Iraq
Iraq
The Human Cost of History

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Introduction: The Iraqi Question in World Politics

Tareq Ismael and William W. Haddad

Investigating the Iraqi question in world politics has traditionally consisted of an examination of Iraq's relationship with international forces and actors as part of an assessment of their impact on the socio-economic evolution of the country. Scholars and other observers of Iraq have recognized how this process eroded traditional society and rapidly and irrevocably remade Iraq into a valuable and robust member of the international system as well as maintaining its position as a regional stalwart. Traditional studies have focused on the consequences of Iraq's increasing incorporation into the global capitalist economy during the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.\(^1\) Iraq's emergence and its capacity to maintain an independent course of action within the system of nation states, modeled on Europe, during the strife-ridden twentieth century were governed by its experiences under the sway of, first, the Ottoman empire and then the British empire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The advance of British colonial power into the Gulf region, and subsequently British dominance and rule of Iraq itself, led to economic and colonial servitude. This included capitulations to European power that largely dismantled the localized economy that had existed in Iraq.\(^2\) The introduction of steam-powered locomotion, first at sea and then by rail, rapidly made traditional forms of transport obsolete. Urbanization and the early imitation of foreign technologies and ideas, including market-orientated land reforms, previously alien to the Iraqi historical experience, saw the abandonment of self-sufficient pastoralism and the loss of cohesion within the mortar of traditional society. With the British and French division of the Middle East following World War I interrupting historical Iraqi trade relations with Syria,\(^3\) and the establishment of a monarchy which depended on outside support for political control, especially in the form of the innovative establishment of a standing Iraqi army, Iraqi society underwent a profound metamorphosis.\(^4\) The political, social and economic change experienced within the country would lead to the
development of alternative and distinct political actors that would go on to shape the Iraqi political landscape to the present day.

Political affiliations and orientations increasingly came to be based on one's position within the new order, whether that of a winner or a loser, an order that was **highly penetrated by outside economic and political influence**. The sensation is one of a society in flux, with widespread social mobility and the potential both for great leaps forward and the loss of social and economic status individually and collectively. The political debate arising from this period of immense change would inform the political discourse of the ensuing national experience from the 1918 Najaf Revolt, the 1920 uprising, the military coups of 1936 and 1941, the Wathbah uprising of 1948, the July 1958 Revolution, the Ba'athist coups of 17 and 30 July 1968, and finally the 1991 intifada of both north and south following the Gulf War of that year.

Around no issue were the effects of international influence felt more than the exploitation of Iraqi petroleum resources. Their increasing importance, from the independence of the state in 1920, through the foreign domination of the industry, saw Iraq manipulated and exploited until the 1961 passage of “Law 80”. This act limited the concession rights of the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC), thereby confining the petroleum reserves in the rest of the country to the Iraqi state. The efforts by the IPC and foreign oil interests to curtail “Law 80” failed thanks to the overwhelming support it received from the Iraqi people. Negotiations with foreign oil interests continued as the Iraqi state whittled away at their influence. The country would play a pivotal role in the founding of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1960, introducing a new element in the radicalization of the relations between the oil-producing states and the global oil industry and thus challenging foreign domination of the natural resources of the region. The 1969 agreement to develop the north Rumelia field with a Soviet corporation led to outrage and reaction from Western oil interests sufficient to warrant the nationalization of the IPC on 1 June 1972 which, together with the OPEC crisis of 1973, finally allowed Iraq to have the freedom to exploit its own resources. The ability now to control Iraq's petroleum resources, as well as its mineral wealth, “the vast tracks of land to be reclaimed, the big rivers to be harnessed, and above all [Iraq's] human resources” were to be harnessed in a national effort of development.

However, Iraq's development effort, both in its stunning successes and disappointing failures, could not be separated from the outside
environment. The aggressive planning by the state, resulting in the meteonic development of Iraqi infrastructure and social programs, adopted the classic contours of what was identified as a rentier economy, an economic relationship in which income from rent dominates the distribution of national income, and thus where rentiers wield considerable political influence. Nonetheless, the emboldened political orientation of the period allowed for a positive outlook, and the Iraqi position within global politics was that of a confident state increasing in influence. The concentration of power at the center of the state apparatus, accentuated by the increased bureaucratic requirements of the national petroleum industry and the management of state expenditures, as well as by the political vicissitudes of the clash between competing Arab leaderships in dealing with Israel contributed to increasingly dictatorial rule and the eventual rise of Saddam Hussein. The dramatic rise in the oppression of political opposition, spurred on by the Cold War, and the increased prerogative and privileges of the executive through petroleum wealth altered the perception of the Iraqi question from one of Iraq's increasing interrelation with the global economy and global society to one of the role of dictatorship.

With the ruinous devastation of the Gulf War with Iran (1980-88) this concentration of power and the attendant abuses and oppression within Iraqi society intensified. Consequently, the development of Iraq, both in terms of planning and implementation, was severely damaged. The focus of the Iraq question in world politics became fixed on the actions of a lone individual - Saddam Hussein. International involvement and contributions to the war were largely ignored within contemporary analysis, or dismissed by practitioners as the result of dealing with the "greater evil" of Islamic revivalism embodied in the Iranian revolution and the Islamic republic erected in its wake. Increasingly world attention was drawn to the proliferation of advanced weaponry in Iraq and the region. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait cemented both notions, and the Iraqi question was reformulated yet again to be one of the containment of Arab radicalism and the equating of Iraq, its 20 million people and vast resources, with one individual. In an odd twist of propagandistic logic this reductive exercise succeeded beyond the totalitarian efforts of a dictatorial regime in equating an entire society with a lone individual. Iraq was not the enemy of the international coalition assembled to liberate Kuwait, it was Saddam Hussein. The people of Iraq were not the target
of draconian economic sanctions put in place first to force Iraqi evacuation of Kuwait and then bring about its compliance with disarmament efforts – Saddam was.

The following decade saw efforts by international civil society, human rights groups, UN member agencies, concerned states and individuals, and eventually Iraq’s neighbors to put an end to the suffering and near-genocide caused by the UN sanctions regime. By 2000 the Iraqi question was again altering to reflect and recognize the role Iraq – including all of its human resources and rich cultural heritage – was to play in world politics. The silence of an entire society was louder than the propaganda a criminally corrupt and morally bankrupt regime lavished on itself. Iraq, through its immense suffering, was gaining friends and champions from across the globe. Famous international citizens of great moral and intellectual standing and many citizens of a shrinking globe lent their voices calling for an end to the devastation.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, discussing the humanitarian situation in Iraq before the Security Council on 24 March 2000, pointed out that the United Nations was risking the loss of support for continued sanctions in the court of international public opinion, which assigned responsibility for the humanitarian crisis to the embargo over the regime, “If we haven’t already lost it.” This was a stunning admission that the United Nations, in spite of the reports of its own member organizations detailing the suffering of the Iraqi people and the central causal role sanctions played in the creation of that suffering (reports Annan in his next sentence stated could not be ignored), was willing to accept the erosion of universal human rights enshrined in the United Nations charter in pursuit of security concerns based on the assessment of individual states that comprised the Security Council. He was essentially warning the court of judgment which had presided over Iraq for a decade, that continued maintenance of its coercive sanctions regime, with its genocidal effects on the Iraqi population, was being rejected not by the dictates of the UN Charter or the Declaration of Human Rights or even by any assessment of their success or failure to affect the Iraqi regime, but rather in the “court of international public opinion.” This new formulation of the Iraqi question, essentially from a groundswell of the people of the global community, rejected the sanctions regime and its devastating humanitarian consequences. What those imposing the sanctions could not comprehend was that this rejection was in no way support for the Iraqi regime, or the result of Iraqi government
propaganda, let alone an unwillingness to recognize the deadly coercion by those responsible for crimes against humanity who infested the Iraqi regime. Rather it was a decision which rejected the inflicting of punishment on an entire population, indeed an entire society in all of its cultural and spiritual manifestations, as well as the humanitarian tragedy evident in the sanctions.

