA, and the Bush

¹⁴³ Ibid.

Administration? There are several plausible theories or assumptions as to what happened and how the decision was made, but it can be difficult to know exactly what occurred and certain assumptions have to be made in order to put together the clearest picture possible. Therefore, for most of these questions, we will never know the full truth. Instead, as memoirs are released from the authors' perspective and material becomes declassified, the US populace will then be able to create a clearer and better understanding of what happened, but it is unlikely the American people will ever know the full story behind this order.

What we do know and what was presented in this section is that there was a lack of a unified message and accountability throughout the entire decision-making process regarding the disbanding of the military. Somewhere the decision between President Bush's initial order to keep the Iraqi military intact became misunderstood or ignored. When examining the effects of the CPA's first two orders, the deBaathification order and the disbandment of the military, both had a devastating role in early postwar Iraq. Both policies created high unemployment and disdain towards the Americans in Iraq. These policies left many Iraqis without jobs, who then blamed the United States for their deprivations and struggles. It is hard to decide which policy had a more influential role in the creation of the insurgency; however, more than likely the official disbanding of the military had a stronger effect. This order sent thousands of armed Iraqis underground with a grudge towards the US, which gave strength and momentum to an insurgency of Iraqi regulars.

Troop Strength and Staffing

The operation to rebuild Iraq was understaffed and underfunded on the junior level and in military strength. The Bush Administration was unwilling to commit the needed forces to ensure a stable postwar Iraq. In February 2003, before the invasion, Army Chief of Staff General Eric K. Shinseki testified on Capitol Hill where he estimated “several hundred thousand” soldiers would be needed in a successful postwar Iraq; this number directly contradicted the numbers provided by Paul Wolfowitz and the Pentagon, which estimated 100,000 American troops.¹⁴⁴ This led to more infighting among key members of the Bush Administration and other vital officials. This contradiction raised more suspicions regarding the continuity between the Bush Administration and the military. This number was never reached and was the center of controversy during the lead up and early months of the war.

The US and coalition forces did not just suffer from lack of proper communication regarding troop strength but also in deployment. Due to an unsteady relationship between the United States and Turkey, the Americans were unable to get enough men in at the start of the conflict¹⁴⁵, and as a result, fewer than half of the men required to ensure a stable Iraq were in Iraq when Baghdad fell.¹⁴⁶ It was clear that the

¹⁴⁴ Eric Schmitt, "Pentagon Contradicts General on Iraq Occupation Force's Size", The New York Times, February 27, 2003, accessed June 23, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/28/us/threats-responses-military-spending-pentagon-contradicts-general-iraq-occupation.html>.

¹⁴⁵ The 4th ID was scheduled to invade Iraq from Turkey, however, the Turkish government denied permission to the American military to invade from the North. Therefore, the 4th ID had to make their way through Kuwait and were able to join the fight and the occupation for the end of major combat operations. The Turkish denial of US forces into Iraq from the north has been cited as a potential attributing factor for a strengthened insurgency. Hendrickson and Tucker claimed that if the US attacked from the north, they may have been able to march across the Sunni Triangle of Death and quelled any Baathist resistance before it became stronger.

¹⁴⁶ David C. Hendrickson and Robert W. Tucker, Revisions in Need of Revising: What Went Wrong in the Iraq War (Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 7-8.

operation was understaffed; however, the problem ran deeper than just the deployment of more American soldiers to Iraq.

Two authors, Hendrickson and Tucker, are unfavorable to the theory that if the United States had deployed more men, then specific problems would not have arisen. These authors make the assertion that if the operation had been staffed properly, Iraq would have still experienced violence. While this assertion is likely correct to a degree, a larger troop total would have been able to maintain control and defuse the anarchic nature of Iraq, while securing the Iraqi borders, which were unguarded for the first year of the conflict. At the time, the Americans would not have been able to deploy 300,000-480,000, roughly the number estimated by Shinseki and others, especially without a heavy reliance on National Guard and Reserve forces.¹⁴⁷

The only feasible way in 2003 to obtain those numbers estimated would have been to create a sizeable coalition willing to contribute fighting men. The initial prewar plan from the Pentagon called for a sizeable contribution from foreign allies. This plan called for four divisions; these four would have been from NATO, Great Britain, Poland, and the Arab Emirates.¹⁴⁸ Hendrickson and Tucker described the situation by saying that the Americans “made the meal” and removed Saddam, while the international forces “did the dishes” or assisted in the rebuilding of Iraq.¹⁴⁹ However, only British and Polish divisions were available, and a potential reason for this was the failure to gain international support and the absence of a UN authorization.¹⁵⁰ In

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 8-9.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 9.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

addition, the Iraqi forces sent home and later disbanded could have provided the additional security needed within Iraq and would have given the operation an Iraqi face.

Secondly, staffing the CPA was a significant blunder by Bremer and the Americans. Fishel detailed in his book, *American National Security Policy: Authorities, Institutions, and Cases*, that Bremer hired senior staff personnel he knew from his time at the State Department. While Bremer filled his senior positions with former ambassadors or senior level State Department employees, for junior positions, Bremer pursued a different method. A majority of Bremer's junior staff were recent masters degree graduates, recommended by the Heritage Foundation, with little to no field experience.¹⁵¹ These graduates had little knowledge of the region and the language, which certainly caused problems for the CPA in their attempt to rebuild Iraq.

The United States, from a military standpoint, deposed Saddam brilliantly. However, because of the lack of a coherent and unified message, the proper preparations before the operation to remove Saddam, and poor leadership throughout, a chaotic and anarchic Iraq resulted. Colin Powell, US Secretary of State in 2003, compared the situation in Iraq to the popular home-furnishing store, Pottery Barn, and this policy metaphor he described operates by a rule that says if you break it, you own it.¹⁵² The "Pottery Barn rule of foreign policy" is just a simple way of describing when an intervening force takes over; the intervening power will become responsible for the safety and security of the population. Therefore, within the analogy, Collin Powell

¹⁵¹ Fishel, *American National Security Policy: Authorities, Institutions, and Cases*, 205.

¹⁵² Robert Siegel, "Powell's Cautions on Iraq", NPR, April 20, 2004, accessed October 02, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1844476>.

stated that the United States was now responsible for fixing the dilemma they had created and could not withdraw as planned.

Restoring Iraq's Ability to Govern

Eventually the Americans would no longer govern the Iraqi people; therefore, some semblance of Iraqi governance would have to be established in order to lead Iraq in a post-Saddam and US-led government. These plans worked to restore Iraq's national, regional, and local governments. After Bremer arrived in Iraq, he tasked his team with establishing an Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) as an early step to transfer political power back to the Iraqis. The IGC served in an advisory role until sovereignty was transferred back over to an established Iraqi government. Rajiv Chandrasekaran, author of *Imperial Life in the Emerald City*, believes that the CPA attempted to engage in social engineering by favoring the Shiites and Kurds over the Sunnis. The CPA implemented strict ethnic or religious quotas on the IGC; therefore, the IGC members comprised of thirteen Shiite Arabs, five Sunni Arabs, five Sunni Kurds, one Christian, and one Turkmen.¹⁵³ While Iraq was already ethnically and religiously diverse before the invasion, the establishment of an ethnically and religiously based IGC similar to one from a troubled system, such as the one in Lebanon, divided the government and the populace from the start.

Some Iraqis, particularly Saad Jawad, a professor at Baghdad University, believed that this system negatively impacted the early foundations of Iraq. Jawad believed that some Iraqis at the time placed national identity over religious or ethnic affiliation, and that “we never saw each other as Sunnis or Shiites first, we were Iraqis

¹⁵³ Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone*, 196.

first...but the Americans changed that and they made it a point to categorize people as Sunni, Shiite, or Kurd”.¹⁵⁴ While this was not always the case or even the case among many across Iraq; however, some did share the same sentiment as Jawad. The CPA chose five relatively weak Sunnis to sit on the council and excluded low-level Baath Party members from consideration, which further alienated the Sunnis and raised tensions between the Sunni populace and the Americans.¹⁵⁵ If the IGC would have placed better-qualified personnel on the council or if the Americans had chosen stronger Sunni candidates, the Sunnis may have felt that they had a stronger voice in the new Iraq

Conclusion

This chapter examined the policy decisions, which led to the rise of an insurgency and eventual sectarian civil war during the Iraq war. The deBaathification process and the disbandment of the Iraqi military led to conditions that were more conducive to the existence of an insurgency, while the security conditions on the ground allowed for chaos, which gave the insurgency the ability to flourish. The deBaathification and the dissolution of the Iraqi military resulted in hundreds of thousands becoming unemployed, and unemployment is a major characteristic that Young and Gray looked into regarding economic conditions needed for an insurgency to flourish.

Specifically, these authors discussed that “The political aim of insurgencies thrived in situations where societal divisions were cumulative and were combined with

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

economic and political disparities”.¹⁵⁶ These economic divisions discussed were “a rising unemployment and underemployment (rate), unequal distribution of wealth, and inadequate distribution of essential goods”.¹⁵⁷ They argued that these factors would lead to dissatisfaction and that it would open the door to insurgent action and guerrilla warfare. Therefore, because of these policies discussed in this chapter, the United States now had to face an insurgency in Iraq.

These actions created a near certainty that during the first year of occupation the initial sparks of the insurgency by the remaining Baathists and ex-soldiers would rebel against a US occupation. Therefore, as time elapsed, the attacks became more militarily advanced and showed clear signs of professionalism.¹⁵⁸ As the attacks increased in their intensity and capabilities, the Americans ramped up their efforts to stop the violence. However, American soldiers found themselves in a position of breaking Iraqi cultural norms and sensitivities, which made it tough to win “the Iraqi populace’s hearts and minds”.¹⁵⁹

It is difficult to argue that the United States would not have faced an insurgency, because history has shown most invading countries tend to experience some form of insurgent activity, however these attacks could have mitigated. If the US government and the CPA had handled their relationship with Saddam’s former officers better, it is not unreasonable to believe the insurgency could have been less violent and destabilizing, especially since some insurgents were former Iraqi military who the CPA

¹⁵⁶ Aaron M. Young, Sr. and David H. Gray, "Insurgency, Guerilla Warfare and Terrorism: Conflict and its Application for the Future", *Global Security Studies* 2, no. 2 (Spring 2011), accessed October 2, 2017, <http://globalsecuritystudies.com/Insurgency.pdf>, 66.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation*, 245.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

had relieved of duty. However, these policies and mistakes resulted in a manifestation of hatred towards the American and coalition forces; this contradicted the belief that the US government and their international partners would be greeted as liberators instead of occupiers. This resentment towards the US made it difficult to build a new national identity in Iraq, and the Iraqi populace's resentment can be directly related to US policy actions, and not relations between the Sunnis and Shiites, especially in the first few years of the conflict. The American presence in Iraq unified many Iraqis with a common enemy, the United States, which in the early years of the war united the different insurgent groups and Iraqis with a common goal. Therefore, the conflict faced the result not of predestined political conditions but instead specific policy actions taken in Iraq that established a political climate that lasted the duration of the conflict.

Chapter 3:

Rise of an Insurgency and Sectarian Violence

Chapter 2 outlined the policies and planning in the months that preceded and the months that followed the invasion and how the actions and the policies of the administration impacted the early stages of Iraqi reconstruction. The chapter discussed the shift in Iraq away from a potential stable and democratic future but instead towards violence and eventual civil war. The change resulted from a series of incorrect policies or failures within the administration that aggravated the religious and ethnic divisions in Iraq. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the result of these policies and the actions taken by the United States, which eventually caused the rise of an insurgency and ultimately a sectarian civil war.

What is an Insurgency and Counterinsurgency:

An insurgency is, “a general overarching concept that refers to a conflict between a government and an out group or opponent in which the latter uses both political resources and violence to change, reformulate, or challenge legitimacy” of the current administration.¹⁶⁰ However, an Australian counterinsurgency expert, David Kilcullen, gives us an additional understanding of what this term means. The definition he uses when understanding an insurgency is, “an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict”.¹⁶¹ The second Iraq War after the fall of Saddam is a strong example of this. An insurgent group led by al Qaeda, former Baathist, and Saddam loyalists attempted to challenge the

¹⁶⁰ Young and Gray, "Insurgency, Guerilla Warfare and Terrorism: Conflict and Its Application for the Future", 66.

¹⁶¹ David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2010), 1.

legitimacy of the United States' involvement in Iraq, and the newly formed Iraqi government after the transition from the CPA.

British Colonel C.E. Callwell wrote one of the original doctrines when encountering a small war or counterinsurgency operation (COIN). Callwell's idea sets the standard for what would be considered a small war or a counterinsurgency operation. The United States and other foreign militaries used his teachings from his book and his definition of a small war to guide policy. Callwell's book was very influential in creating the US Army and US Marine Corps' doctrine regarding their fight in a "small war" or counterinsurgency operations. The evidence is the field manuals created by the Marines in 1940, which General Mattis drew from extensively, as did Army General Petraeus in 2006.

Callwell defined a small war as "anything other than a conflict that consists of regular troops", but more specifically, he denotes this type of conflict as "operations of a regular, conventional army, against an irregular, or comparatively speaking, irregular force".¹⁶² Colonel Callwell specifically noted that a "small war" has nothing to do with the size and scope of the conflict but instead the actors that are involved in the conflict. Using this understanding of the term, the first Gulf War from 1990-1991 and the initial invasion of Iraq in March 2003, until the fall of Saddam's regime in April 2003, would not be considered a "small war" by Callwell's definition. However, the growing insurgency in Iraq, after the fall of the Saddam regime, is an example of Callwell's "small war" concept.

¹⁶² C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 21.

Another way of looking at counterinsurgency is the host government alongside an intervening/occupying power or by itself with the purpose of defeating the insurgent organization and returning the status to normal.¹⁶³ If the host government is successful but refuses to acknowledge the underlying issues that created the conditions for the insurgency in the first place, then that allows the same situation to reform, and another insurgency would soon follow. After Saddam's regime had fallen, it became apparent that there was going to be an insurgency in Iraq, so the United States and coalition forces took counterinsurgency measures to create a stable and safe Iraq. The occupying power or host government has several options they can consider to defeat an insurgency that forms in their controlled territory. These measures adopted by an intervening/occupying power are primarily based on the use of force (military strength), economic coercion, or forcing the insurgent's hand politically.¹⁶⁴

A protracted counterinsurgency operation is very costly for any occupying or intervening power. An insurgency is very cheap to operate because the key objective is to promote disorder and fear throughout their areas of operation, which is comparatively very inexpensive.¹⁶⁵ Disorder serves many purposes. For example, it can help disrupt an economy and create discontent; both of these factors serve the overall purpose of

¹⁶³ An intervening power is a state that involves themselves in the affairs of another state for the protection of their interest. This can be to help expel the current government in the country from power or to protect the current power from an insurgency or invasion. An occupying power is slightly different but similar. An occupying power already intervened in the situation and now tasked with rebuilding the host nation. In the case of Iraq, before the removal of Saddam, I considered the US as the intervening power, while after the ousting of Saddam the United States was tasked with rebuilding Iraq, therefore, I would consider them to be an occupying power.

¹⁶⁴ United States Department of State, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide, by David Kilcullen, Matt Porter, and Carlos Burgos (2009), 2-3.

¹⁶⁵ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger, 1964), 6.

undermining the strength and authority of the counterinsurgency operation.¹⁶⁶ The Iraqi insurgency effectively drew the US deeper into the conflict, spending more US lives and treasure and becoming an obvious example of cost disparity between the US and the insurgent groups.

Kilcullen argued that to operate a successful counterinsurgency operation, two important fundamental factors must be understood. These factors are respect for noncombatants and understanding what drives the conflict, which implies a constant need for diligence and updating of policy, based on changing circumstances on the ground.¹⁶⁷ The United States adopted these concepts put forth by Kilcullen; however, this took time for the Americans to implement, and therefore, the situation worsened.

Sectarian and Ethnic Breakdown in Iraq

As discussed before, Iraq is a very diverse country that consists of three major ethnic or sectarian divisions. The two major ethnic groups that comprise Iraq are the Arabs and the Kurds. As of 2016, the Arab population constituted roughly 75-80% of Iraq's ethnic groups, compared to the Kurds who comprise anywhere from 15-20% of the population.¹⁶⁸ Besides an ethnically diverse state between the Kurds and Arabs, Iraq is diverse within the two sects of Islam.

According to the CIA, roughly 99% of the Iraqi population follows and practices a form of the Islamic faith.¹⁶⁹ The two major sects of Islam, the Sunnis and the Shi'a,

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, 3-4.

¹⁶⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook: IRAQ", Central Intelligence Agency, January 12, 2017.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid

resulted from the schism that occurred after the death of Mohammed in the 7th century. From the two sects of Islam, Sunni and Shi'a, the Iraqi population is roughly 60-65% Shiite and 32-37% Sunni.¹⁷⁰ The major reason for the split was a disagreement over who would become Caliph within the Muslim leadership after Mohammed. One side believed that the Caliph should be a consensus choice, while the others believed that the Caliph should be a descendant of Mohammed. Since then the two sects have been at conflict with each other.

A sectarian division has always existed in Iraq long before the American invasion. However, since the invasion the situation has become much worse. Since the capture of Mesopotamia by the Ottomans in 1638, the minority Sunnis had always been the ruling party in Iraq.¹⁷¹ After the fall of the Ottomans after World War I, the British took control and continued that status of the Sunnis as the ruling party, while the Shiites largely remained in rural and labor classes in Iraq.¹⁷² The relationship between the two became more challenging and complicated after the Shiites began to move into the urban areas in the 1950s.

The relationship between the Sunnis and Shiites did not cause a big problem, and the two sects appeared to coexist relatively well, until the Iran-Iraq War. There was sectarian bias before the war. However, it did not truly get worse until after the start of the 1980s. During the conflict, the regional powers, like Saudi Arabia, expected Iraq to be the Sunni defense against Iranian Shiite expansion throughout the Middle East;

In addition: Since the outbreak of the war in 2003, there has been a large and widely voluntarily exodus by Iraqi Christians and Jews to other countries, since the fall of Saddam. This added to the historically low number of the Jews and Christians reported in Iraq by the CIA in 2017.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Rosen, *Aftermath: Following the Bloodshed of America's Wars in the Muslim World*, 28.

¹⁷² Ibid.

however, this became a source of tension within Iraq, especially in the Shiite intelligence and security establishments.¹⁷³ The discrimination against the Shiite population, which was encouraged by Saddam, resulted in a massive exiled class and migration of Iraqi Shiites out of Iraq, even though these Shiites fought against the Shiite-dominated Iran and identified more as Iraqis. Saddam believed that the Shiite Iraqis were Iranian and confused nationality and ethnicity with religion, which became a problem the US had to face when attempting to foster a new identity away from religious lines and towards a more secular belief system.

This sectarian divide became a problem for the United States during the duration of the conflict Iraq. Differences between sectarian ideologies were a significant factor in the rise of violence in Iraq. Political or religious ideology can divide a populace, and Iraq is a strong example of that. Violence increased from insurgent groups, and besides targeting US troops, they also targeted competing religious groups. David Galula discussed the overall power and effect an ideology has on the rise and creation of an insurgency or civil war. He argued that for an insurgent group to be successful they needed to have a well-grounded cause and ideology to attract supporters from the population.¹⁷⁴ Their ideology and resolve must be strong enough to overcome the certain weaknesses that will arise for insurgent groups, and in Iraq, the different insurgent groups' pursuits outlasted the weakness in the early years.

Who Comprised the Insurgency?

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, 8.

In 2003, the US and other coalition forces faced the first major attack of an Iraqi insurgency. Many different organizations comprised the insurgency and fought against coalition forces. The major groups that encompassed this insurgency were secular/nationalist groups, Islamic organizations, a combination of both nationalist and religious factions, and finally foreign influence and fighters. By June 2006, NPR posted an article that revealed all of the major insurgent groups fighting in Iraq against coalition forces at the time, which is based on Ahmed S. Hashim's book, *Insurgency, and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*.¹⁷⁵ Hashim concluded, "There are a remarkable number of insurgent organizations. They vary widely in levels of skill and functional specialization....This chaotic situation has proven to be a major problem for effective intelligence-gathering about the insurgency, its methods, and goals".¹⁷⁶

Saddam Loyalist

The first major organization is the Sunni Baathists; and the example of this group outlined by Hashim is The General Command of the Armed Forces, Resistance, and Liberation in Iraq and the Fedayeen Saddam.¹⁷⁷ These organizations comprised of mostly Saddam's former regular soldiers that were promised a role in the new Iraq before the CPA disbanded their jobs and Saddam's Republican Guard, who were always going to be disbanded. Therefore, the members that composed these organizations tended to be those who had suffered from the Coalition's occupation. However, because of the disbanding of the military, and the fact that thousands deserted their posts before the fall of Iraq, organizations were still armed with weapons given to

¹⁷⁵ Ahmed S. Hashim, "Iraq's Numerous Insurgent Groups", NPR, June 8, 2006.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

them by the Saddam regime and would use them against coalition forces. This gave them more legitimacy and made it more difficult for coalition forces to contend with the eroding situation on the ground.

Before Saddam's capture in December 2003, their initial goal was to restore the former Baathist government and to have the coalition abandon their mission in Iraq.¹⁷⁸ The pre-war organization of the Baath Party allowed for these militias loyal to Saddam to continue to operate a guerilla-type insurgency.¹⁷⁹ However, after the capture of Saddam, these organizations had less credibility and therefore, changed from a more nationalist identity about liberating Iraq from a Western ideology to a more Islamist-dominated motive.¹⁸⁰

Sunni Insurgents

The next major insurgent faction was the Sunni Islamists. These fighters were primarily under the ideology of Salafi Islam. A Salafist is an individual who follows an ultra-orthodox form of Islam where they live in the manner of the Prophet Mohammed and fight for a return of what they consider a pure form of Islam.¹⁸¹ Practicing as a Salafist is very similar to the Wahabi sect of Islam, which is popular in nearby Saudi Arabia that has connections with Osama bin Laden; however, the major difference is that Salafists "in Iraq do not condone tolerance towards the Shi'a Muslims" a tactic that groups like AQI and later ISIS practiced.¹⁸² The most popular insurgent organization with these

¹⁷⁸ "The Sunni Insurgency in Iraq", Global Guerrillas, 2.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Malcolm Nance, *Defeating ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe* (New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 2016), XVI.

¹⁸² Ahmed S. Hashim, "Iraq's Numerous Insurgent Groups", NPR, June 8, 2006.

Also See: "The Sunni Insurgency in Iraq", Global Guerrillas, 2.

factors is the Islamic Army of Iraq (IAI). Hashim described the members of IAI as “people who will not surrender. That they have time, they have weapons, they have money, and they are fighting at home”. Hashim goes on to state that, “I am afraid it will only get worse, that they will get more and more power”.¹⁸³ IAI was involved in the insurgency in Iraq until the coalition withdrew in 2011.

In 2006 after the bombing of the Samarra Mosque, it became clear that Iraq was engulfed in a sectarian civil war, and a new organization in Iraq emerged called al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). AQI, led by Jordanian Sunni Islamist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, specifically attacked the Shi’a population in Iraq. AQI was a separate organization, but was still affiliated with Osama bin Laden’s al Qaeda that the United States was fighting in Afghanistan. However, there was a fundamental difference between the two organizations. Bin Laden viewed the United States and practicing Muslims who ruled and understood the world in a more secular manner as the real enemy, compared to Zarqawi and AQI, who viewed the Shi’a interpretation of Islam as the real threat. This resulted in attacks across Iraq towards Shi’a Muslims because of the perception that this would be the best strategy to defeat the United States and the result of these attacks inspired a retaliatory conflict between the two sectarian groups.

AQI’s main goal during Zarqawi’s leadership was twofold: first, to rid Iraq of the Americans and establish an Islamic government, and the second was to take the fight out of Iraq and into the Middle East, specifically Jerusalem. Zarqawi outlined that in order to bring about coups in neighboring Middle Eastern countries, AQI first had to establish an Islamic government. Zarqawi believed that the rescuing of “Jerusalem and

¹⁸³ Ibid.

the neighboring countries will come only after the rise of an Islamic state from which the youth will set out to liberate the neighboring areas”.¹⁸⁴ This involvement by AQI and other Sunni Islamist organizations set out to rid the Americans from Iraq, expel the Shi’a government from power, and establish a Sunni-led government, once again.

This changed the dynamic of the conflict in two ways. The first way the dynamic changed was, it moved away from a classic insurgency towards a civil war between the two major sectarian ideologies in Iraq. Secondly, this caused further foreign involvement between the Saudis and the Iranians in regional competition for influence in Iraq. This competition further exacerbated regional rivalries and worsened the relations between the Sunnis and Shiites that lived in Iraq. As a result of the change in nature of the conflict, the United States failed to deal with the change effectively and struggled to make any progress under General Casey’s leadership.

Shi’a Militias

With the emergence of AQI and violence towards the Shi’a population, a Shi’a response materialized. However, before the 2006 bombing, Shi’a insurgent organizations existed, most notably, The Mahdi Army and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). The Mahdi Army took their roots from Shi’a cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, and this group took form in 2003 to protect Shi’a communities from Sunni insurgents due to the collapse of “public order” after the invasion by the United States.¹⁸⁵ The Mahdi Army had an adamant anti-US sentiment and demanded a

¹⁸⁴ "The Al-Zarqawi Beliefs: 'Allah Has Permitted Us to Repay Them in Kind'," The Irish Times, February 24, 2013, accessed March 31, 2018, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/the-al-zarqawi-beliefs-allah-has-permitted-us-to-repay-them-in-kind-1.1158951>.

¹⁸⁵ “Profile: the Mahdi Army”, Al Jazeera English, April 28, 2008, accessed April 16, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2008/03/200861505611516526.html>

withdrawal and a timetable for the removal of foreign troops in Iraq. Al- Sadr told Al Jazeera “the Mahdi Army will only disarm when an administration that can ‘get the occupier out of Iraq’ is present” and that they could liberate Iraq.¹⁸⁶ It is important to note that

The Mahdi Army primarily focused their efforts in the southeastern part of Iraq because of the small Sunni population and minimal al Qaeda activity and therefore actively resisted US occupation efforts within this region.¹⁸⁷ The Mahdi Army sought US removal from Iraq immediately, and in 2007 the US accused Iran of arming, supplying, and training Shi’a groups like the Mahdi Army in the effort to gain a further foothold in an already chaotic Iraq. The Iranians became a state sponsor of terrorism in favor of Shi’a organizations and became an opposition intervening power in the war against the Americans and the coalition forces.

Groups like the Mahdi Army were involved in not only the targeting of US personnel but also in sectarian violence and death squads against Sunni insurgents and the local Sunni populace. Their goal, with the support of the Iranian government, was to make Iraq a Shi’a-led and dominated state, and with the help of Iran, these organizations caused further chaos and disruption a to the growing situation in Iraq. This group continued to cause problems for the United States until the ceasefire in 2008. One conclusion discussed for why groups like the Mahdi Army began to lose

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ John Pike, "Al-Sadr Movement / Sadrist Trend", Global Security, accessed November 03, 2017, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/sii.htm>.

influence was that al-Sadr began to shift away from violence and prioritized his organization's cultural, religious, and socio-economic outreach.¹⁸⁸

A competing Shi'a organization was the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), previously known as Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). After the fall of Saddam, the ISCI quickly began to consolidate power and became an influential political player in the new Iraq by providing goods and services to the Shi'a Iraqis. During the civil war in Iraq, the ISCI military wing, the Badr Brigade, was accused of secret killings and death squads against Sunnis throughout Iraq.¹⁸⁹ Much like the Mahdi Army, ISCI received money and supplies from the Iranians to rid Iraq of Sunni and American influence and became a proxy for Iranian interests. This created additional problems for the Americans in the effort to rebuild Iraq.