The bottom-up momentum to alleviate the suffering of Iraq was a response from an increasing majority of ordinary people in many countries the world over. That they were no longer willing to accept the imposition of sanctions was resoundingly recorded in the “court of international public opinion”, but it was not a call simply to end the suffering of the Iraqi people, but rather a recognition of the injustice resulting from the power being wielded by the Security Council: a power that was not accountable to any authority outside its veto-wielding five permanent members. The nature and role of the Iraqi regime was not misunderstood, discounted or dismissed by the opponents of sanctions, but its brazen disregard for its own population was matched by a similar disdain exhibited by the Security Council. Increasingly the United States and the United Kingdom, identified as the principal perpetrators of the ongoing injustice, were isolated, first in international opinion and then diplomatically. The only remaining tools available to maintain the quarantine were their veto-power and overwhelming military force.

The costs of maintenance were rising as efforts around the world increasingly undermined not only the legitimacy of the sanctions but also their implementation. The resignation of senior UN employees such as Denis Halliday and Hans von Sponeck, the growth of the international grass-roots campaigns against sanctions, the arrival of humanitarian relief flights in September 2000, and the dramatic rejection of Iraq’s diplomatic Isolation by regional governments as well as concerned states the world over were leading to a near total collapse of the sanctions embargo. The outbreak of the Aqsa Intifada in October 2000, with the subsequent recognition that a peaceful resolution between Palestinians and Israelis was not at hand, again intensified linkage between the strife-ridden regional political axes. Only the military presence of the US and UK and the strict legal penalties for ignoring the quarantine prevented the humanitarian relief the Iraqi people needed so desperately. Efforts to buttress the sanctions regime, the implementation of so-called “smart sanctions” were identified as just that: efforts to shore up the weakening support for the sanctions, not a serious effort to relieve the suffering of Iraqis. It was increasingly recognized, largely through
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the activist efforts of a handful of campaigners, that Iraq's ordeal would not end without the removal of sanctions and an immense rebuilding effort undertaken to reconstruct the country's economic, material, and social infrastructure.

The diplomatic stalemate reached in 2000, which the Security Council meeting in March was attempting to address, was rejected by the Bush administration. A fundamental shift occurred between the two principal enforcers of Iraqi sanctions. The British government had long maintained that it supported the maintenance of sanctions in an effort to bring about Iraqi compliance with the disarmament goals of the Security Council Resolutions adopted at the end of the 1991 Gulf War. The Bush administration, however, advocated a more daunting condition for the lifting of sanctions, the removal of the Iraqi regime. This was regarded warily by sanctions opponents and many US allies in the opening months of the new Bush administration. The tragedies of horror and destruction that visited the United States on 11 September, however, altered the parameters of the Iraq question yet again. In the face of the crimes against humanity perpetrated that day, the Bush administration forcefully responded with a sweeping array of policies. The erosion of American civil liberties, the preponderant use of force in Afghanistan and around the world in attacking fringe Islamic revivalist groups, the escalation of racist and uninformed commentary about the Arab and Islamic people and cultures, all resulted from the Bush administration's response to 11 September. Moreover, within days of 11 September, the US Congress passed a joint resolution authorizing the president to use force against nations that he determined had aided the terrorist attacks. The resolution stipulated:

That the President is authorized to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on 11 September 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any further acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons.

Moreover, "the Congress declares that this section is intended to constitute specific statutory authorization within the meaning of section 5(b) of the War Powers Resolution." By providing this authorization Congress gave great latitude to the White House in the
prosecution of any military action it chose to pursue in its “war on terror.”

However, contained within many of these reactionary policies and publicly acknowledged from the moment of the attacks was a concerted effort to tie the Iraqi regime to the now voracious public support for the eradication of political terrorism. That the US government, largely at the prompting of the Bush administration, chose to prosecute a campaign solely against Islamic varieties of this political phenomenon is well documented. Hardliners with a decade of calls to engage Iraq militarily behind them, such as Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz, New York Times columnist William Safire, former CIA director James Woolsey, and journalist Laurie Mylroie, now propagated a US invasion as the panacea to international political terrorism. The dubious claims connecting Iraq and the events of 11 September took the form of three implausible stories. The first had one of the suicide attackers of 11 September, Mohammed Atta, meeting with Iraqi intelligence in Prague, although the CIA and FBI publicly acknowledged their own investigative timeline had Atta in the United States during the same period and that therefore the story lacked credibility due to their inability to produce corroboration. The second story had Iraq connected to the anthrax attacks in the United States, a story which had no basis beyond the fact that Iraq had an anthrax weapons program prior to 1991. This attempted connection took on a surreal quality when the United States ousted the head of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the agency established under UN auspices to enforce the Chemical Weapons Convention, and scuttled attempts to improve the verification and monitoring measures surrounding the Biological Weapons Treaty while continuing to maintain that their dispute with the Iraqi government was over weapons proliferation. The third connection revolved around an Islamic revivalist group in northern Iraq, Ansar al-Islam. This territory was outside the control of the Ba'athist regime (in fact it fell under the protection of US and UK pilots in the northern no-fly zone) and the Iraqi leadership had no known ties to Islamic fundamentalism of any variety prior to 11 September, which led many observers to be sceptical of the motives and veracity of the allegations.

The fact that they could not provide a single impartial credible piece of evidence to support countless claims of Iraqi culpability did not stand in the way of Bush administration officials implying that such was the case. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks Paul
Wolfowitz stated: “It's not just a matter of capturing people and holding them accountable, but removing the sanctuaries, removing the support systems, ending states who sponsor terrorism.” No question was raised as to which states he was referring to. President Bush made the connection clear on 29 January 2002 with his State of the Union Address delineating an “axis of evil” that threatened the global community, with Iraq as its central member. European leaders called for restraint. German deputy foreign minister Ludger Vollmer went so far as to state “this terror argument cannot be used to legitimize old enmities.” Wolfowitz also pressed the first public version of the argument linking Iraq not only to the sponsorship of terrorism, but also to the claim that the Iraqi regime would be a willing supplier of weapons of mass destruction to terrorist organizations. Other US officials, such as Secretary of State Colin Powell, when asked to clarify the government's position on Iraq, demurred, preferring broader goals: “Ending terrorism is where I would leave it and let Mr Wolfowitz speak for himself.” Donald Rumsfeld, speaking from his authority as US Defense Secretary, repeatedly expressed his belief that Iraq had “a relationship” with al-Qaeda, despite the lack of evidence.

Efforts by a majority of the Bush officials cemented the alteration of the Iraq question to that of being a threat to the civilized world. In the words of President Bush:

We must prevent the terrorists and regimes who seek chemical, biological or nuclear weapons from threatening the United States and the world. Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The United States of America will not permit the world’s most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world’s most destructive weapons. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens – leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections – then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world.

This volume is an attempt to redress this attempt to demonize Iraq, its people and its history. A lack of specialized knowledge or sophisticated understanding of Middle Eastern or Iraqi politics has not prevented many people from making sweeping and highly
reductive statements about the Iraqi state, Iraqi peoples, Iraqi political culture, and the role Iraq plays in regional and international politics. Here we seek to contribute to redressing the lack of understanding – towards reasonable thinking and diversity of opinion present in the wider debate, in an effort to avert the further devastation of the Iraqi people. Muhammad Hamidullah opened his celebrated volume on the conduct of Muslim states by pointing out that: “Conduct in time of war, with regard to the enemy, has [for] all time been considered as the mirror of the culture of a nation.” While so many propose war as the sole means to carry out policy in Iraq and in the process abandon the cries heard from the Iraqi people over the past twelve years, other voices are being raised. Some are within the binding of this volume, many others are struggling to be heard elsewhere. In the words of Martin Luther King:

“Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction...The chain of evil – hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars – must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the abyss of annihilation.”