Foreign Fighters

The final major insurgent group was comprised of foreign fighters. As early as 2003, the United States has had to “contend with fighters from across the region, particularly Syrians, Saudis, Yemenis, Algerians, Lebanese, and even Chechens”.¹⁹⁰ This problem became so noticeable that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated, regarding foreign fighters, “We know that busloads were coming in with money and recruiting

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Andrew Buncombe and Patrick Cockburn, "Iraq's death squads: On the Brink of Civil War", The Independent, February 25, 2006, accessed November 07, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iraqs-death-squads-on-the-brink-of-civil-war-6108236.html>.

¹⁹⁰ Michael R. Gordon and Douglas Jehl, "Foreign Fighters Add to Resistance in Iraq, U.S. Says", The New York Times, June 21, 2003.

posters...I am sure there are people still coming in from neighboring countries, and it is something that's obviously unhelpful".¹⁹¹

What the presence of foreign fighters showed is twofold. First, the number of fighters in Iraq revealed that the insurgency had a degree of organization behind the fight against the American and Western presence.¹⁹² Secondly, it showed that a threat emerged against coalition forces. Authors Gordon and Jehl discussed how busloads of fighters across the region looked for an opportunity to kill Americans, in the effort to get coalition forces to abandon Iraq and the Middle East.¹⁹³

These insurgent organizations and the influx of foreign fighters developed because of the destabilizing and disenfranchising policies instituted during the early months in Iraq. These policies caused hatred by many Iraqis and Arabs in the Middle East regarding American and coalition forces' presence in Iraq. This made many within the region believe that American involvement was just another example of Western influence and dominance over their land and decisions, which was very reminiscent of the Middle East's complicated past with the British and French. Therefore, when looking at the characteristics that gave rise to the insurgency, the biggest causes were the result of poor American policies and poor execution.

US Counterinsurgency Plan

From 2003 to 2006, coalition troops lost considerable ground and potentially lost the war to insurgent groups because of the US military's tactics, which eventually evolved the conflict towards a sectarian civil war. After the invasion in 2003, the United States

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

quickly toppled Saddam's Baathist regime and to prevent a power vacuum from forming, the US created the Coalition Provisional Authority, and the interim government of Iraq. Paul Bremer, who was discussed earlier, was assigned as the leader of the CPA and responsible for reestablishing a governing body in Iraq. This government's main purpose was to distribute services back to the Iraqi people, like security and other essential amenities.¹⁹⁴ This was all in the hope that this would prevent an insurgency and allow the rebuilding of a strong and independent Iraq.

However, due to actions taken by Saddam before the invasion as well as actions by the CPA, several paramilitary groups, established by Saddam, were able to continue the fight against the United States. Saddam also ordered before the invasion that his forces gather weapons, food, and other supplies and store them throughout the country.¹⁹⁵ These efforts made before the invasion were in the hopes that Iraq would be able to draw the United States into a prolonged insurgency against coalition forces. Saddam's efforts were ultimately successful.

After an occupation of several months, the Iraqi people and American forces settled in and worked towards building a new future for Iraq. In August 2003, the CPA released a public relations document, ironically the day after the bombing of the Jordanian Embassy that suffered over 60 casualties. This document highlighted the progress that Iraq experienced and their road to a stable democracy.¹⁹⁶ The White House claimed that these attacks only occurred in isolated regions of the country, when in fact, the insurgency was widespread and developed well before that attack. This was

¹⁹⁴ Slevin, "Wrong Turn at a Postwar Crossroads: Decision to Disband Iraqi Army Cost U.S. Time and Credibility", 9.

¹⁹⁵ Pirnie and O'Connell, *Counterinsurgency in Iraq (2003-2006)*, 7-8.

¹⁹⁶ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 215.

the administration's attempt to downplay the violence in the effort to maintain support at home.

Initially, insurgent attacks did not exclusively focus on US personnel. Instead, the insurgent groups focused on allies and others supporting components to the American effort, which they believed legitimized the occupation.¹⁹⁷ Lt. General Ricardo Sanchez, who was the commander of coalition forces in 2003-2004, saw a four-pronged attack by the insurgents against American, Iraqi, and other coalition forces. Gen. Sanchez stated, "They were doing direct action against us. They were attacking the Iraqi security forces, as they existed at the time. They were attacking politicians. They were attacking the international coalition, and they were looking to split the coalition".¹⁹⁸ In other words, the insurgents focused on other targets, deemed softer than American hard targets, because they believed these were easier to hit and would cause support to peel away from the Americans and disrupt their efforts rebuilding Iraq. That is exactly what happened, and a strong example of this was the bombing at the International Red Cross in Baghdad. A suicide bomber, in the disguise of an ambulance, drove up to the International Red Cross in Baghdad and detonated a bomb, killing roughly 40 people, a mix of Americans and Iraqis.¹⁹⁹ Jack Straw, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in the UK, reacted with "shock and outrage" to the Red Cross attack and stated, "The fact that terrorists have yet again

¹⁹⁷ Ibid

¹⁹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹⁹ "Up to 40 Die in Baghdad Attacks", The Guardian, October 27, 2003, accessed February 19, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/oct/27/iraq>.

targeted not US or UK troops but an international organization...shows the depth of depravity to which they stoop”.²⁰⁰

These attacks showed the world that an insurgency had formed since the invasion ended and Bush declared an end to all major combat operations in May of 2003. Shortly after that declaration, the conditions in Iraq completely turned against coalition forces. Initially, by the end of midsummer in Iraq, the Americans’ initial plan was to reduce the troop commitment to 30,000. However, because of conditions on the ground, that was not possible. During the years that Lt. Gen. Sanchez led the United States military, the operation in Iraq lacked an overall counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy; therefore, coalition forces focused on tactical attacks.²⁰¹ Examples of these measures were door-to-door raids and patrols throughout Iraq. These responses were very predictable and ineffective over time against the insurgents, and the result of these tactics was widely unsuccessful, and this is an effect of an enemy-centric strategy.

In addition to poor tactics, the American and coalition forces had repeatedly received poor and inaccurate intelligence. Thomas Ricks outlined this situation in his book *Fiasco*. Ricks pointed out how the Americans all summer long (2003) had poor intelligence and months into the conflict they had no idea who the enemy was and what the Iraqis thought of the Americans.²⁰² This would make it difficult to fight a counterinsurgency conflict as the enemy was not clear, their capabilities were not clear, and what the local populace believed about the intervening powers’ involvement in their

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Pirnie and O'Connell, *Counterinsurgency in Iraq (2003-2006)*, 12.

²⁰² Ricks, *Fiasco*, 222.

country was not clear. This is basic COIN theory that the Americans did not utilize when fighting during the early years of this conflict.

American forces lacked basic information in Iraq that would have assisted in the progress of their COIN operation, but the American military conducted the conflict in a way that violated many basic principles of a proper counterinsurgency operation. Ricks stated, “It appeared the only lesson the American military learned from the Vietnam War was that it should not get involved in messy counterinsurgencies”.²⁰³ This was evident by the military’s lack of implementation of true counterinsurgency tactics, and instead applied tactics that directly contradicted an effective COIN.

An essential text regarding counterinsurgency tactics was completed by Lieutenant Colonel David Galula in 1964 called *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Based on the methods implemented to deal with the violence in Iraq, it is likely that this text and the tactical content were virtually unknown throughout the US’s military upper leadership in 2003. For example, Galula prescribed a very different approach when dealing with insurgents than the American military took. The US military used large-scale conventional tactics when dealing with Iraq, but as Galula described, this method is not effective for a long-term operation. LT Col. Galula stated:

True, systematic large-scale operations, because of their very size, alleviate somewhat the intelligence and mobility deficiency of the counterinsurgent. Nevertheless, conventional operations by themselves have at best no more effect than a fly swatter. Some guerrillas are bound to be caught, but new recruits will replace them

²⁰³ Ibid., 264.

as fast as they are lost.²⁰⁴ Essentially, what Lt. Col. Galula meant by this is that although with a larger footprint, the intervening power would be able to gain the advantage in the short term because of the intel picked up, this is not a long-term solution because the intel can change and can be too narrow or focused. This same principle is mimicked in both Col. Callwell's text in *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* and the US Marine Corps' *Small Wars Manual*.

Another direct contradiction of an effective COIN operation the American military did not utilize, which hindered their ability to control Iraq, was their control of the border. This is also a policy outlined by Lt. Col. Galula. Galula stated, "The border areas are a permanent source of weakness for the counterinsurgent whatever his administrative structures and this advantage is usually exploited by the insurgent, especially in the initial violent stages of the insurgency".²⁰⁵ This is what occurred in Iraq. The insurgents within the earliest stages of the Iraqi occupation, after violence erupted, took advantage of both the Syrian and Iranian borders with Iraq. Not only was there an influx of foreign fighters sneaking into Iraq from Syria, as outlined earlier, but the Iraqi insurgents could also alleviate their pressure and escape when needed. Additionally, the lack of control on the Iranian border allowed the Iranians to influence the future of Iraq and arm the Shi'a insurgents with a lot more ease. It took the American military far too long to secure the Iraqi border, and the US suffered because of that fact.

²⁰⁴ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, 51.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

One senior Department of Defense official stated, “There are clearly more foreign fighters in the country than we ever knew, and they are popping up all over”.²⁰⁶ During the last month of the Saddam regime, foreign fighters, mainly Syrians, were welcomed into Iraq as volunteers and during the invasion engaged in the fight outside Baghdad with coalition forces.²⁰⁷ This proved a major problem for American forces.

The mass Iraqi populace was relatively limited in their resistance to the US occupation during the summer of 2003, and the main belligerents against coalition forces were former Saddam Baathists and foreign fighters.²⁰⁸ Therefore, because of the problem these fighters created (i.e., violence, instability, and the challenged US legitimacy in Iraq); the United States developed a strategy in defeating them. The main goal for the coalition forces was, “to demonstrate that these fighters have no hope of evicting American troops from Iraq and to prevent Iraq from becoming a magnet for Islamic militants”.²⁰⁹ The coalition’s plan to achieve this goal was to track down the fighters and kill them. An example of American success early on was in 2003 at the Rawa camp; Iraqis and foreign fighters used this camp to train for attacks on Americans, but after a clash with US forces, the camp was destroyed by American troops.²¹⁰ This was very similar to the COIN strategy in Vietnam, which was to find the enemy and kill them. An enemy-centric approach can show signs of success, as this

²⁰⁶ Michael R. Gordon and Douglas Jehl, "Foreign Fighters Add to Resistance in Iraq, U.S. Says", The New York Times, June 21, 2003.

²⁰⁷ Pirnie and O'Connell, Counterinsurgency in Iraq (2003-2006), 9-10.

²⁰⁸ Michael R. Gordon and Douglas Jehl, "Foreign Fighters Add to Resistance in Iraq, U.S. Says", The New York Times, June 21, 2003.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

did; however, an enemy-centric approach cannot stand alone and for a long-term COIN and needs engagement of the local populace.

The United States and coalition forces achieved limited short-term success against foreign fighters by destroying the size of their operational force. However, coalition forces were still unable to prevent large-scale waves of fighters crossing the Iraqi border and wreaking mayhem on the US occupation because of their inability to lock the Iraqi border down. When conducting a successful counterinsurgency operation, a winning strategy incorporates a secured border to prevent a safe haven for insurgents and avoid the potential flow of insurgents to and from the host nation. The United States in the early months and year of the conflict were unable to lock down the Iraqi border and therefore had to contend with a much larger and widespread conflict. Because of these failures under Sanchez's leadership, and the fact that Sanchez did not possess a fourth star which would have given him the ability to effectively work with CENTCOM and the US ambassador, Army General George Casey replaced General Sanchez after the transition of power in Iraq from the CPA to the Iraqi government. This replacement led to a change in policy, actions, and results for the American and coalition forces, the Iraqi government, and finally the Iraqi populace.

In addition to these poorly executed tactics, the Americans mishandled the Iraqi people dealing specifically with the insurgency. LT Col. Galula described the population as the prize in the conflict in his text, and said that "The population, therefore, becomes the objective for the counterinsurgent as it was for his enemy".²¹¹ Moreover, Thomas Ricks described the Americans' view of the populace as the

²¹¹ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, 52.

“playing field” instead of the prize, which they are competing to win over against the insurgents.²¹²

In the early months into the conflict, the treatment of Iraqi civilians negatively hurt American efforts in the reconstruction phase. A clear example of this comes from the detainment of Iraqi civilians. Within the first 18 months of the operation, 30,000-40,000 Iraqis passed through US detention facilities, many of which were taken during the middle of the night with no notification to the families for weeks.²¹³ This eventually led to an understaffed and undertrained army reserve unit at Abu Ghraib that committed widespread prisoner abuse. Many of the Iraqis arrested had limited or no direct connection to the insurgency efforts in Iraq, and after the treatment of the Iraqi civilians was discovered, this turned many Iraqi civilians and those in the global community further against the American efforts in Iraq.

The Americans continued to violate basic counterinsurgency tactics to achieve short-term intelligence gains and victories. The leadership failed to examine the effects of their policies towards the big picture and long-term strategy to win over Iraq and the Iraqi people and therefore diminished any chance of success within the first year of the conflict. The chief of military history at West Point, Colonel Matthew Moten, stated, “Scholars are virtually unanimous in their judgment that conventional forces often lose to unconventional forces because conventional forces lack a conceptual understanding of the war they are fighting”.²¹⁴ This is the clearest analysis of what went wrong in the

²¹² Ricks, *Fiasco*, 266.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 199.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 267.

early years for the American military in Iraq; the military and the Bush Administration did not understand the conflict they were fighting.

The actions and tactics taken by the leadership within the US military in 2003/4 directly contradicted sound counterinsurgency policy and therefore made it made it difficult to win the Iraqi people over and put an end to the insurgency. It raises the question of why the American leadership within the military seemed to ignore basic counterinsurgency tactics and try to “reinvent” the COIN wheel especially after a long history of counterinsurgency operations. These operations ranged from the conflicts with the Indian tribes across the US, the Philippines in the 20th century, Central America in the 1960s-80s, and the Vietnam War. Fishel attempts to answer that question in his article “Little Wars, Small Wars, LIC, OOTW, The GAP, and Things That Go Bump in the Night”.