In 1967 he said, “man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation.”

This edited collection includes several prominent public intellectuals and academics who are known both as champions of social justice and for the high academic standards of their work. While certainly informed by activist passions and a resounding desire to see sanctions lifted, the authors present detailed and sophisticated critical arguments that can inform students, activists, policy-makers and interested readers looking for both more information and a critical approach. The conclusions drawn within this volume follow an articulation of the factual examination of the impact of twelve years of economic sanctions and over 20 years of conflict on the people of Iraq. This is most important as the authors, while detailing past events and measuring their impact, have an inherent focus on the future of Iraq and its people.

Richard Falk, Eric Herring and Stephen Zunes all examine the post-11 September world and the impact of the aggressive policies of the US administration of George W. Bush. As pointed out by Falk, Zunes and Alnasrawi, US policy has remained committed to the idea of regime change in Iraq, and no difference in degree of Iraqi compliance
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with UN bodies has produced any significant change in this stated goal. Quite simply, the US has designated Iraq as a “rogue state” and therefore, a direct threat to its national security. According to the National Security Strategy of the United States of America, “rogue states” are defined as those nations that will:

- brutalize their own people and squander their national resources for the personal gain of the rulers;
- display no regard for international law, threaten their neighbors, and callously violate international treaties to which they are party;
- remain determined to acquire weapons of mass destruction, along with other advanced military technology, to be used as threats or offensively to achieve the aggressive designs of these regimes;
- sponsor terrorism around the globe;
- reject basic human values and hate the United States and everything for which it stands.

Of course, the only characteristic defining a “rogue state” that the US itself fails to fulfill might be the final condition. However, one might even be bold enough to argue that the Bush administration displays a contempt for “the United States and everything for which it stands”, given Bush’s record in electoral politics, his attempt to assign Henry Kissinger to head the 11 September probe,29 his unilateral withdrawal from international treaties, his flaunting of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, and countless other acts.

Additionally, the US has positioned itself as the champion of the free market – a term it ludicrously utilizes as a direct equivalent to “democracy” and “civilization”.30 American policy, although attempting to portray itself as benign, operates notably as a direct threat to the sovereignty, well-being, health, liberty, self-determination and democratic structures of potentially every other nation in the world. For this reason, it seems obvious that the US would use its “unprecedented and unequaled strength in the world”31 to exempt itself from the workings of the International Court.32 Protecting the advance of the capitalist empire has become the responsibility of the US government and the British government (an inheritor of one of the old colonial empires). The role of the British government as it fits into the sanctions regime and its role as a US junior partner is examined in detail by Milan Rai in this volume. Anyone standing in
the way of this advance or posing a possible challenge by asserting rights to sovereign control of resources, such as Iraq, will be made an example and will pay dearly.

The costs suffered by the people of Iraq from a war waged via military combat, diplomacy, and economic coercion through sanctions is explored extensively in this volume, especially in the works of Abbas Alnassrati and Thomas J. Nagy. Nagy’s chapter is also of importance because it addresses a declassified US report entitled Iraqi Water Treatment Vulnerabilities in which the US government clearly lays out an understanding of the implications of sanctions on the water supplies of the Iraqi people. The fact that this document is dated 22 January 1991 reveals that the United States government was well aware of the impact of sanctions and suggests that the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis may have even been a desirable goal, or at least a secondary outcome that was “worth” the pursuance of the primacy.

However, in war there are always at least two parties. In this war of economic and strategic control of resources, as usual the group that suffers the most is the general public of Iraq. They are caught between the economic advance of George Bush Sr.’s New World Order and Saddam Hussein’s vociferous thirst for power and control of the Gulf. Isam al Khafaji deconstructs some of the mythologies of the pre-sanctions Iraqi paradise presented by many anti-sanctions activists flying in the face of logic. People who seek to find justice and a return to humane conditions for the Iraqi people cannot afford to assume that Iraq was on the right track before. Only through the establishment of a just system of organizing Iraq’s human and natural resources can the Iraqi people recover and begin to pursue healthy and productive lives as is pointed out by Abbas Alnassrati.

Without these conditions yet being realized, even in advanced representative democracies (i.e. the US and Britain) and given the imperial tendencies of these bodies, it would be logical that these states are in no position to offer a democratic solution for the Iraqi people, let alone liberty. In adherence to even the most basic understanding of liberty, neither the conditions of democracy nor liberty can be forcibly applied from above but, rather, must be arrived at through the development and accessibility of civil society. The US and Britain are not interested in the liberty of the Iraqi people; they simply use this as a rhetorical device. What they desire is the complete control of the economic production and military strategic capacities of Iraq. Contrary to US State Department claims, the liberty of the Iraqi people
cannot coexist with the domination of US imperialism or any other tyrannies, including the rule of Saddam Hussein.

We would like to express our gratitude to all of the authors who have contributed to this critical examination of an extremely urgent and vital discourse. Additionally, thanks must be extended to John Measor, Lisa MacIsaac, and Mark Bizek for their research assistance, especially in chasing the latest developments and keeping a cheerful disposition.

NOTES

12. Ibid.


19. Peter Ford. “US diplomat in British eyes nations: A senior UN chief who policed the chemical weapons ban was voted out Monday night,” Christian Science Monitor (24 April 2002); “US forces order of UN body’s chief,” DAWN: The Internet Edition (23 April 2002); “Chemical weapons body sacks head,” BBC News Online (22 April 2002).


24. Ian Black, John Hooper, and Oliver Burkeman. "Bush warned over 'axis of evil': European leaders insist diplomacy is the way to deal with three nations singled out by America," Guardian (5 February 2002).


27. The President's State of the Union Address (29 January 2002).


29. Given Kissinger's record of allegiance to the State and its "right" to carry out covert operations despite their effect on the democratic process, the selection of this man as the head of the probe into the mishandling of intelligence relating to 11 September could be viewed as an attempt by the Bush administration to thwart any effective investigation. Bush's vehement opposition to the probe suggests that there may be the possibility of some level of complicity amongst his administration in the tragic events of 11 September. For an assessment of the questionable character of Henry Kissinger, especially as related to the probe into intelligence failures leading up to 11 September, see Christopher Hitchens. "The Latest Kissinger Outrage: Why is a proven liar and wanted man in charge of the 9/11 investigation?" The Slate, slate.msn.com/id=2074678 (27 November 2002). Hitchens is also the author of The Trial of Henry
Kissinger (Verso, 2001) in which he argues a case to try Kissinger for crimes against humanity.

32. “We will take the actions necessary to ensure that our efforts to meet our global security commitments and protect Americans are not impeded by the potential for investigations, inquiry, or prosecution by the International Criminal Court (ICC), whose jurisdiction does not extend to Americans and which we do not accept. We will work together with other nations to avoid complications in our military operations and cooperation, through such mechanisms as multilateral and bilateral agreements that will protect US nationals from the ICC. We will implement fully the American Service members Protection Act, whose provisions are intended to ensure and enhance the protection of US personnel and officials.” Ibid., p. 31.
1 Iraq, the United States, and International Law: Beyond the Sanctions

Richard Falk

What accounts for the obsessiveness of American policy toward Iraq over the course of more than a decade? Is it another Vietnam in the sense that the US Government cannot bring itself to acknowledge the failure of its approach to regime change in Baghdad since the end of the 1991 Gulf War, Saddam Hussein having withstood comprehensive sanctions, a variety of covert assaults, and repeated American harassment from the air without flinching? Is it the pique at the White House and Pentagon associated with the electoral removal from the scene of Bush Sr contrasting with the persistence of Saddam Hussein and posing a filial challenge to Bush Jr? Is it some sort of Freudian response by the younger Bush in retaliation for Saddam Hussein's alleged plot to assassinate his father? Is it the long deferred payback to Israel for staying on the sidelines during the Gulf War, despite the Scud missiles being fired from Iraq? Is it a matter of securing US control of the oil reserves being linked to periodic displays of regional dominance, especially through the denial of weaponry of mass destruction to those states in the Middle East that might seek at some point to deter or challenge the US in some future crisis? Or is it part of the American empire building strategy that views Iraq as both an obstacle, but also as an opportunity to demonstrate the extent of military dominance possessed by the US Government and its political will to deal harshly with states that stand in the way? Or is it the new cover story, frequently repeated by Bush and senior political aides, that the Baghdad regime has become more dangerous since 11 September because it may enable al-Qaeda to obtain weaponry of mass destruction that would then be used against American targets?

Undoubtedly there is no single correct answer because different members of the Bush inner circle are drawn to various combinations of these lines of analysis and advocacy, and they seem mutually reinforcing in any event. What is beyond doubt, however, is that American policy toward Iraq since the ceasefire in 1991 that ended
the Gulf War has violated the most basic precepts of international law, including the UN Charter, and the fundamental economic and social rights of the Iraqi people. To the extent that the UN Security Council has endorsed American policy, it has weakened respect for the UN around the world. Iraq was defeated in a war, accepted humiliating conditions for a ceasefire, which effectively encroached upon the basic sovereign rights of Iraq as a state. In the ensuing period Iraq has not been offered any kind of protection by the international community even in the face of an increasingly threatened and unprovoked armed attack by the United States.

This chapter discusses the changing context of US policy toward Iraq, followed by a consideration under international law of sanctions and war threats, concluding with a criticism of the approach taken by the United States and by the United Nations over this period of more than a decade. In sum, for more than a decade the international community as shaped by the United States has imposed an extremely punitive peace on Iraq, abruptly forgetting the lessons supposedly learned as a consequence of the disastrous effects of the punitive peace imposed by the victorious powers on Germany after World War I. These lessons were self-consciously and successfully applied to Germany and Japan to promote the recovery of these defeated countries in the aftermath of World War II. In retrospect, it seems reasonable to wonder whether these "lessons of Versailles" were only meant for those countries associated with the North in some integral way. The South, subordinate in any event, has remained fertile ground for indefinite punishment of any political actor that challenged the established geopolitical order. Iraq, formerly a strategic junior partner in the maintenance of such an order, especially during its long war with the Islamic Republic of Iran during the 1980s, became and remains the arch enemy of this post-Cold War American design for the region. Iraq currently faced for some years dire threats of invasion and attack that were openly discussed by American political leaders, with alternative plans for the military operation openly debated in mainstream media. The debate focuses on means, their supposed effectiveness and their anticipated costs and risks, and treats the acceptability of the ends as taken for granted or irrelevant, although in stark violation of the most basic rules of the UN Charter prohibiting recourse to non-defensive force in the settling of an unresolved international dispute. Looking sympathetically at the plight of Iraq as a beleaguered state should not be confused with an endorsement of the Baghdad regime, or its brutal and bloody past behavior, both
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with respect to neighbors and its own internal minorities. In this regard, there is little doubt that Saddam Hussein is indictable for crimes against humanity and crimes against the peace. Nonetheless, the criminality of a head of state or of official policies pursued does not impair the sovereignty of that state, nor does it provide grounds for suspending the application of international law. The reclassification of Iraq as “enemy” and “rogue state” that occurred in the 1990s was purely a consequence of altered geopolitical priorities as the worst excesses of the Iraqi government were committed years prior to its attack on Kuwait, and provoked no change of strategic relationship.

THE CHANGING CONTEXT

From every perspective except that of geopolitics, American policy toward Iraq since the end of the Gulf War has been a disaster. The imposition and retention of comprehensive sanctions for more than a decade after the devastation of the Gulf War has resulted in hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties; more than a million according to some estimates. This assessment has been abundantly documented by reliable international sources, and affects most acutely the very young and the poorest sectors of the Iraqi population. Although, regrettably, receiving formal backing by the United Nations through a strained interpretation of Security Council Resolution 687, with some modifications in recent years, the cruel impact of sanctions so appalled the most senior international civil servants of the UN entrusted with administering programs of oil-for-food programs as to prompt that rarest of bureaucratic impulses, successive resignations by the lead administrators on principle. The political objective of this highly punitive diplomacy was justified as a way to destabilize and contain the repressive regime of Saddam Hussein, but the evidence clearly indicated that as the years passed, the government in Baghdad gathered political strength while the internal and external opposition among Iraqis seemed ever more inconsequential. It was ordinary Iraqi people who were paying the main price for this continuing encounter between Saddam Hussein and the United States Government.

Throughout this period, as well, American and British planes continued to patrol extensive no-fly zones that had been established in the north and south of Iraq, initially justified by the US Government as indirectly authorized by Security Council Resolution 688 as a way to protect endangered minorities, but later maintained as a way to
challenge Baghdad militarily on a daily basis, exhibiting its helplessness as a sovereign state. Unlike sanctions, these military incursions lacked clear Security Council authorization, were quite unconnected with their original protective function benefiting the Kurds in northern Iraq and the Shi'ite minority in southern Iraq during the immediate aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War when Baghdad was seeking revenge against those elements in the Iraqi population that had sided with the American-led military campaign.

At issue all along was the UN mechanism, the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), that was imposed on Iraq after the ceasefire in the form of an inspection mechanism that claimed extensive rights to oversee the destruction of existing Iraqi stockpiles of weaponry of mass destruction and ensure that no activities were continuing secretly to acquire such weaponry in the future. There was much controversy surrounding UNSCOM activities, associated with alleged Iraqi evasions and denials of access, but also countercharges by Iraq contending that the inspection procedure was being used for espionage purposes and to harass and humiliate the Iraqi government. Some years ago Iraq refused to grant further access to UNSCOM, creating a new pretext for intervention and the resumption of war, as well as debates about whether such inspections, however extensive, could ever provide confidence about Iraqi compliance with the conditions of disarmament imposed by UN Security Resolution 687. In the years of the Bush Jr. presidency there have been assertions that without inspection a preemptive war is needed to ensure that Iraq does not pose a threat to the United States in the future, but also assertions from Washington that inspections even if restored would not provide sufficient confidence to overcome the justification for a military attack designed to impose a regime change. Complicating the picture further, the UN, with strong backing from Secretary-General Kofi Annan, has been seeking to negotiate a renewal of an inspection arrangement positing an UNSCOM arrangement as an alternative to war, and coupled with some indication that sanctions could be ended if the new scheme worked successfully. It became clear that Washington rejected such an approach, and viewed the inspection issue as a diversion and distraction from its goal of regime change. The US was playing a double game: if Iraq resisted inspection, this would validate the need for intervention, but if it asserted, then the unreliability of inspection would also validate the need for intervention, a deadly catch-22!
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In the meantime, during the latter half of the 1990s, a cruel stalemate arising from the imposition of sanctions and intrusive US claims persisted. It had long been apparent to objective observers that these undertakings were not succeeding, but policy-makers in Washington lacked the political courage to acknowledge, even indirectly, that their approach had failed to dislodge Saddam Hussein and was doing great damage to the people of Iraq, as well as to the humanitarian reputation and political autonomy of the United Nations. The Clinton administration had so committed itself to the support of sanctions, as well as the continuation of periodic bombings within the no-fly zones, that it seemed completely unable and unwilling to re-evaluate the policy in light of the harm being done to Iraqi civilian society. Such a reluctance was consistent with the overall approach in the Clinton years to exhibit “toughness” in foreign policy, especially in the Middle East, so as to minimize criticism from the hard right that made little secret of its push all along for a renewal of outright war against Iraq with the goal of coercing a regime change in Baghdad.7 Reminiscent of Vietnam, leaders in Washington could not bring themselves to admit that their policy was a dreadful failure, and so it went on and on, with no end in sight. During his presidential campaign and upon arrival in Washington, George W. Bush announced that sanctions against Iraq would be continued, and intensified, although the undisclosed intention was to move from sanctions to the more proactive option of intervention and war.