Fishel outlined that there are three major reasons why the United States has to relearn counterinsurgency every time a COIN conflict arises. The first reason outlined is the tradition of the American military. Although the American militia experienced success against the British regulars in the early part of the American Revolution, Washington professionalized the Continental Army and it set a precedence that engaged each generation of officer corps every 30 years in large “professional” conflicts.²¹⁵ Secondly, the education at America’s military academy, West Point, adopted a technological orientation with its officer corps, which remains in their ethos today.²¹⁶ Finally, the romantic tradition and perception of 19th century war based on the chivalric

²¹⁵ John T. Fishel, "Little Wars, Small Wars, LIC, OOTW, The GAP, and Things That Go Bump in the Night", *Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement* 4, no. 3 (Winter 1995): 376.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

European tradition of uniforms, marching in formation, and engaging your enemy head on in battle.²¹⁷ This style was the opposite of the type of conflict that dominated the 19th century American military, specifically against the Indian tribes, which many considered messy. The conflicts against the Indian tribes were often against non-combatants, rarely engaged in open conflict, and nearly always by ambush; therefore, Fishel outlined how many in the US military preferred to prepare for a war against a “civilized force”.²¹⁸ This view of COIN operations as just a nuisance and a distraction from the US military’s true role set the US behind in every major COIN operation as they relearn the lessons from the previous operation.

Because of this view on COIN operations, the Americans experienced several setbacks and the US government suffered backlash and harsh criticism of their efforts to rebuild Iraq and their counterinsurgency operation at home. By the end of 2003, the Americans did not just lose support at home in the United States, but the American occupation also began to lose Iraqi support and confidence. A poll conducted for the CPA surveyed five different Iraqi cities in November and December 2003. This poll revealed the negative sentiments held by the Iraqi people towards the American military force in Iraq. With the growing violence and looting discussed earlier, 62% of the Iraqis surveyed believed that the most pressing issue was the topic of security and the growing threat and presences of violence in Iraq.²¹⁹ Once violence became more widespread in 2003 and the Americans lost support from the Iraqi people and the world, a change in the upper leadership positions needed to occur.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 213

Change in Leadership

In 2004, Iraq experienced several changes at the leadership level. After much consideration regarding who the proper choice was to replace General Sanchez, the White House chose General George Casey. General Casey was a career infantryman and commander of the 1st Armored who served in the peacekeeping mission in the mid to late 1990s in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Casey was tasked to lead a war against multiple insurgent factions within Iraq while attempting to rebuild Iraq's government and society. In addition to the change for the top military brass in Iraq, the US also replaced the top civilian official. After the turnover of governmental duties to the Interim Iraqi Government (IIG), John Negroponte was appointed the ambassador to Iraq. John Negroponte replaced Paul Bremer as the highest-ranking US civilian. Casey and Negroponte attempted to work together to achieve success in Iraq and alter Iraq's current path of a violent insurgency and increasingly dangerous sectarian tensions.

First, the relationships between the Bush Administration, the different agencies, and US military were favorable compared to the relationships prior. This was not a result of a policy change but the replacement of key officials. These changes included Gen. Casey for Sanchez and Paul Bremer's replacement in mid-2004 with John Negroponte. John Negroponte was a career diplomat who was previously the US Ambassador to the United Nations. After Bremer's replacement, Ricks stated that the changes in both Washington and Baghdad were felt immediately. Richard Armitage described Negroponte's arrival with, "once State got involved, everything

changed... We had reporting; it was orderly, things started to run”.²²⁰ The change in the US top leadership in Iraq on the civilian level ushered in a much stronger working relationship between the civilian and the military side of the operation.

Too often, there was a communication problem between the civilian and the military side of the conflict; therefore, after the change in leadership, Casey and Negroponte established the “Red Cell” to create a shared vision. The Red Cell was compiled of embassy officials, military officers, and intelligence experts, including British officers and diplomats with the purpose to generate a big picture report that would show the US the nature of the enemy and the nature of the war the US fought.²²¹

The plan first rejected the notion that the main challenge came from the Shiite militias, specifically the Mahdi Army. Gordon and Trainor outlined the Red Cell’s rationale behind this finding because the Shiites could consolidate control during the upcoming election and therefore had no interest in stopping these elections.²²² The Red Cell had little interest in disrupting the potential future relationship with the Shiite government and the US. Therefore, the plan determined that the Sunni insurgent groups posed the biggest threat to the US and the Interim Iraqi Government (IIG) efforts to rebuild Iraq.

The Red Cell assessment group saw other difficulties that Iraq could face going forward if their primary goals were not achieved. These goals included the assurance that the January elections occurred, the support of national reconciliation between the Sunni and Shi’a populations, the end to external support for the insurgent factions, the

²²⁰ Ibid., 391.

²²¹ Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Endgame: The Hidden History of Americas Struggle to Build Democracy in Iraq* (New York: Pantheon, 2012), 95.

²²² Ibid.

buildup of Iraqi security forces, and assistance with the Iraqi government providing employment and services back to the Iraqi populace.²²³ The split between the military and civilian component characterized by Bremer and Sanchez's leadership had narrowed, and now there was a more unified message and mission between the civilian and military operation. While the relationship improved, there was still room for significant improvement between the civilians' and military's relationship.

When Zalmay Khalilzad replaced Negroponte as ambassador, internal reviews by the government showed poor interagency cooperation and a heavy reliance on private contractors (which were slow and costly). Khalilzad and Casey had a better relationship than Casey and Negroponte and attempted to solve the problems regarding interagency cooperation.

Like Negroponte, Khalilzad recognized the tactical imbalance between the civilian and military assets within the country. The civilian agencies were concentrated in the Green Zone and had limited insight into Iraqi society, Bowen outlined, while the military on the brigade level went into Iraqi neighborhoods daily and understood Iraqi society but was unaware of the political process unfolding in Baghdad.²²⁴ Similar to the problem in 2003, poor interagency sharing of information and expertise was the challenge in 2004/5 with Negroponte and Khalilzad. Both ambassadors along with Gen. Casey took steps to pair the civilians' and military's knowledge together to create the best policy going forward.

²²³ Ibid., 97.

²²⁴ Bowen, Jr., *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*, 236.

The goal for better integration began during Casey's and Negroponte's time in charge. Military representatives were encouraged to attend meetings by the embassy country team and the Joint Steering Committee; additionally, Casey established an interagency Strategic Operation Center, which regularly briefed senior military and civilian staff.²²⁵ During Khalilzad's time as ambassador, Khalilzad and Casey further expanded the integration of the civilian and military component of the operation that Casey and Negroponte began. For example, Bowen points out that "Key civilian and military staff met weekly in core groups on reconstruction, economic policy, political issues, and public communications, each of which became part of an integrated line of operation and reporting in support of goals established in the campaign plan".²²⁶ In addition to the integration of the military and civilian wing and the layout of clear political goals, the US issued a nationwide counterinsurgency plan going forward in Iraq.

Finally, the relationship between General Casey and General Abizaid, a Four Star General at CENTCOM, was an improvement from the previous leadership structure between Sanchez and Franks/Abizaid and the command structure with Bremer/Rumsfeld/Bush. Casey and Abizaid had "little conflict and worked well together", referring to both their knowledge in COIN theory, Abizaid's regional expertise, and the fact that Abizaid trusted and supported Casey's interpretation of how events in Iraq unfolded.²²⁷

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Fishel, *American National Security Policy: Authorities, Institutions, and Cases*, 208-9.

The second reason Casey was able to achieve some success was the changes made in the counterinsurgency policy. The lack of a proper counterinsurgency policy ended with the replacement of General Sanchez with Army General George Casey in mid-2004. This replacement ushered in a shift in counterinsurgency policy and attitude towards the conflict. The US implemented a national counterinsurgency plan compared to General Sanchez where each division had relative autonomy to work within their region in Iraq. This allowed some divisions to succeed like the 1st Marine Division and the 101st Airborne, while others dramatically failed in their reconstruction and COIN operations like the 4th ID.

A more unified strategy gave the US military a clear objective and a plan to stabilize Iraq and quell the insurgency. One senior military intelligence officer recalled, “We did not have a campaign plan the whole time Sanchez was out there. Until Casey’s arrival, there had been only a kill or capture mission and an endlessly debated draft of a campaign plan”.²²⁸ Gen. Casey’s plan called on the containment of insurgent violence, the buildup of Iraqi security forces, to rebuild Iraq economically, and to reach out and persuade the Sunni community to join the American side.²²⁹

This change in strategy also coincided with an attempt to train the lower officers in the military in proper COIN tactics. Gen. Casey added in a five-day-long school for all combat officers dubbed the COIN Academy. The purpose of this class was to teach combat commanders the tools and skills needed to run an effective counterinsurgency campaign, and many officers praised the importance and success regarding their

²²⁸Ricks, *Fiasco*, 392.

²²⁹*Ibid.*, 392-393.

attendance at this course.²³⁰ This course included “subjects from counterinsurgency theory and interrogations to detainee operations and how to dine with a sheik”; compared to prior practices when “commanders permitted troops to shoot at anything mildly threatening....and failed to give their troops the basic conceptual and cultural tools needed to operate in the complex environment of Iraq”.²³¹ This plan in conjunction with the recently held elections in Iraq were the guide to defeating the insurgency and rebuilding Iraq successfully. These steps put forth by the new leadership looked much more reminiscent of what David Galula described in his book, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*.

While there was finally a more unified mission between the civilian and the military component of the operation during General Casey’s leadership, any sense of national unity and identity failed to foster, which failed to reconcile the relationship between the Sunnis and Shiites. There were some positive signs within Iraqi governmental institutions in 2005/2006, such as a serious effort to train, arm, and advise the Iraqi military along with some governmental efforts experiencing some success. However, most of the political success achieved was superficial by 2006 and most of 2007 because the newly created government suffered from extreme polarization between the Sunni and Shi’a political parties. The reconciliation success experienced in Iraq with the Sunnis and Shiites began to take root in the end of 2007 until 2011 when the US withdrew from Iraq.

²³⁰ Thomas E. Ricks, "U.S. Counterinsurgency Academy Giving Officers a New Mind-Set", The Washington Post, February 21, 2006, accessed November 08, 2017, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/20/AR2006022001303.html>.

²³¹ Ibid.

However, in 2006 the Sunni Islamist organization, AQI, attacked a Shiite mosque in Samarra, Iraq, in which the direction of the conflict turned away from a classic insurgency into a sectarian civil war layered within the insurgency. These fighters conducted suicide bombings on an unprecedented scale; these attacks inflicted mass devastation on the Iraqi population, specifically the Shiite Arabs.²³² The Americans had no real solutions for the suicide bombings or other attacks, which caused more anger and frustration by the Iraqis towards the US and other coalition forces. American forces were unable to combat this retaliatory conflict between the Sunnis and Shiites, and Iraq fell deeper into conflict.

The increase in violence during Gen. Casey's leadership can be attributed to the rise of sectarian violence across Iraq. The US lacked any real initiatives to deal with the rise of sectarian violence motivated against the Iraqi populace and continued to view the conflict in the scope of a basic insurgency. For the next two years, US forces and governmental agencies failed to engage the Sunni population and help reconcile the differences between the Sunnis and Shi'a. Therefore, Iraq saw a rise in sectarian violence between the Sunnis and the Shi'a and the United States' efforts to stabilize the country were largely unsuccessful. The Americans were unable to protect the civilian population against the different insurgent groups, specifically AQI and Shiite militia groups, and failed to gain the trust and support of the Iraqi people. That was until 2007 when General Petraeus took over Gen. Casey's command. The change in command ushered in a new military policy, referred to as the "The Surge". This change stabilized Iraq and engaged the Sunni population, which gave success to coalition forces.

²³²Pirnie and O'Connell, *Counterinsurgency in Iraq (2003-2006)*, 28.

Chapter 4:

The Stabilization of Iraq

In the years leading up to “The Surge”, Iraq saw violence across the country increase specifically in motivated sectarian attacks; this resulted in massive civilians deaths (roughly 1,500 per month by August 2006), and the US military suffered casualties at an alarming rate of 100 KIA and 700 WIA per month.²³³ The war slipped away from the US, and the American populace grew tired of the conflict. An estimated 62% of Americans disapproved of the direction the war was taking and the overall conflict in July 2007.²³⁴ Therefore, in 2007, another change in leadership and examination at the direction of the conflict occurred. The US would have to determine whether the time, money, and lives spent in Iraq would be worth it for the United States. This time General David Petraeus replaced General Casey. The result of this change had an overwhelmingly positive effect. The violence decreased and the number of US casualties decreased, which showed evidence of stability returning to Iraq.

Sectarian Violence

During the conflict, it became apparent that the war in Iraq had a detrimental effect on sectarian relations in the Middle East and that Iraq was pushed towards a sectarian civil war.²³⁵ Many believed that the start of the violence between the sectarian factions and militias began at the Samara shrine bombing in 2006. However, the threat of violence had been brewing long before the 2006 bombing, and the reality was that the violence

²³³ Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey A. Friedman, and Jacob N. Shapiro, "Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007", *International Security* 37, no. 1 (Summer 2012), 7.

²³⁴ Gallup, "Iraq War Approval Rating", Gallup.com, 2016.

²³⁵ Fanar Haddad, "*Sectarian Relations and Sunni Identity in Post-Civil War Iraq*", in *Sectarian Politics in the Persian Gulf* edited by Lawrence Potter. (New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014), 67.

was just a result of tensions between the two sides and the policies enacted by the US that pitted the Shi'a and the Sunnis against each other.

After the invasion, many Iraqi neighborhoods became segregated or “purified” of minority sects, and these neighborhoods became primarily dominated by a single sect or ethnic group.²³⁶ The segregation is more evident than just in the divide of different communities. Others included a segregated media; each outlet targeted a different sect, and the result was that Iraqis stopped watching the same news, ceased to follow the same issues, and even went as far as to stop watching the same TV shows.²³⁷ These conditions helped to shape the political consciousness of Iraq; the populace became increasingly isolated, and there was no public and peaceful forum or interaction between the Sunnis and Shiites.²³⁸ This was just the beginning of the problem and established the relationship early on in the invasion as to how relations between these groups would progress.