From the perspectives of international law and morality these policies directed at Iraq were of a highly dubious character, yet their continuation in the face of widespread criticism from most governments in the region and the world, revealed the extent of American influence within the United Nations specifically, and international politics generally. The whole experience was a demonstration of the primacy of geopolitics at the expense of basic standards of law and morality. Despite the pragmatic and humanitarian misgivings of many governments, there was little disposition to challenge openly the American position.

Then came the 11 September attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, which inflicted heavy symbolic and substantive damage on the United States, and produced a claim to use force in self-defense. Despite some criticisms directed at the way the claim was formulated and applied to Afghanistan, it did represent a reasonable effort to retaliate against the main locus of al-Qaida operations and to diminish the prospect of future attacks.8 In the
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face of these attacks, President Bush in his 20 September 2001 address to a Joint Session of Congress, outlined the resolve of the US Government to wage an overall war against "every terrorist group of global reach."° Iraq was mentioned by name in the speech only to make the point that the character of the war being launched was different from the 1991 Gulf War: "This war will not be like the war against Iraq a decade ago, with a decisive liberation of territory and a swift conclusion." True, a generalized warning declared that "[i]f from this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime."

The truth was that the hawks in Washington had smelled Iraqi blood from the moment of the al-Qaeda attacks. There were early statements by right-wing think-tank analysts urging the extension of the military response to Iraq. Leading members on Congress sent a bipartisan letter to the President, coordinated by Senators Joseph Lieberman and John McCain, insisting that the war on terrorism could not succeed unless the threat posed by Saddam Hussein was confronted by military force. Israel, also, made little secret of its wish to extend the battlefields of Afghanistan to Iraq (and Iran). Various efforts were made to encourage war against Iraq by trying to show (on the basis of slim and unconvincing evidence) that there were links between Baghdad and al-Qaeda agents prior to 11 September, or to imply that Iraq was the source of the anthrax distributed via the US Postal Service. Throughout this period there were inconsistent and inconclusive comments deriving from top members of the Bush security team. The Secretary of State, Colin Powell, was still seen soon after 11 September as reluctant to endorse such a belligerent stance, realizing that it would interfere with his diplomatic priority, which involved building up a global coalition against the al-Qaeda network and finding some way to dissipate anti-Americanism arising from the unresolved fate of the Palestinians. Such caution seems to have disappeared in the wake of the successful campaign by American military forces to turn the tide of battle within Afghanistan so quickly and decisively in favor of the Northern Alliance, producing the collapse of the Taliban regime, the destruction of the Afghan nerve centre of al-Qaeda and the dispersal of its leadership. This American victory was achieved with almost no American casualties sustained during the air campaign. At first, it seemed far more dangerous to be a journalist covering the US war in Afghanistan than to be a soldier on the American side. Later on, this state of affairs changed somewhat, as American forces were used on the ground to deal with enclaves of
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Taliban and al-Qaida resistance and some deadly fire-fights occurred. A new wave of American triumphalism emerged, being painted in vivid colors of geopolitical achievement in the course of President Bush's State of the Union Address on 29 January 2002. This occasion was seized to expand the scope of the war against global terror by extending its goals to include a series of countries, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, which were provocatively labeled "the axis of evil." Ever since that speech, the assumption has permeated media treatments and public attitudes that a US decision to wage war against Iraq had been made by the White House, and the only uncertainty that remained was related to the adoption of specific war plans, the extent, timing, and nature of the attack, the degree of dependence on a ground attack and the availability and relevance of Iraqi opposition forces both inside and outside the country.

This further turning of the screw by the US Government has moved the sanctions debate into the background, shifting world attention towards the avoidance of war. The UN is still pursuing a course that would suggest that a reliance on the inspections mechanism authorized by UNSC Res. 1441 could avert a second Gulf war. Despite this sidestepping of sanctions, it remains important to consider the sanctions regime, which continues to impose hardships on the civilian population of Iraq, from the perspective of international law and morality. The sanctions regime, whatever else, stands before our political understanding of legality as a severe descent by the organized international community into criminality, subjecting it to serious analysis as to whether or not the wrongdoing and harm amount cumulatively to genocide.  

THE SANCTIONS REGIME

It seems helpful to separate the sanctions regime into five distinct phases, each of which poses the question of legality and morality in a different way:

1. pre-war reliance on sanctions in the months after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990;
2. immediate post-war reliance on sanctions to achieve compliance with Security Council Res. 687;
3. persisting reliance on sanctions during the UNSCOM period in the face of growing evidence of civilian suffering.
4. shift to “smart sanctions” to deflect criticism of early sanctions regime, and to sustain UN consensus for their imposition;
5. maintenance of sanctions as a secondary policy, with increasingly blatant “war talk” as the primary policy, threatening a military attack unless a satisfactory regime change in Baghdad occurs.

Pre-war sanctions
It is of great importance to distinguish between the imposition of comprehensive sanctions by virtue of UNSC Resolution 660 prior to and after the initiation of the first Gulf War on 15 January 1991. In the months following Iraq’s conquest and annexation of Kuwait in August 1990, the approach advocated publicly by the United States, and adopted by the United Nations Security Council, was to endorse Kuwait’s right of self-defense and to seek a resolution of the conflict by a combination of diplomacy and sanctions. The limited goals of this policy were to restore fully the sovereign rights of Kuwait, and to impose on Iraq the costs of the harm inflicted. The issue of Iraqi actual and potential possession of weaponry of mass destruction was not part of the UN engagement in this phase. Such a response to the Iraqi invasion received wide and genuine support, including support from the members of the Security Council with the sole exception of Yemen, which abstained. Reliance on sanctions, even if it meant imposing hardships on Iraq’s population, was seen as reasonable and appropriate means to obtain Iraqi withdrawal, and the best way to fulfill the Charter goals of protecting states that have been victims of international aggression while doing everything possible to avoid recourse to war. In this fundamental sense, sanctions prior to the 1991 Gulf War were fully consistent with international law and morality, and enjoyed the virtually unanimous backing of the membership of the United Nations, including most of the countries of the Middle East.

Indeed, to the extent criticism was made, it moved in the direction of advocating a greater reliance on the mix of sanctions and diplomacy, especially providing more time to generate effective pressure on Baghdad. A related criticism was that the United States did not genuinely seek a diplomatic resolution of the dispute, and put forward the demand for withdrawal in such unconditional and rigid terms as to ensure that the Iraqi government would respond negatively, thereby building the US case for war. The UN Secretary-General at the time, Javier Perez de Cuéler, supports the view in his memoirs that a somewhat more flexible approach might well have achieved
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the stated UN goals without war. However, even then, for undisclosed reasons, Washington preferred a military solution that would eliminate Iraq as a regional power and as a threat to the Gulf oil reserves and to Israel. Part of this preference was the possibility of connecting the aggression against Kuwait with the quite separate concerns arising from Iraq’s efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction, including biological, chemical, and nuclear weaponry. Only with war, and an imposed ceasefire, could this wider security concern be addressed, as was done in Resolution 687, which established the mandate for destruction and inspection of such capabilities.

Post-war realities

In contrast, the perpetuation of sanctions by way of UNSC Resolution 678, in the period after the ceasefire and Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, was justified initially as leverage needed to ensure compliance with Iraq’s various obligations to make various amends for the harm inflicted, as well as to satisfy the most serious disarmament demands imposed on a sovereign state since the end of the two world wars. It is to be noted that after World War II, in contrast to the punitive reparations burden imposed on Germany after World War I, the defeated countries were not subjected to economic sanctions. On the contrary, despite the terrible harm they had inflicted, these countries were given help with economic reconstruction, and soon achieved positive economic growth.

The devastation wrought by the war in Iraq was extensive, including the civilian infrastructure. The former president of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari, presented a report to the UN on the basis of a fact-finding mission, shortly after the military campaign ended, that indicated the destruction of Iraq’s entire industrial and modern sectors, suggesting that it had literally been bombed back to a pre-industrial reality. Declassified documents from the US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) confirm early complaints that the United States deliberately targeted the civilian infrastructure of Iraq, especially the water treatment system, with the acknowledged purpose of disrupting civilian life throughout the country. Under these circumstances, the imposition of comprehensive sanctions was legally and morally dubious from the outset. It was perfectly obvious that the war had left Iraq in a situation of great vulnerability to a major health crisis, and that increasing pressures by sanctions would exact a heavy toll on the civilian society. To go ahead with comprehensive sanctions
under such circumstances would seem certain to have the effect of imposing massive indiscriminate death and illness on the civilian population, while, ironically, exempting the military and political leadership of Iraq from harm, thus engaging the moral, and possibly, the legal responsibility at some level of those countries that supported post-war sanctions. Such an approach to implementing the agreed ceasefire also eroded the legitimacy and moral standing of the United Nations, first, for agreeing to sanctions given its knowledge of their probable effects, and then, for extending the ceasefire to cover aspects of coercive disarmament and inspection that were not closely connected with the claim of collective security that was put forward as a proper justification for the war.

Sustaining the sanctions

As the months and years went by, evidence accumulated to confirm what should have been anticipated: the sanctions were exacting an enormous toll among the civilian population, and were doing virtually nothing to hamper the activities and lifestyle of the Iraqi elite. The US Government favored the maintenance of a tough sanctions regime even in the face of well-documented reports detailing the suffering of the Iraqi people, contending in the notorious words of Madeleine Albright in 1996 (while serving as US ambassador at the UN and not long before becoming Secretary of State), when confronted by statistics as to the loss of life among Iraqi women and children, "[w]e think the price is worth it."16

Humanitarian considerations were only part of the disquiet experienced by governments when asked periodically to extend the sanctions under UN auspices. Similar hostility was expressed in various ways by public opinion outside the United States. Another part of the growing anti-sanctions movement within the UN had to do with the degree to which the United States was seen to be throwing its weight around in the UN and elsewhere, without finding a path that could lead to a quick resolution. Closely related here was the European concern that business opportunities in the Middle East, especially in the field of energy development, were being sacrificed for no plausible reason.

Maintaining sanctions under these conditions certainly seems to run counter to international humanitarian law, as well as to the more general just-war doctrine in its application to sanctions. The most basic concept embedded in the law of war at the close of the nineteenth century, in the Hague Convention, was the idea of
agreements by governments that force could be legally used in warfare only if directed against military targets and the related broad injunction against the “unlimited” use of force against an enemy state. Admittedly, there are conceptual and interpretative issues present. International law is directed at states, not at international organizations such as the UN; the imposition of sanctions in this comprehensive form was initially authorized and periodically reaffirmed by the Security Council. Is the Security Council bound by the restraints of international humanitarian law? There are no clear answers given by existing international law to such questions. By analogy and by moral reasoning, it would seem that the UN as political actor should not be exempt from rules of behavior which seek to protect civilians from the ravages and excesses of warfare, but can such an analogy be legally relied upon in the absence of its acceptance by the UN Security Council? Cautiously, then, it could be concluded that the maintenance of sanctions, given the evidence of their effects, is both immoral and in violation of the just-war doctrine, involving three separate aspects: sanctions as applied seem indiscriminate, disproportionate, and have little prospect of achieving the ends being pursued.\textsuperscript{37}

The move to smart sanctions

In response to the rising tide of anti-sanctions sentiment, especially in Europe, the United States took a series of backward strides from its preferred unyielding position so as to prevent the international consensus from falling apart. It had earlier agreed to an oil-for-food program that allows Iraq to sell its oil on the world market, importing civilian goods, with the use of the revenues by Iraq scrutinized by the UN Office of the Iraq Program (OIP) in such a cumbersome and restrictive way as to compromise the humanitarian rationale.\textsuperscript{36} In May 2001, after elaborate diplomatic negotiations in which the United States did its best to maximize sanctions while retaining the support of the Security Council, a much heralded move to “smart sanctions” was finally approved by the UN.\textsuperscript{19} Then, in November 2001, with the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1382, the sanctions regime somewhat modified this focus, banning all traded goods that had military or dual-use applications. Any Iraq overseas contract is subject to scrutiny, and rejection by UN administrative action. Any member of the Security Council can delay a contract almost indefinitely by seeking review if any of the challenged items appear on the extensive Goods Review List. The OIP turns any questionable contract with
Iraq over to the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to determine whether the traded goods are related to Iraqi military applications. The so-called 661 Committee of the Security Council has the last word on whether a contract survives this review process.

In reality, Iraq appears to have circumvented many of the constraints associated with the early years of sanctions via internal adaptation and regional smuggling arrangements designed to sell oil outside the sanctions regime, especially to Syria. Iraq and the UN have played a cat-and-mouse game related to the renewal of inspection, which at times has turned into a bargaining move, exchanging access by inspectors for a gradual lifting of sanctions. In addition, the smuggled goods tend to reflect state priorities relating to security and regime stability rather than the alleviation of the humanitarian tragedy. While the US has at times seemingly accepted the situation, it has nevertheless maintained a degree of ambiguity by stressing its lack of confidence that inspection will be able to determine whether Iraq is observing its obligation to refrain from production, development, and possession of weaponry of mass destruction. In recent months this ambiguity has almost been entirely suppressed by the unilateralist climate of opinion in Washington that expresses its intention to take whatever steps are necessary to achieve a regime change in Baghdad. As a consequence, sanctions seem of diminishing relevance both to advocates of a hard line on Iraq, who favor a military solution, and advocates of normalization, who favor an end to sanctions.

What became clear long before 11 September is that, to the extent that sanctions were seeking political results beyond a punitive effect, their impact was negligible even though they were maintained for more than a decade in the face of strong objective evidence that massive loss of civilian life was being caused month by month over the course of many years. Consequently, it can be concluded that the indiscriminate civilian suffering caused was not "collateral", especially after the initial period when it might have been reasonable to suppose that over time the sanctions would erode internal support for Saddam Hussein’s leadership, possibly stimulating internal and external Iraqi forces to achieve a regime change. Despite this assessment, and by making adjustments of the sort involved in the adoption and administration of smart or selective sanctions, without the intervening reality of 11 September American-led policy toward Iraq would in all
likelihood have maintained its futile course indefinitely, squeezing the people of Iraq without any realistic hope of achieving political objectives. Of course, some supporters of the US approach argue that sanctions did succeed to the extent of keeping Saddam Hussein pinned down, "within his box" to use Beltway jargon.20 Further, without sanctions, Iraq would have by now acquired a formidable arsenal of weaponry of mass destruction. Even if this latter conjecture is accurate, there is no reason to doubt, particularly in light of the 1991 Gulf War and US/Israeli regional security policy, that containment and deterrence could be relied upon, with every prospect of success, to minimize the risk of Iraqi expansionism. A careful examination of Iraqi behavior under Saddam Hussein discloses an ambitious approach to the use of power in regional settings, but also a rational one to gains and losses, and a willingness to back down rather than to engage in self-destructive warfare. In effect, then, sanctions after 1991 were essentially punitive and, although supported by the UN, seemed to violate the most fundamental values embodied in international humanitarian law, and arguably raise plausible allegations of genocide. Some have argued that, although they were atrocities, the sanctions do not qualify as genocide because there is no showing of specific intent.21

From sanctions to war
There is no doubt that 11 September created an opportunity for those seeking regime change in Iraq to acknowledge tacitly the failure of the sanctions approach, yet still escalate their demands with respect to Iraq. Recourse to war against al-Qaida gave the Bush Administration great latitude in foreign policy. There were attempts in the immediate aftermath of the attacks to intimidate that there were Iraqi connections with al-Qaida, a supposed meeting in Prague between an Iraqi intelligence official and Mohammed Atta, the claim that Iraq was behind the anthrax dispersal, and other more generalized allegations of the connections between Iraq as rogue state and the new threats posed by mega-terrorism.