The United States, during the reconstruction phase, alienated the Sunnis because they believed Sunni Arabs were pro-Saddam and pro-Baathist. The deBaathification process destroyed Iraq's managerial and professional class because of fears of loyalty to Saddam. This idea was the same justification given for the disbanding of the military and police force. These policies prevented Saddam loyalists from running the new Iraqi government; however, it alienated the Sunnis left in Iraq. This pushed the Sunnis from once governing Iraq to a large outsider who had little say in the country's new future. Regardless of who was previously in charge, if an outsider strips a political ideology

²³⁶ Rosen, “*Aftermath: Following the Bloodshed of America's Wars in the Muslim World*”, 27.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

and party from power and demotes and alienates that population, there will be a backlash and even potential violence. These policies resulted in the loss of credibility and legitimacy in the new Iraq for the Americans while disenfranchising a large percentage of the population while they propped up the other portion.

Many Iraqis took advantage of this opportunity to target opponents. Former American ally and unpopular former exile, Ahmad Chalabi, used this chance to target Sunnis and because of the influence that Chalabi and the other exiles had, the state became de-Sunnified.²³⁹ The Americans selected the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) based on sectarian and ethnic divides of all of Iraq, and the Sunni representation chosen was feeble and ineffective. Even though the IGC had little support and was considered weak, the IGC wrote Iraq's interim Constitution, which further exacerbated the Sunni and Shi'a divide.²⁴⁰ A secular Shiite named Ayad Allawi headed the interim government that replaced Bremer and the CPA in 2004.

The 2005 election that followed was based on a proportional representation of the different sects or ethnicities with Iraq as one district, as opposed dividing Iraq into different districts and regions. This shifted the identity away from being an Iraqi or what locality the individual is from but instead Iraqis based their identification on their religious sects. Rosen outlines how this process weakened local parties that had grassroots support and resulted in the strengthening of the ethnic and sectarian blocs across Iraq.²⁴¹ This resulted in the boycott of the 2005 Iraqi elections by many Sunnis,

²³⁹ Ibid., 31.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid

therefore strengthening the Shiite parties, which further alienated the Sunni population in the new Iraq.

In this new Iraq, there was fear that some Shiites would seek revenge on the Sunni population; this became further ingrained when the Sunnis saw the Shiite dominated security forces and militias target the Sunni population. Eventually, the Sunnis began to attack Shiite communities and structures. At first Shiite leadership showed restraint under Allawi, but after the 2005 elections, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq took over the Interior Ministry and filled senior level positions with men from the Badr Militia, a Shiite-led militia.²⁴² The Sunni Arabs became the primary victim of sectarian violence and the world began to see the replication of mass killings, torture, and executions. Finally, because of the clear division between the Sunnis and Shiites, the Sunnis decided to take up arms against the Shiite government and the American occupation. The main goal of the Sunni insurgency was to get the Americans out of Iraq so they could restore Iraq to the Sunni-dominated state it once was.

Both sides feared each other, and violence eventually erupted after decades of old scores to settle. The outbreak of violence was bound to happen because of historical trends when a tense relationship and dynamic existed between the old ruling class and now the new ruling class before the exchange of power. However, based on the United States' past counterinsurgency operation successes, if the United States had managed the relationship with more control and engaged the Sunnis as equal partners from the start, the damage would have been much more limited in scope. However, it would

²⁴² Ibid., 32.

have been unknown how much control the Americans could have over the militias at the time.

The conflict changed from a classic sense of an insurgency into a full-blown sectarian civil war. American forces were unable in the early years of the conflict to manage the relationships between the Sunnis and the Shi'a effectively, and eventually, violence between the sides erupted. These organizations attacked American forces, but after the bombing of the Samarra Mosque in 2006, began to attack their opposing sectarian population as well. Because of the actions taken by the US government and the treatment of the Sunni population, sectarian violence haunted the American military effort until 2007, when the US implemented a change in COIN tactics and leadership.

Shift in Counterinsurgency Policy: The Surge

In early 2007, the security of the capital, Baghdad, deteriorated and it was clear that Iraq was in the middle of a civil war, between different warring sectarian factions who competed for power not only in Baghdad but also in all of Iraq. The decision for the US was either to cut their losses and withdraw from Iraq, which essentially would have escalated the conflict and destabilized Iraq and the region further, or double down, which would increase troop levels along with a different engagement of the population. When the decision was made, President Bush met with Iraqi Prime Minister, Nuri al-Malaki, in Amman, Jordan to inform him that there was going to be a dramatic change in US policy in order to achieve the objective, a stable and democratic Iraq.²⁴³

The new strategy dubbed “The Surge” shifted US COIN policy away from Casey’s and Abizaid population-centric approach to a population centric approach that

²⁴³ Sky, *The Unraveling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, 138.

made it a priority for the US military to protect the Iraqi population and help mend the relationship between the Sunnis and Shiites, which was a change during Petraeus' command. This required a more integrated role between the US military, the Iraqi population, and the Iraqi security forces. This required a more noticeable footprint; therefore, in order to achieve that, the US needed to leave the forward operating bases (FOB) and increase their troop levels by 20-30k.

This strategy was a bold and risky policy that President Bush believed would alter the direction of the conflict that would end the increasing violence in Iraq. This approach was not widely supported by many within the US government. President Bush made this change in policy on the recommendation of several groups, the first being The Iraq Study Group (ISG). The ISG was an independent and bipartisan panel appointed in 2006 by the US Congress, and their purpose was to assess the situation in Iraq and create policy recommendations for President Bush to implement. Former Secretary of State James Baker and Representative Lee Hamilton headed this panel.

On December 6, 2006, the ISG outlined possible ways going forward and discussed possible alternatives to what they proposed and why they believed those options would result in failure. Of these potentially ineffective policies discussed, one was an increase in US troop levels. The ISG believed that a "Sustained increase in U.S. troop levels would not solve the fundamental cause of violence in Iraq, which is the absence of national reconciliation".²⁴⁴ Their rationale was that once violence subsided and the troops were withdrawn from the area, violence would just commence again,

²⁴⁴ United States Institute of Peace, Iraq Study Group, The Iraq Study Group report, by James Addison Baker, Lee Hamilton, and Lawrence S. Eagleburger (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006), 30.

which is what occurred after the troop withdrawal in 2011. Therefore, the idea of a surge in forces, alone, would unlikely be the best way forward, according to the ISG.

Former Secretary of Defense to President Clinton, William Perry, believed that there should have been a date for American withdrawal, as this would give the Americans a timetable that would allow them to reevaluate if the situation in Iraq did improve. This was not a universal belief within the ISG; Baker, for example, believed that posting a date for an American withdrawal would undermine the effectiveness of American and Iraqi forces.²⁴⁵ Baker decided that there was far too great of a risk to include a withdrawal date, and therefore decided it was best to exempt that clause from their final report. Additionally, the ISG described US forces as stretched thin and consequently unable to address the growing concerns in Afghanistan or anywhere else throughout the world.²⁴⁶ Finally, the last recommendation of the ISG was to call for a more aggressive and robust diplomatic effort within the region. Specifically, what the panel meant by this was the initiation of more talks between the Syrians and the Iranians, to prevent a sale of arms to the insurgent groups.²⁴⁷

Both the Iranians and the Syrians acted as proxies to the different Sunni and Shiite insurgent groups in an attempt to gain more control in their bordering country. As a result, the United States threatened both with regime change; however, given the circumstances in Iraq at the time and the role in Afghanistan as well, regime change would have been unwise and unrealistic at the time to suggest. This is based on the

²⁴⁵ Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How this Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a way out of Iraq* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009), 28.

²⁴⁶ United States Institute of Peace, Iraq Study Group, *The Iraq Study Group report*, by James Addison Baker, Lee Hamilton, and Lawrence S. Eagleburger, 30.

²⁴⁷ Robinson, *Tell Me How this Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a way out of Iraq*, 28.

political climate at home and the potential for spreading the US financially and militarily too thin. Instead, if common ground could not have been achieved, which was unlikely, the US would have to find a way to prevent the influx of foreign fighters, arms, and other supplies into Iraq.

The ISG's suggested goal was to shift away from a strong American presence in Iraq and shift towards a policy that allowed the Iraqis to take control of the major security and political responsibilities of the nation.²⁴⁸ The ISG argued that there needed to be a shift away from combat operations and the beginning of a more advisory role until the drawdown began and the Iraqis would take over. However, not everyone within the ISG was adamant regarding a US drawdown. For example, Senator Chuck Robb, a Democrat, believed that the United States had a moral obligation to stay in Iraq until order could be restored because the United States had invaded, adopting the similar principle that Colin Powell had regarding his "Pottery Barn Policy".²⁴⁹ Chuck Robb believed that the US had far too much "skin" in the game to just walk away and leave the job incomplete; therefore, he suggested that the US adopt the policy of increasing troop level and called it "a surge".²⁵⁰ While some within the ISG did not believe in adopting a policy that increased US troop levels, Robb made it a condition of his signing off on the policy, and the ISG eventually decided to adopt this plan in the effort to stabilize Baghdad.

The ISG was not the only group tasked with offering a solution to the Iraq question. In addition to the ISG, the first came from the Chairman of the Joint Chief of

²⁴⁸ United States Institute of Peace, Iraq Study Group, The Iraq Study Group report, by James Addison Baker, Lee Hamilton, and Lawrence S. Eagleburger, 6.

²⁴⁹ Bob Woodward, *The War Within* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2008), 83.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

Staff (CJCS) 2006 Study Group regarding Iraq is commonly referred to the “Council of Colonels” and the second came from the outside consultant American Enterprise Institute (AEI) that examined the question for a way forward in Iraq. General Peter Pace established the Council of Colonels. The CJCS Council of Colonels comprised of “just over a dozen officers selected because of their Iraq combat experience or their reputations as strategic thinkers” and their goal was to challenge top officials and other consultants regarding how to solve the Iraq problem.²⁵¹

The Council of Colonels gave three potential options for future US policy, such as the “Go Big” plan, which was championed by H.R. McMaster that essentially argued for sending all available forces to Iraq and extending the tour length of those already there. There was a “Go Long” plan designed to reduce the American presence and reduce casualties, therefore making the conflict more acceptable for the home population. Finally, there was the “Go Home” strategy, which outlined a plan to withdraw all US troops from Iraq. Although the Council of Colonels offered some options for policy, the most significant contribution the Council of Colonels made was that they defined the problems and the conflict that the Americans faced.

For example, the Council of Colonels identified the specific trends in the war. These specific trends were all negative, but these findings included points like how the current strategy did not work, how the current Iraqi security force was weak, the increased cycle of sectarian violence, and still a slow Iraqi economy.²⁵² The colonels believed the US “needed to acknowledge that it was involved in a complex insurgency

²⁵¹ Steve Coll, "The General's Dilemma", *The New Yorker*, August 09, 2016, accessed April 15, 2017, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/09/08/the-generals-dilemma>.

²⁵² Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Hidden History of Americas Struggle to Build Democracy in Iraq*, 286.

as well as an escalating civil war”.²⁵³ The proper characterization of the conflict was critical to know how to proceed and help the US escape a short war mentality and develop a longer-term strategy in the fight for Iraq.

The final consultant that tackled the Iraq question was the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). AEI’s report was headed by Fredrick Kagan and had additional support from General Jack Keane (Retired). Their report recommended not an immediate withdrawal of Iraq, which many people throughout the United States government called for. The AEI committee believed that an immediate removal would result in an “immediate defeat for the United States. The Iraqi Security Forces are entirely dependent upon American support to survive and function. If U.S. forces withdraw now, Iraqi troops will collapse”.²⁵⁴ This would mark a US defeat in Iraq, and the turbulence from Iraq would threaten Iraq’s surrounding neighbors.

In their policy proposal titled *Choosing Victory: A Plan for Success in Iraq*, they outlined their policy options that the Bush Administration should take to achieve victory in Iraq. This option would rival and agree to some degree with the ISG proposal and the CJCS Council of Colonel’s recommendations. The highlights of this report included an increase in US military personnel with seven Army Brigades and Marine Regiments to support the operation around Baghdad.²⁵⁵ In addition, American and Iraqi forces would clear and secure Sunni majority neighborhoods in addition to Shi’a and Sunni mixed neighborhoods, and provide after-combat but permanent security and

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Fredrick Kagan, "Choosing Victory: A Plan for Success in Iraq", American Enterprise Institute, January 5, 2007, 5.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

reconciliation.²⁵⁶ They believed that these options allowed Iraq and the Iraqi population to stabilize and in doing so Iraq's central government could appear as if they had control and their country was not in turmoil.

The current strategy transferred too much power away from the Americans and any shift towards an Iraqi-led security was destined to fail. Therefore, with the support of President Bush's NSC staff, headed by Steve Hadley, the administration was able to compile a new plan going forward and combine elements from all three major plans, the AEI plan, the ISG Group, and the CJCS Council of Colonels. Hadley took the "the surge" strategy mainly from Kagan and Keane's work with AEI and combined it with elements from the ISG Group and the Council of Colonels. President Bush decided to go against the policy recommendations of many within the US government and military who believed that the American presence was the problem in Iraq.²⁵⁷ Therefore, on January 10, 2007, President Bush ordered a change in the US counterinsurgency policy and adopted the policy known as "The Surge", which also brought in a change to a more population-centered approach to counterinsurgency. This strategy involved an increase of American personnel by roughly 20-30,000 troops in the effort to stabilize the country, specifically in Baghdad and Anbar Province, with the goal to decrease the violence against American and Iraqi personnel and help Iraq gain a sense of long-term stability.

As the discussion as to how to proceed in Iraq occurred in the United States, the Iraqis in Anbar Province banded together and formed an alliance called the "Anbar

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Sky, *The Unraveling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, 139.

Awakening”. This alliance occurred because of the encouragement from the US and displeasure towards AQI by the local Sunnis, because of their violence and brutality, which ultimately helped engage the Sunni populace and turned them towards the side of the Americans. Because of the relationships during the Anbar Awakening between the different tribes fostered, it allowed Sunni Iraqi militias to form with the backing of the US. Eventually, these militias would become known as the Sons of Iraq (SOI).

The Sons of Iraq were the result of a cultivated relationship between the battalion commanders of cities and tribal sheiks, imams, and other key locals that the US took advantage of during “The Surge”. Many were fearful, Americans and Iraqis, that this was a gun-for-hire program, and an organization like SOI could organize the next stage of the civil war and never give up the armed struggle against a Shi’a government. Many Shi’a Iraqis feared that bringing a large number of armed Sunnis back into the government could ignite the return of the repressive Sunni-led government. Americans, like Andrew Bacevich, compared the American support of SOI to “arming the Crips to fight the Bloods”, and that “if the US military empowered a rogue militia, like SOI, they would eventually attack the government”.²⁵⁸ Bacevich was incorrect in his prediction regarding the American engagement of local militias like SOI, and as the Americans showed along with past countries’ COIN operations, local militias are crucial in the achievement of stability and a decrease in violence.

With the new relationship that unfolded because of the Anbar Awakening, between the Americans and the Sunni tribes, and a new COIN strategy the US agreed upon, a change in leadership was needed. In January 2007, General David Petraeus

²⁵⁸ Robinson, *Tell Me How this Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way out of Iraq*, 253.

received a call by the new Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, and during the call, Petraeus was offered, and he accepted the job of the new Multinational Force Commander (MNF) in Iraq and a promotion to a Four-Star General.²⁵⁹ After the Senate confirmed Petraeus, he was tasked with implementing President Bush's new policy.

Equally crucial to the replacement of the MNF commander with Petraeus, the replacement of the Multinational Corps (MNC) Commander General Peter Chiarelli with General Ray Odierno and the replacement of Khalilzad as Ambassador to Iraq with Ryan Crocker were essential for the implementation of the new strategy. General Odierno commanded the 4th ID during the invasion of Iraq in Tikrit where he suffered a reputational defeat for not implementing a proper COIN strategy that was needed. This failure damaged the US' reputation and progress in Iraq along with Gen. Odierno. However, after his time with the 4th ID, Odierno learned from his mistakes in Tikrit and looked to apply the lessons he learned during his time as a three-star in his new role as the commander of the MNC. Ambassador Crocker served throughout the Middle East, like Lebanon, Syria, Kuwait, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and additionally he was the ambassador in Pakistan. During Crocker's career, he gained a vast wealth of knowledge of the region and the people in the Middle East and during Crocker's retirement, President Bush referred to him as "America's Lawrence of Arabia".²⁶⁰ The Americans now had leaders with a vision and the knowledge needed that would move Iraq towards stability, making this endeavor a success.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 47-48.

²⁶⁰ "President Bush Commemorates Foreign Policy Achievements and Presents Medal of Freedom to Ambassador Ryan Crocker", National Archives and Records Administration, January 15, 2009, accessed November 13, 2017, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2009/01/20090115.html>.

This change in strategy did not just include an increase in American personnel into Iraq but also a shift in tactics. This revised plan was crucial in the Council of Colonels' findings and the AEI recommendations. Prior to the surge, under Gen. Casey's leadership, implemented some characteristics of a population-centric strategy, however, when Gen. Petraeus took over, the direction of the military changed again. Petraeus' approach concentrated on protecting the population and focused on rebuilding, providing basic amenities, and securing the Iraqi populace, and included to help repair the divide between the Sunni and Shiite populations which was possible because of the Anbar Awakening prior to Petraeus' arrival.²⁶¹

Biddle, Friedman, and Shapiro outlined the new strategy as, "a replacement of prior emphasis on large, fortified bases, mounted patrols, towards a transition to Iraqi-led security forces with a new pattern of smaller, dispersed bases, dismounted patrolling, and direct provision of U.S. security for threatened Iraqi civilians".²⁶² This increased the coalition's presence, gave an Iraqi-led face on the counterinsurgency, and eventually reduced the level of violence in Iraq by ultimately suffocating the insurgency and destroying their ability to kill Americans or Iraqis on a large scale.²⁶³

"The Surge" was more successful compared to previous COIN operations by the United States in Iraq because they adopted a working relationship with the local Sunni groups who once fought American soldiers, which was made possible because of the "Anbar Awakening". Petraeus urged for national reconciliation between the Sunnis and Shiites. Petraeus stated, "You have to give the Sunnis a reason to support the new Iraq"

²⁶¹Robinson, *Tell Me How this Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way out of Iraq*, 99.

²⁶²Biddle, Friedman, and Shapiro, "Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007", 8.

²⁶³Ibid.

and therefore, he urged his officers to encourage tribal engagement and local reconciliation.²⁶⁴ Petraeus and others believed that the best way to defeat the Sunni insurgency was not to defeat them militarily but by “flipping those who could be flipped”.²⁶⁵ This policy was similar to a degree to what Jay Garner proposed in the early months of the occupation when deciding how to proceed with the Iraqi military and engage the Sunni Iraqis as equal partners, giving them a legitimate seat at the table in the new Iraq both politically and militarily.

The US worked with tribal leaders before the time of “The Surge”, but ideologically; the American government was not ready. In 2003, the American military had wanted to work with the Iraqi tribes, but were “hammered” for it, recalled one American strategist in Iraq.²⁶⁶ The strategist described his meeting with Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, who stated how disturbed and concerned he was at the fact of the tribal importance of Iraq. The idea of working with the Sunni tribes was discussed during the transition after Casey and Negroponte took over. Some believed at the time that the Sunnis were the principal danger and needed to be lured into the political system; however, like Bremer before, Casey and Negroponte rejected the notion.²⁶⁷ Petraeus and others disagreed with people like Bacevich, Casey, and Negroponte regarding the importance of mending relationships with the Sunni tribes.

²⁶⁴ Robinson, *Tell Me How this Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way out of Iraq*, 251.

Also see: Woodward, *The War Within*, 45.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 252.

²⁶⁶ Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 219.

²⁶⁷ Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Hidden History of Americas Struggle to Build Democracy in Iraq*, 96.

The US viewed what would eventually become SOI as a valuable ally against al Qaeda. These organizations provided intelligence and helped secure areas that had little to no police presence in Sunni-dominated territory, like Anbar. Many Sunnis throughout Iraq positively responded to this chance of reconciliation with the United States. The attempt at moderate reconciliation was successful up to this point for several key reasons.

Before the “Awakening”, the Sunnis in Anbar fought the United States regarding the occupation, but the United States was eventually able to enlist the help of the Sunnis. The US was able to persuade these Sunni tribes into a cease-fire for several reasons. First, the Sunni tribes longed for stability within Iraq; these tribes saw the United States as an agent of stability compared to al Qaeda and other groups who were considered agents of chaos.²⁶⁸

Secondly, the United States was able to provide security and protection to the tribes within the “Awakening” alliance. For example, those tribes friendly to the United States received protection from the American military; therefore, tribes that were part of the “Awakening”, when attacked, would receive American air and armor support that resulted in the rescue of these tribes from groups like AQI²⁶⁹. This built a trustful relationship, and Sunni tribes became friendlier to the Americans. Next, the tribal leaders felt alienated by the brutality of AQI and the work by Zarqawi that included AQI’s rhetoric and their violent tactics towards the populace. The Sunnis feared the Shi’a militias or death squads and the violence that had been unleashed for the past two

²⁶⁸ Rosen, *“Aftermath: Following the Bloodshed of America's Wars in the Muslim World”*, 234.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 226.

years on them from Shi'a insurgent groups, and they understood that once the Americans left, they could be at risk of violence if they did not protect themselves.²⁷⁰

Finally, the guaranteed payment of \$300 per fighter from either the US or Iraqi government was enough to sway these Sunnis to join groups like the Sons of Iraq and fight alongside the United States.²⁷¹ This alliance between the US and the Sunni tribes resulted in one fewer insurgent organization that fought US forces and created a major regional alliance in the attempt to create a stable Iraq. These groups abandoned their alliance with AQI and their fight against US troops; therefore, the United States freed precious resources by aligning with the SOI and tribes within the "Awakening" to fight AQI.

This policy of allying with the reconcilables and killing those who would not work with American forces succeeded in destroying the Sunni-led insurgency.²⁷² However, many opponents of this policy still saw the Sons of Iraq as "guns for hire" and believed that the Sunni tribes would not permanently give up the fight against the new Iraqi government but instead would usher in a new phase of the current Sunni-Shi'a civil war.²⁷³ To prevent conflict between the Sunnis and Shi'a from reigniting in the long-term, it had to be made clear to Maliki that he needed to incorporate the SOI into the Iraqi police and other security jobs. This was important because the Iraqi population largely preferred to have local residents in charge of neighborhood security,

²⁷⁰ Robinson, *Tell Me How this Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way out of Iraq*, 252.

²⁷¹ Biddle, Friedman, and Shapiro, "Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007", 18.

²⁷² Robinson, *Tell Me How this Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a way out of Iraq*, 252.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 253.

especially when the police force was still largely Shi'a.²⁷⁴ Robinson points out a recent survey completed in Iraq that showed 56% of Iraqis support the SOI compared to 49% who support the government; therefore, those who marginalize SOI misunderstand the importance that SOI had on the ceasefire and run the risk of the sectarian conflict reigniting.²⁷⁵

This policy was ultimately successful for the Americans and led to the peace and stability in Iraq. Petraeus explained, "these guys used to point their guns at us. Now they are pointing their guns at AQI".²⁷⁶ This plan worked and displayed how change occurred in Iraq. It was slow; and the US spent lots of capital in time, effort, and treasure to succeed in bringing the Sunni Iraqis into the peace and reconstruction process in Iraq, but ultimately it was successful. This showed that the Sunni populace was willing to work for the Shi'a government if they were brought in as an equal partner. While the mistrust might be there for a generation, the distrust would begin to decrease the more substantial but equal role the Sunnis had in the government and security compared to the Shi'a.

In addition to the reconciliation with the Sunni tribes across Iraq, the US military and the Iraqi government were able to crack down on the Shi'a militia groups, like the Mahdi Army. This crackdown began in March 2008, when American and Iraqi security forces led an operation in Basra; the operation's aim was to limit the power of the Mahdi Army and other Shi'a groups while strengthening government-backed

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 353.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 260.

security forces.²⁷⁷ This eventually led to a ceasefire between the Iraqi government and the Shi'a groups, which assisted in the decreased rate of violence. Additionally, this showed the Sunni populace that Maliki was not just attacking Sunni insurgent groups but also seeking to end the armed violence from the Shi'a militias.

Finally, this COIN operation was successful because there was better communication within the United States leadership but also between the United States and the Iraqi government. Ambassador to Iraq from the United States Ryan Crocker was Petraeus' civilian counterpart, and together they were tasked with rebuilding Iraq and taking over from where Gen. Casey and Zalmay Khalilzad left Iraq. Petraeus and Crocker worked closely together to ensure that they followed the same cohesive message especially when they presented policy options to Maliki and the Iraqis.²⁷⁸

This messaging was also crucial in the US military. For example, there was clear disagreement and dissension in American leadership before 2007, specifically within the early years of the conflict. The relationship between Paul Bremer and General Sanchez made it very clear that they did not like each other. This made it tough to work together and accomplish the mission in Iraq. However, in 2007, besides the strong relationship between Crocker and Petraeus, the relationship between Petraeus and General Ray Odierno is necessary to mention. Kilcullen mentioned that before 2007, "Everyone knew that Petraeus and Odierno did not get along", that Odierno and Petraeus had been competitors and Petraeus had a better reputation coming out of Mosul than Odierno did coming out of Tikrit in 2004. However, Kilcullen goes on to

²⁷⁷ "Profile: the Mahdi Army", Al Jazeera English, April 28, 2008, accessed April 16, 2017.

²⁷⁸ CBS, "Iraq and Afghanistan: A Tale of Two Surges", CBSNews.

mention that once they began to work together in 2007 there was almost “no discernible friction”.²⁷⁹ Their relationship operated very smoothly and resulted in positive steps forward for Iraq and the American operation.

Even for Petraeus and Odierno's differences, their key similarities benefited Iraq's rebuilding effort. Colonel H.R. McMaster noted their flexibility as leaders was their most effective quality and allowed the operation to run smoothly.²⁸⁰ Therefore, because of the professionalism these men operated with over the next five years, violence decreased and Iraqi stability increased. This is a result of the stronger relationship between the Iraqi government and the US military/government.

During 2007, the military surveyed the mental health and the morale of US troops fighting in Iraq. Despite the hard and tense fighting for the first half of 2007, the study showed a sharp rebound in morale and mental health generally by the US military compared to past years.²⁸¹ This boost was credited to the effect of the “The Surge” as some American soldiers expressed. One stated, “The surge hammered us at first but over the past couple of months it seems to be working...and if we were a football team, we are just now having a winning record”.²⁸² The tide was turned both militarily and mentally.

Not only did morale significantly improve for US troops during 2007, but also the deaths per month and the number of IED attacks dramatically declined. At the start of 2007, the chances a civilian supply would be attacked was 1 in 5, and by December

²⁷⁹ Ricks, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 132

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 240.

²⁸² Ibid., 241.

2007, it was 1 in 33.²⁸³ These were abrupt changes of the conditions in Iraq. Not only were the IED attacks becoming less frequent, but the IEDs also became less potent. This showed real change on the ground and resulted in fewer casualties.

One case study showed a district located in Baghdad on average experienced a monthly rate of 35 IED attacks; however, from May to August 2007, that rate plummeted from 35 to two.²⁸⁴ One of the most dangerous blocks in Baghdad also saw a dramatic drop in Iraqi civilian monthly deaths from 26 to 0.6 by the end of 2007.²⁸⁵ This was a sharp decrease, and now there was tangible evidence that the new counterinsurgency policy began to take shape and return Iraq to a sense of normalcy and stability. These results within the city showed signs of success from the new plan; some of that strategy entailed a working relationship with Sunni locals and militias. Throughout 2007 combat deaths steadily declined, peaking in May with 126, and December ended in 14 KIAs.²⁸⁶ The Americans seemed to have finally stabilized the violence in Iraq, and this change in strategy and leadership was a major reason for it.