However, the decisive move was made in the 2002 state of the Union address when Iraq headed the list of "axis of evil" states, and a doctrine of pre-emption was set forth by President Bush. Drawing on public anxieties about mega-terrorism, Bush declared that "axis of evil" countries with the will and capability to produce weaponry of mass destruction posed severe threats, not so much through the likelihood that such weapons would be used directly, but rather that
they would be transferred to al-Qaeda and possibly other terrorists
groups with global agendas. Without explicitly indicating that an
attack upon Iraq was forthcoming, the clear implication of what Bush
and others in Washington were saying was that it would do what was
necessary to supersed the Saddam Hussein regime thereby achieving
regime change comparable to Afghanistan.

It is important to underscore the degree to which such war talk is
at odds with the most fundamental rules and principles of interna-
tional law, as well as being incompatible with the just-war tradition
that continues to be influential in religious and ethicist circles.
Throughout the twentieth century there were major efforts to outlaw
non-defensive wars, the core undertaking of the UN Charter being
designed to fulfill the pledge of the Preamble “to save succeeding
generations from the scourge of war.” The Nuremberg/Tokyo pros-
ecutions of German and Japanese leaders after World War II proceeded
on the premise that aggressive war was a crime against the peace, and
that, as such, was the most serious form of international criminality.
The Charter was drafted to minimize the role of subjective factors –
self-serving explanations by governments as to why war is justifiable.
The Nicaragua decision of the World Court in 1986 upheld this
Charter approach as also being contained in general international law
applicable under all circumstances of conflict. It is arguable that the
11 September attacks by al-Qaida cannot be addressed within this
template of modern international law as the threat and capability
cannot be territorialized, and the idea of defensive force needs to be
extended to enable a threatened state to protect its people and uphold
its security. Such reasoning does not apply in the setting of the axis
of evil states, since deterrence offers an adequate way to reconcile
containment with the avoidance of war – the security policy used by
both sides in the Cold War for over 40 years. In this regard, the war
talk directed at Iraq is a direct challenge to the overall framework of
modern international law concerning war/peace issues. If war is
unleashed against Iraq, it will establish a dangerous and unaccep-
table precedent validating recourse to international force in a wide
range of circumstances. First of all, anticipatory defense and preventive
war would be used as a rationale. Secondly, recourse to war would
be undertaken by the United States without a UN mandate, and
without even the collective procedures invoked to justify recourse to
war in 1999 in relation to Kosovo.
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CONCLUSION

The Iraq experience with sanctions needs to be understood by reference to the five distinct temporal intervals discussed above. No blanket generalizations can be applied to the sanctions regime as a whole. The imposition and maintenance of sanctions after the 1991 Gulf War needs to be condemned as a deliberate and indiscriminate policy designed to inflict harm on the civilian population of Iraq. The UN discredited itself by endorsing sanctions, although efforts were made to mitigate the humanitarian catastrophe being caused by initiatives of the Secretary-General and others, and the UN generally is no stronger and more accountable under international law than it is leading members permit. Accordingly, it is the United States and the United Kingdom, the most ardent proponents of sanctions and the enforcers of the no-fly zones, who bear a particularly heavy political, legal, and moral responsibility for the harm inflicted on the people of Iraq.

The debate about sanctions was superseded at the end of the Afghanistan War by the debate about recourse to an American-led war against Iraq. President George W. Bush claimed that such a war was necessary as part of the anti-terrorist campaign that represented the American response to 11 September. Most of the world disagreed, despite the general recognition that Saddam Hussein was an oppressive ruler who had committed numerous crimes against humanity during his period as head of state. In an attempt by the Bush administration to build greater international support for the war, the United States agreed to work through the UN as of September 2002 so as to give Iraq one last chance to avoid war. The Security Council was persuaded to establish a very intrusive mechanism of unconditional inspection that Iraq accepted, presumably seeking to avert the threatened American attack. This inspection process was tasked with the job of ensuring the complete “disarmament” of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, with Iraq facing the prospect of “serious consequences” if it foiled the inspectors or was found to be in “material breach” of the operative Security Council Resolution, 1441. As the process went forward it was evident that there was a widening gap between the American-led war party and the French-led inspection party. At the time of writing, it seems as though the French will prevail within the UN, and the US will proceed with its war plans in defiance of the UN.
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Despite this overshadowing of sanctions by the clouds of war, however, it is important to assess the sanctions imposed on Iraq that set the stage for the initiation of an aggressive war. What we should learn from this reliance on sanctions, first, to induce Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, and then for more than ten years as a punitive peace in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, is that such a policy can have devastating effects on the civilian population. This is especially true when the sanctions are imposed on a country whose centralized water purification system has been destroyed. Indeed, in such a setting sanctions are both more indiscriminate than war itself and more life-threatening as the experience of Iraq since 1991 demonstrates. In such circumstances, sanctions amount to the continuation of war, without even the loose constraints of international humanitarian law. For the United Nations to have formally endorsed such a sanctions policy when these realities were widely reported, and essentially uncontested, is a severe blight upon its own mission to prevent war and to raise the moral standards of the world politics, especially concerning the protection of vulnerable peoples confronting a humanitarian disaster. Let us hope that these dismal lessons of Iraq sanctions will be learned, and the suffering caused to the people of Iraq will not be repeated elsewhere in the future.

NOTES


5. These two civil servants have become prominent civil society campaigners against sanctions in the years following their resignation. See Denis Halliday and Hans von Sponeck, “The Hostage Nation: Former UN Relief
32. Iraq

Chiefs Hans von Sponeck and Denis Halliday Speak Out Against an Attack on Iraq, "Guardian" (29 November 2001).


7. As is consistently the case when liberal militarism seeks to appease the hard right, the criticisms of Clinton’s foreign policy that have surfaced since 11 September have emphasized its reluctance to use force sufficiently to intimidate Islamic extremism. Bernard Lewis and Fouad Ajami have been particularly influential in mounting such lines of criticism, partly to support moves toward waging war against Iraq, and partly to give assent to the approach taken in the Afghanistan War.


10. For text see White House website, www.whitehouse.gov.


13. Bishara, a respected international figure, revealing the conditions prevailing in Iraq when comprehensive sanctions were reimposed, wrote in the report: “The recent conflict has wrought near-apocalyptic results upon the economic infrastructure of what had been, until January 1991, a rather highly urbanized and mechanised society. Now, most means of modern life support have been destroyed or rendered tenuous. Iraq has, for some time to come, been relegated to a pre-industrial age, but with all the disabilities of post-industrial dependency on an intensive use of energy and technology.” Report to the Secretary-General on Humanitarian Needs in Kuwait and Iraq in the Immediate Post-Crisis Environment by a Mission Led by Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, 10-17 March 1991, UN SCOR, Annex, UN Doc. S/22366-


15. As Bishara, "Sanctions as Genocide," observes, in 4, p. 381; beyond other considerations, Iraq’s particular vulnerability to sanctions “was increased by its relative geographical isolation, its reliance on oil pipelines, and its
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limited shipping access, which made an embargo simple to enforce," citing Graham-Hughes, note 3, p. 73 as source.