For the next five years, it was clear that Iraq had come a long way since 2007. A successful COIN operation was achieved because of the relationship between the US and Sunni tribes, the relationship between the US and the Iraqi government, the increase of US troops by 20-30,000, and finally a change of COIN tactics that brought the US and Iraqi forces together to destroy the remaining insurgents and quell sectarian violence. The stability achieved was accomplished through policy initiatives and the

²⁸³ Ibid., 240.

²⁸⁴ Robinson, *Tell Me How this Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way out of Iraq*, 242-243.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ricks, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 240.

engagement of the different sectarian segments of the population. The stability shown and the relationship (at the time) between the government and the population illustrated there was hope that Iraq could become a functional democracy.

Chapter 5:

Withdrawal from Iraq and the Way Forward

January 2009 President Bush left office and gave the new president, President Obama, an Iraq much better off than it was in 2003-2007. In 2009, the insurgency was broken, and AQI was defeated and struggled to survive. American and Iraqi casualties dramatically decreased, sectarian violence all but dissipated, and sectarian reconciliation appeared to be moving in the right direction. The operation in Iraq turned in the Americans' favor and finally appeared like a successful operation. However, the new president wanted to "clean his hands" of the "bad war", which led to the premature withdrawal from Iraq in 2011. This policy hurt the future and stabilization of not only Iraq but also the Middle East. The eventual policy of withdrawal left Iraq in worse shape, increased violence throughout, and resulted in the loss of Iraqi territory to a new insurgent group called the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) because of President Obama's Middle Eastern policies, which included the policy decision to withdraw from Iraq prematurely.

Withdrawal from Iraq

When then-Senator Obama was on the campaign trail during the 2008 election, he heavily campaigned on ending the war in Iraq. He believed that "The War was a needless and costly war that tarnished America's reputation" and that the United States should withdraw from Iraq.²⁸⁷ Obama won the presidency during the 2008 election and therefore, when Obama entered the 2012 campaign, it was a political imperative that he

²⁸⁷ Daniel Halper, "Biden Once Called Iraq One of Obama's 'Great Achievements'" Weekly Standard, June 12, 2014.

fulfilled his campaign promise and he did. Vice President Biden called the “victory” in Iraq “one of the great achievements of this administration”; however, it appeared that President Obama tried to shift his priorities away from Iraq to obtain a sense of deniability if Iraq would dissipate and crumble.²⁸⁸

Vali Nasr, the former senior advisor to Ambassador Richard Holbrooke of Afghanistan and Pakistan, called Iraq, “A signature American project whose outcome will be the measure of our reliability and legacy of power in the Middle East”.²⁸⁹ Since the end of the Cold War, Iraq has been a cornerstone and a thorn in the United States’ foreign policy. The United States first beat back regional ambitions of Iraq in regard to the invasion of Kuwait. Next, the US constricted their power with the implementation of a no-fly zone and international sanctions, destroyed Saddam’s Iraq by removing him from power, and finally established a new Iraq. The United States had their footprint in Iraq and was heavily invested in the outcome.

Unfortunately, the Obama Administration did not hold Iraq with the same level of importance. The US pledged to the Middle East that they would be better off with American intervention during the Bush Administration, but instead, the region was “dangerously close to a vortex of instability and sectarian conflict, and the region lost trust for American power” as a result of the Obama Administration.²⁹⁰ What the Obama Administration did regarding Iraq reinforced the belief that the United States did not have the perseverance to finish the job and left Iraq and the Middle East to their own fate. Nasr outlined that a quick withdrawal in 2011 and not a renewed agreement with

²⁸⁸ Vali Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation: American Foreign Policy in Retreat* (New York: Anchor Books, 2014), 143.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

Iraq would confirm the Middle East's worst fears, and would only damage the US's reputation more.

In 2008, the Bush Administration negotiated a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the Maliki-led government in Iraq. The agreement pledged that all US forces would depart from Iraq in 2011; however, some factors needed to be achieved before a US departure. For example, for the US to depart according to SOFA, the Iraqi government had to hold together long enough and Iraqi security forces had to show they could keep the peace on the streets and enforce the rule of law.²⁹¹ Even with this agreement in place, the 2011 departure date was more of a symbolic gesture because there was an understanding that a sizable American force would remain in Iraq following the 2011 SOFA deadline.²⁹²

The Iraqi political system was still young and fragile and still required American supervision to ensure future elections were conducted freely and fairly. However, the Obama Administration was tired and wanted to move on from Iraq. Based on the Iraqi elections, Maliki should have been removed from the premiership. Ayad Allawi would have replaced Maliki after his party; the Iraqiyya party defeated the al-Da'awa party 24.7 to 24.2%.²⁹³ However, to maintain power, Maliki claimed Shi'a and former Baathist Allawi's connection to the predominately Sunni Saudi Arabia and his leadership would, therefore, risk thrusting Iraq towards sectarian violence again. Maliki was able to sway American officials to support him, and Maliki, in the end, was able to

²⁹¹ Ibid., 145.

²⁹² Tim Arango and Michael S. Schmidt, "Despite Difficult Talks, U.S. and Iraq Had Expected Some American Troops to Stay", *The New York Times*, October 21, 2011, accessed April 13, 2017, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/22/world/middleeast/united-states-and-iraq-had-not-expected-troops-would-have-to-leave.html?_r=0.

²⁹³ Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation: American Foreign Policy in Retreat*, 146

keep his role as Prime Minister.²⁹⁴ The result of the election would have left the Prime Minister position to Allawi; however, knowing the actions taken by Maliki after his “reelection”, would the United States have been better off backing the popular vote winner of the election, Allawi, and instead form a new government that would result in a reinvestment in Iraq?

The United States would have been better off backing a candidate like Allawi, who was a pro-western, secular Shiite, and had strong relations with the Sunni populace.²⁹⁵ The US could have legitimately built a functional coalition to move Iraq forward, but decided to place Maliki back in power even though many throughout Iraq feared that Maliki showed authoritarian tendencies as a leader. A potential reason for this decision was that contesting Maliki’s legitimacy as a leader or assisting in building a new government would take time, energy, and investment from the Obama Administration when the Administration was looking to pivot away from Iraq.²⁹⁶ Therefore, it would have been easier for the US to support Maliki remaining as PM.

This support allowed Maliki to further his practice of authoritarianism, specifically against the Sunni population. It made the US appear to be a dishonest broker for the Iraqis after the US claimed for seven years that they were there to help the Iraqi people and as a result, the US lost the trust of the Iraqi populace. In addition, many within the US government wanted Maliki out because they noticed his attempts to consolidate power and persecute the Sunnis, which threatened to remove all of the

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 147.

²⁹⁵ Peter Beinart, "Obama's Disastrous Iraq Policy: An Autopsy", *The Atlantic*, June 23, 2014, accessed November 16, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/06/obamas-disastrous-iraq-policy-an-autopsy/373225/>.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

progress achieved by the Americans over the past eight years.²⁹⁷ Maliki grew suspicious of the US government and noticed the dissent by some against his rule that involved potentially removing Maliki from power as a result of the 2010 election and, therefore, became unwilling to compromise. This set the table for the 2011 negotiations for a new SOFA.

Negotiations began in June 2011 and there were two major hurdles the United States had to overcome if an American military presence would remain in Iraq. The first hurdle the Obama Administration had to overcome before the SOFA expired in 2011 was the continuation of immunity for the American military for crimes committed in Iraq. The Iraqis wanted the ability to prosecute American troops for crimes committed in Iraq, but all members of the American military were under the jurisdiction of the Military Court and not the Iraqi court system. If American personnel would remain in Iraq, the Iraqi government wanted to change that provision in the 2011 SOFA.

In 2008, in the renegotiated SOFA, it stated that off-duty Americans could be prosecuted by the Iraqi court system for crimes they committed, but excluded on-duty troops.²⁹⁸ Since American troops were never considered off-duty by the American government, because American troops in a combat zone were always considered on-duty, they avoided this demand in the 2008 SOFA. Obama could have renegotiated a continuation of the agreement for post-2011 Iraq using the same model and path put

²⁹⁷ Ali Khedery, "Why We Stuck with Maliki and lost Iraq," The Washington Post, July 03, 2014, , accessed March 02, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-we-stuck-with-maliki--and-lost-iraq/2014/07/03/0dd6a8a4-f7ec-11e3-a606-946fd632f9f1_story.html?utm_term=.b7bcd3e8cf3.

²⁹⁸ Associated Press, "Americans Could Face Jury-less Trials in Iraq", NBCNews.com, October 17, 2008, , accessed April 13, 2017, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/27241156/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/americans-could-face-jury-less-trials-iraq/#.WO9C9_nyvIU.

forward by the Bush Administration, but he argued for full immunity, which was not acceptable for Iraqis, as they believed it was a violation of their sovereignty.²⁹⁹

The second hurdle the Obama Administration had to overcome was the residual troop level that would remain in Iraq. Washington's first offer for a residual force was 10,000 troops along with continuation of immunity; PM Maliki agreed, but stated he needed time to line up political allies.³⁰⁰ In August 2011, the Pentagon, State Department, and White House agreed upon a new number for the residual troop force, and they decided that the number was only 3,000-5,000 American troops.³⁰¹ However, when negotiations progressed, the Iraqis sensed Obama's lack of continued dedication to Iraq, and these figures proved the perception of his lack of commitment to Iraq, especially because the Iraqi military headed by Gen. Babakir Zebari requested American troops not to withdraw until 2020.³⁰² Therefore, because of the perceived lack of commitment and the Iraqis not having the ability to prosecute off-duty American soldiers for perceived crimes committed, the Iraqis rejected the Americans' offer for a continuation of their SOFA agreement.

The United States military worried Iraq would revert to open conflict again if American forces withdrew early. However, the Obama Administration realized their frustrations with Iraq and saw the ability to low ball the residual force level and completely remove American involvement from Iraq. The Administration knew the Iraqis would decline any SOFA with only 3,000-5,000 troops and a full immunity

²⁹⁹ Tim Arango and Michael S. Schmidt, "Despite Difficult Talks, U.S. and Iraq Had Expected Some American Troops to Stay", *The New York Times*, October 21, 2011.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation: American Foreign Policy in Retreat*, 149.

clause, and therefore, Obama could use this as the excuse he needed to follow through on his campaign promise in what was predicted to be a tight political race for his 2012 reelection campaign, and withdraw all American forces from Iraq.

Alternatively, the low number could have been the administration ignoring the request of the military to keep a larger presence in Iraq, which would have acted as a deterrent to prevent any large-scale sectarian fighting or deter further foreign intervention by the Turkish, Syrians, or Iranians in Iraq. Maliki and the Iraqi government rejected the offer of 3,000-5,000 American soldiers and the new immunity clause; therefore, all American forces were scheduled to leave by the end of 2011. Since the Americans did not offer an agreeable deal to the Iraqis, this confirmed the suspicions to the Iraqis regarding American commitment to Iraq and the region.

Since American forces were withdrawing from Iraq, Vice President Joe Biden was given the task of overseeing the United States' exit. Joe Biden offered experience in the foreign affairs department to President Obama during his campaign. Biden was the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and had decades of Senate experience. During Biden's time as the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he wrote an op-ed article in 2006 for the NY Times along with Les Gelb, president of the Council on Foreign Relations, that discussed what the potential plan and goal should be for Iraq.

His opinion reviewed the comparison between the situation in Bosnia and the conflict in Iraq as of 2006. Biden discussed that the only way to unite Iraq was by decentralizing the power structure. He wrote, "This plan gave each ethno-religious group — Kurd, Sunni Arab, and Shiite Arab — room to run its affairs while leaving the

central government in charge of common interests”.³⁰³ Essentially, Biden and Gelb believed Iraq could become “a loose federation within secure borders”.³⁰⁴ That the ideal Iraq would be divided up into different ethnic or religious “states” with one central government to assist in important and common interests of the “states”.

However, the Biden-Gelb plan was problematic. The theory discussed by Biden and Gelb would dismantle and divide Iraq into three semiautonomous states. Many feared this would lead to an eventual official partition of Iraq and that the Sunnis would get a state with no oil and consequently become dependent on the Shiite government to give them their fair share of oil profits, which inherently caused many Sunnis to oppose this plan.³⁰⁵ The ISG discussed this potential outcome during the 2006 analysis of the future of Iraq. However, their recommendation regarding a semi-three-state solution was not viewed as realistic.

Partly because Iraq’s population did not separate neatly, regional boundaries would be challenging to design. The eighteen provinces in Iraq including their major cities are mixed, and it would be complicated to separate these cities peacefully. Therefore, the diversity of states and provinces in Iraq would have made it very arduous to divide into specific yet stable sectarian governance. In addition, initiating a large-scale relocation would cause chaos in Iraq, very similar to the Pakistan/India relocation in the late 1940s. Any large-scale population movement could potentially lead to “collapse of the Iraqi security forces, strengthening of militias, ethnic cleansing,

³⁰³ Joseph R. Biden and Leslie H. Gelb, "Unity Through Autonomy in Iraq", *The New York Times*, April 30, 2006.

³⁰⁴ Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame: The Hidden History of America's Struggle to Build Democracy in Iraq*, 277.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

destabilization of neighboring states, or attempts by neighboring states to dominate Iraqi regions”.³⁰⁶ Understanding the Biden and Gelb belief system could help explain why the Obama Administration acted the way that they did regarding Iraq.

The Obama Administration hoped that with the withdrawal from Iraq, they could rid the US of the Iraqi question and essentially force the Iraqis to figure out their sectarian and political problems for themselves. However, what occurred in reality was increased foreign involvement. The Turks became more involved in the North, a stronger participation and relationship between Iran and Iraq flourished in the dominantly Shiite south, and finally, Maliki abandoned the democratic principles as Prime Minister and began to crack down on political opponents.³⁰⁷ Any sense of Iraqi unity and new identity began to fade, and sectarian division began to resurface. However, if the US remained in Iraq as a stabilizing presence even in a limited role, Iraq would have been able to continue down the same path set forth and slowly move towards the Iraq being built.

The Obama Administration understood that the risk of withdrawing from Iraq before the Iraqi government and police force were stable enough to deal with the insurgency in Iraq effectively was a real threat. The military continually warned the Obama Administration about the threat from withdrawing early; however, there was a considerable amount of pressure to withdraw US troops from Iraq based on the previous policies discussed with the Maliki government and the American electorate. However, as Dobbins points out, “if keeping U.S. troops in Iraq provoked further resistance,

³⁰⁶ United States Institute of Peace., Iraq Study Group., The Iraq Study Group report, by James Addison Baker, Lee Hamilton, and Lawrence S. Eagleburger (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006), 31.

³⁰⁷ Naṣr, *The Dispensable Nation: American Foreign Policy in Retreat*, 152.

withdrawing them prematurely could provoke much worse: a civil war or a regional crisis of unpredictable dimensions”.³⁰⁸ However, the Obama Administration decided to give in to political pressure going into his reelection year and disregarded the reality of the situation in Iraq.

In addition to lacking the political will to stay in Iraq, there are two other important factors to consider when discussing Iraq during the Obama Administration. The first factor to consider is the replacement of the Ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, with Christopher Hill. Ambassador Hill was a poor choice for an ambassadorship in Iraq for two main reasons. First, his experience and skill set were not suited for Iraq. Hill became Ambassador to Iraq, possessed no Middle Eastern experience and possessed zero understanding of Arabic or the Arab world. With zero experience in the region, Hill should have relied on his staff that had experience in region and country, but he did not. Emma Sky pointed out in her book *The Unraveling* that Hill marginalized his experienced staff and an example is Hill’s treatment of Robert Ford. Sky discussed how Hill repeatedly rejected advice from Ford, who was a well respected and a knowledgeable Arabist who completed three tours in Iraq and cut his tour as ambassador in Algeria short in order to return to Iraq and served as Hill’s deputy; however, Hill pressured Ford to depart Iraq early in 2010.³⁰⁹

The second reason was Hill’s relationship with the military and General Odierno. Odierno met with Secretary of State Clinton to discuss the “level of dysfunction at the embassy”, and Odierno outlined how Hill never engaged the Iraqis or

³⁰⁸ James Dobbins, *Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2009), 18.

³⁰⁹ Sky, *The Unraveling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, 312-313.

others within the diplomatic community. Gen. Odierno said, “His only focus appeared to be monitoring the activities of the US military”.³¹⁰ This presented a level of mistrust towards the military from State, which was different from the relationship between State and the military with Crocker as the ambassador before. This appointment as ambassador brings to mind an interesting question of how much of the current situation in Iraq is the fault of Ambassador Hill, between the lack of knowledge and experience in the Middle East and his poor relationships with the military and the Iraqis. Thomas Ricks believes that the relationship between Hill and Odierno paralleled the relationship between the lead civilian and the military when Bremer and Sanchez were in charge during 2003-2004 and therefore many problems that Iraq faces today can be attributed to poor management and relations during Hill’s ambassadorship.³¹¹

The second factor to consider is the replacement of SECDEF Robert Gates with Leon Panetta at the Pentagon. Panetta disagreed with how Obama operated with the secretaries and was less influential to the President than former SECDEF Gates was. Panetta outlined in his book *Worthy Fights* the relationships that President Obama had with his secretaries and the negative relationship that that had on policymaking, specifically in Iraq. Panetta discussed how he believed the President “often limited decision-making to his inner circle and forgoing the advice of senior officials”, which he believed diminished the role and effectiveness of his Secretaries.³¹² Panetta was also

³¹⁰ Ibid., 312.

³¹¹ Thomas E. Ricks, "How much did Ambassador Chris Hill lie to the Washington Post? A lot, I think", *Foreign Policy*, March 31, 2015, accessed November 17, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/31/how-much-did-ambassador-chris-hill-lie-to-the-washington-post-a-lot-i-think/>.

³¹² Lauren Walker, "Panetta's Memoir Blasts Obama On His Leadership, Blames Him For State Of Iraq And Syria", *Newsweek*, March 02, 2016, accessed November 18, 2017,

upset that “Obama restricted who was able to represent the government in public speeches and settings to his political advisers...Panetta felt failing to use specialists hurt the administration’s ability to explain the problems it faced to the public, or properly represent its policies”.³¹³ This gave a political face to a non-political event that many, including Panetta, believed hurt the effectiveness of the policy the administration attempted to enact.

Looking at the end of the Iraq War, the Obama Administration hoped that with the withdrawal in 2011, they could rid the US of the Iraqi question and force the Iraqis to figure out their sectarian and political differences for themselves. The early signs of a new Iraq were built on a weak foundation and needed more time before a withdrawal of US forces. The withdrawal led to a power vacuum similar to the removal of Saddam, and this void was filled by increased foreign involvement in the country and reemergence of Islamist groups. Increasing Turkish involvement in the North, coupled with a stronger participation and relationship between Iran and Iraq in the dominantly Shi’a south, and Maliki’s abandonment of democratic principles as Prime Minister,³¹⁴ undermined any sense of Iraqi unity and new Iraqi identity that the Americans had helped to create.

Result of the Withdrawal: Rise of ISIS

In 2007, during the height of the Iraq operation known as “The Surge”, President Bush in the White House briefing room stated, “If we withdrew early before our commanders

<http://www.newsweek.com/panettas-memoir-blasts-obama-his-leadership-blames-him-state-iraq-and-syria-276582>.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Naṣr, *The Dispensable Nation: American Foreign Policy in Retreat*, 152.

tell us we are ready; it would mean surrendering the future of Iraq to al Qaeda”.³¹⁵ This was amidst the calls from the American populace, the international community, and many within the US government to withdraw from Iraq in 2007. These calls came from those who had become tired of an unstable Iraq that had cost American lives and treasure.

President Bush had been adamant that American forces should stay in Iraq for the foreseeable future and allow “The Surge” to take shape. President Bush went on to say that a premature withdrawal “would increase the probability that American troops would have to return at some later date to confront an enemy that is even more dangerous”.³¹⁶ Because of the withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, Maliki’s persecution and purge of Sunni leaders that resulted in the breakdown of the gains made in sectarian reconciliations since 2007, and the Syrian Civil War, stability decreased rapidly. These factors gave way for the rise and the growth of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Since December 2011, Iraq has been very unstable. A division of al Qaeda, specifically al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), reemerged out of Syria as ISIS and they were able to take control over a large portion of Iraq and Syria very easily. ISIS flourished when the United States left and Iraq became very fragile once again, which allowed ISIS to march across both Iraq and Syria and took land to establish the Caliphate. As President Bush and our generals had predicted, a premature withdrawal resulted in an increase in violence and the reestablishment of al Qaeda in Iraq.

³¹⁵ Mike Miller, "President Bush's 'Frighteningly Accurate' 2007 Warning On Iraq", Independent Journal Review, 2014.

³¹⁶ Ibid

The Iraqi people, not just the Sunnis, were frustrated with the lack of professionalism, the corruption, and the mismanagement of the postwar government under Maliki.³¹⁷ The Iraqi government failed to effectively power share with the different sectarian groups, and Maliki began to purge Sunni political rivals from the government starting in 2011 and only became worse after the US withdrawal.³¹⁸ In an interview with PBS, General Petraeus outlined why he believed the gains made in Iraq were lost and ISIS was able to grow. After the US withdrew, Maliki began to persecute his political opponents and pressed charges against his Sunni VP. Petraeus stated in response to these sectarian persecutions, “It started the process of undoing the progress that we’d worked so hard to do, during “The Surge” and the years after”.³¹⁹ The later subsequent actions taken from Maliki against the Minister of Finance, prominent Sunni Parliamentarian leaders, and a violent response against peaceful demonstrators led to the belief that Sunnis no longer had a seat at the political table and were disenfranchised once again.

Because of this belief of mistrust and the growing tensions between the Sunni people and the government, ISIS took advantage of the political instability. ISIS marched across Iraq and seized major cities and territory, including the second largest city in Iraq, Mosul. ISIS advanced within 8 miles of Baghdad, Iraq’s capital city, until the Obama Administration finally began to take the threat of ISIS seriously.

³¹⁷ Keiko Sakai, "ISIS and Sectarianism as a Result of a Meltdown of the Regional Orders in the Middle East", *International Relations and Diplomacy* 3, no. 4 (2015), 266.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ Priyanka Boghani, "David Petraeus: ISIS's Rise in Iraq Isn't a Surprise," PBS, July 29, 2014, accessed April 01, 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/david-petraeus-isiss-rise-in-iraq-isnt-a-surprise/>.

Author Keiko Sakai argued that ISIS was able to grow not just because the withdrawal of US forces but the lack of something filling that void. Sakai claimed that “not just the absence of the US but also the lack of an alternative regional system to fill the vacuum after the US withdrawal”.³²⁰ Sakai agreed that after the US withdrawal, something needed to fill that void, whether it was Iraq or another regional power like Iran. Something had to ensure order and stability was kept in Iraq. At the time of the withdrawal in 2011, the Iraqi military was not strong enough to ensure and maintain stability across Iraq, especially with the political actions taken by Maliki since the US withdrawal; therefore, groups like ISIS had the ability to flourish.

Sakai went on to say that, “ISIS emerged in the absence of a regional system or order in two senses: Absence of a shared feeling of solidarity based on norms, identity, and a value-system, and absence of a regional alliance led by the US to protect its interests and those of its allies”.³²¹ The national system of norms, identity, or values that the US had worked so hard to create over the eight years in Iraq fell apart because of Maliki and the actions of the government after the US withdrew. The people of Iraq no longer believed in the future and what Iraq could look like, but instead all of the advancement gained during “The Surge” evaporated. This made it difficult to rally behind a single idea of what Iraq was and should be, which would have stopped the growth of ISIS when they were relatively weak.

The success of ISIS and the downfall of the Iraqi government does not mean that Iraq cannot experience a resurgence in Iraqi nationalism and discover their new identity

³²⁰ Sakai, "ISIS and Sectarianism as a Result of a Meltdown of the Regional Orders in the Middle East", 267.

³²¹ Ibid.

going forward. However, for this to happen there needs to be a new agreement from the Iraqi elites on how to govern, there needs to be a decentralization of government, the Sunni grievances need to be addressed, and the Iraqi security forces need to be reformed and include more Sunnis.³²² The United States had to re-enter Iraq to assist the Iraqis in pushing out ISIS from the large territory the organization was able to conquer. However, now that ISIS has been almost eradicated from Iraq, this gives the new Iraqi government the ability to start over and reunite the country again.

Concluding Remarks

When looking at the Iraq War the most influential term associated with the conflict is foreign-imposed regime change (FIRC). This creates the question how successful are FIRCs and what is the broader implication this operation had on Iraq and the Middle East. This question is crucial in understanding US foreign policy of the past and the future because of the influence that FIRCs have had on US policymakers. Policymakers tend to be more optimistic when believing whether a government can impose a democracy and regime change by force, which contradicts most studies regarding forced democracy operations. Alexander Downes and Jonathan Monten look at what conditions are necessary in order for a FIRC to be successful or unsuccessful.

For example, Downes and Monten discovered that the places where an FIRC operation is most likely to be used, the less likely it is to be successful. They stated, “Simply overthrowing foreign leaders is unlikely to enhance democracy, and may

³²² Sky, *The Unraveling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, 362.

actually contribute to chaos and even civil war in target states".³²³ Especially in states in the Middle East and the region surrounding it, where there have been discussions over the last several years of potential intervention and regime change, it is important to note the state of the country. Downes and Monten warn that states with little experience in democracy and sharp societal divisions are unlikely to work, and could trigger a civil war.³²⁴

They argued that a FIRC is much more likely to be successful when the nation already established democratic traditions, and an FIRC is implemented to fix or restore a democracy from an autocracy, essentially used as safeguarding democracy instead of promoting democracy.³²⁵ This study conducted by Downes and Monten is crucial because of the current outlook in not only the Middle East but in other parts of the world. After seven years of a civil war in Syria and with Iran, an Arab Spring, and North Korea under the microscope of the Trump Administration, evaluating the conditions and historical outlook of both of these countries is crucial in knowing how an FIRC would unfold if the US sought regime change in these countries.

While Downes and Monten offered compelling points regarding FIRCs, many regard Iraq as a failed FIRC. However, one crucial factor these authors discuss besides the pessimist and optimist views, are the views of the conditionalists. Conditionalists take into account other factors that could determine the outcome of the FIRC. For example, one outcome that could have been a determining factor for Iraq was the effects

³²³ Alexander B. Downes and Jonathan Monten, "Forced to Be Free: Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Rarely Leads to Democratization," *International Security* 37, no. 4 (2013): 130, doi:10.1162/isec_a_00117.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

of human error and failures on the end of the intervening power. Iraq is a clear example of conditions and decisions by the intervening power that affected the outcome of the conflict. This thesis outlined how after the removal of Saddam, each decision and policy made, further exacerbated the sectarian divide in Iraq and pushed Iraq further towards chaos and civil war. These policies included the deBaathification of Iraq, the disbanding of the military, poor choices of leadership, inability to restart the Iraqi economy, and an ineffective military strategy in the early postwar years. All of these policies alienated the Sunni population in Iraq, spurred violence, and ultimately gave rise to an insurgency and pushed Iraq towards a sectarian civil war.

In conclusion, a majority of the problems that arose in Iraq were avoidable; this was due to inaction, poor policy, and bad leadership. While the United States had to deal with internal struggles and decades of sectarian revenge caused by Saddam's leadership, there was evidence, from 2007-2011, that the Sunnis and Shi'a could form a functional government and the two populations could learn to coexist peacefully overtime. Although the success gained was built on a fragile base and needed time to flourish and grow, there were early signs of stabilization and reconciliation. This thesis hopes to point out certain characteristics and lessons learned from the Iraq War so that key policymakers can be prevented from repeating the same mistakes of the past in America's next counterinsurgency operation. The war was winnable, as "The Surge" showed, but to achieve victory in Iraq, the United States needed to stay the course and remain committed to creating a democratic and stable Iraq, unfortunately they were not.

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