16. This statement was made in the course of the following exchange on 60 Minutes “We have heard that a half million children have died,” said 60 Minutes reporter Lesley Stahl, speaking of US sanctions against Iraq. “I mean, that’s more children than died in Hiroshima. And...and you know, is the price worth it?” To which Ambassador Albright replied, “I think this is a very hard choice, but the price— we think the price is worth it.” Michael Schwartz. “US Takes Selfish Stance in Relations Throughout the World.” IF-Wire (14 February 2001) available at: www.uwire.com/content/topops021401001.htm.


20. Even The Nation in a recent editorial endorsed an approach to Iraq that rests on renewed inspection and selective sanctions, partly as an alternative to war, partly as a containment plus strategy of meeting what it acknowledges to be an Iraqi threat. “War on Iraq is Wrong,” The Nation (19 June 2002), pp. 3-4.


22. This position is fully developed in Falk, The Great Terror War, Chapters 2 and 3.
2 Power, Propaganda and Indifference: An Explanation of the Maintenance of Economic Sanctions on Iraq Despite their Human Cost

*Eric Herring*

*Indifference is the rejection of common humanity.*

The United Nations Security Council imposed economic sanctions on Iraq in August 1990 in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and those sanctions were still in place in March 2003, though with the prospect of being lifted in the wake of a US-led invasion. What explains the continuation of the sanctions despite voluminous evidence of their human cost in terms of the blighted lives of millions and premature deaths of hundreds of thousands? This is a crucial question for those who have opposed the sanctions on principled, humanitarian (as opposed to pragmatic, instrumental) grounds, yet little attention has been paid to it. The growing academic and policy literature on the sanctions on Iraq focus more on their human cost, their political effectiveness, whether and how their human cost can be reduced or their effectiveness increased, whether they should be lifted, whether they are legal, whether a US-led war should be endorsed to bring about their lifting or how they relate to the broader theory and practice of sanctions. That officials (by which I mean politicians and civil servants at both national and international levels) are willing to accept the human cost is a given for this literature: how it is they can think that way is left unexplored. Social, ethical and international relations theorists could shed significant light on this but have shown almost no interest in the sanctions on Iraq. Nor have those who see themselves as working in what they call critical security studies, premised explicitly on a commitment to common humanity as opposed to prioritizing one fraction of humanity over another in the pursuit of some supposed national or other sectional interest. I share that ethical commitment to common humanity and argue in this
chapter that a crucial underpinning of an acceptance of the human cost of the sanctions on Iraq has been the denial of the common humanity of people in Iraq.

The answer to the question I posed needs to be considered at two levels. The first is the specifics of why the sanctions have been maintained, and the second is the permissive, more general set of assumptions that enable officials to think in terms of those specifics. I start out with the first level, and examine the argument that it is all very simple - the sanctions achieve important political objectives at acceptable human cost. I then go on to examine what makes it possible to see that human cost as acceptable. Some officials argue that, while the human consequences of the sanctions have been terrible, what matters most is that those consequences were unintended. In contrast, I argue that, in many respects though not all, the human consequences of the sanctions are intentional. It is noteworthy that the human cost of the sanctions has not made them unacceptable to most of the public in the state principally responsible for keeping the sanctions in place, namely the United States. I argue that this is to a great extent due to the manufacture of consent through the news media in terms of the rarity of coverage of the human cost of the sanctions and also in terms of how that human cost is framed. I examine the role of propaganda in this process, and the ways in which officials engage in self-deception as well as deception, and in which bureaucratization fosters indifference to the human cost of the policy. In combination, this analysis provides an answer to the question I posed. In Michael Herzfeld's terms, it explains the acceptability of "behavior that 'normally' - that is, when the victims are seen as insiders rather than outsiders - would be outrageous and even psychopathic." It is an account of how those who run the sanctions are able to preside over such havoc and live with themselves. Even if the sanctions are lifted following a US-led invasion, this question of how such a devastating policy could continue for so many years is of great significance.

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF POLITICAL OBJECTIVES AT ACCEPTABLE COST

The apparently simple answer to my question of why the sanctions have continued despite their human cost is, as Madeleine Albright, then US Ambassador to the UN, put it infamously in response to the figure of 500,000 dead children in Iraq: "the price is worth it." In
other words, the political gains outweigh the human cost. However, far from there being one sensible account of the sanctions there is a mass of overlapping and competing accounts. It is routine to divide views on the sanctions into pro and anti positions. That does indeed represent an important dimension of what is going on. However, it is not simply that those in favor of the sanctions all agree that they are aimed at making Iraq comply with the relevant UN resolutions; that they have achieved a great deal of Iraqi compliance; and that all of the human cost of the last twelve years can be attributed solely to Saddam Hussein. Nor do all opponents of the sanctions take the line that the sanctions are aimed at the overthrow of Saddam Hussein; that the sanctions have actually allowed him to tighten his grip on the country; and that the sanctions are the main reason for the suffering in Iraq. Instead, individuals have more complex, ambivalent and shifting sets of preferences and disagreements over the objectives and “ownership” of the sanctions.

In terms of objectives, the sanctions are variously seen as aimed at securing Iraqi compliance with UN Resolutions; overthrowing Saddam Hussein; overthrowing anyone, including his successors, who are not compliant with US wishes; or serving a broader US strategy of global dominance. The relationship between sanctions and overthrow has been disputed. Has it been to make the lives of ordinary Iraqis so miserable that they will accept the risks associated with an uprising, or to bring about a coup from within the Iraqi elite, probably by the armed forces? Others have interpreted the sanctions not in terms of overthrowing Saddam Hussein but, on the contrary, keeping him in power in order to prevent a breakaway Kurdish state in the north and the establishment of a Shi’ite Islamic state in the rest of the country, but weak enough to prevent him from launching a military challenge to US oil interests in Saudi Arabia. Arms control motivations are seen by some as residing at the core of the policy (limiting Iraq’s nuclear, biological and chemical weapon, and ballistic missile capabilities) and by others as mere propaganda cover (because those same countries had previously sold Iraq military and dual-use technology and provided financial assistance to Iraq at the peak of its efforts to acquire such capabilities). Related to this is disagreement over whether or not the actors involved even want the sanctions to be lifted. The strongest version is that neither the United States nor Iraq want the sanctions to be lifted as they achieve various goals only possible through their presence such as a permanent sense of emergency and siege. The United States effectively controls most of
Iraq's finances while Saddam Hussein has extended his control within most of Iraqi society through the population's reliance on handouts. In contrast, some hold the view that one side but not the other wants the sanctions lifted, while disagreeing on which side is which. Furthermore, according to journalist Stephen Farrell: "a senior UN official in the Middle East...believed that the only reason sanctions were still in force in their present form was because no one could be seen to back down." Hence the sanctions can be seen in terms of symbolic politics (such as looking tough or at least not looking weak) in which the achievement of the stated policy objectives is irrelevant or at least secondary.

There is even dispute over whose sanctions they are. Do the sanctions symbolize the will of the "international community" made manifest in UN resolutions? Or the hijacking of the UN by the United States through the use of its Security Council veto with Britain as its poodle? Are the United States and Britain the only actors responsible enough to take on the tough tasks of both trying to ensure that Iraq does not acquire prohibited weapons and dual-use technologies but does adhere to a system in which the proceeds from Iraqi oil sales are spent on the Iraqi people and individual and corporate victims of the invasion of Kuwait in 1990? From this perspective, only the United States and Britain have the political courage to take the flak for making hard choices while countries like France and Russia are so focused on chasing lucrative oil contracts dangled in front of them by Iraq that they ignore the threat posed by Saddam Hussein internationally and to the people of Iraq. Another way of looking at the policy ownership issue is that current national and UN level decision-makers did not choose the sanctions policy but inherited it from their predecessors. Decision-makers often continue with policies put in place by their predecessors even if they would not have chosen to adopt them in the first place, perhaps because of the uncertainties and criticism they may face. Policies acquire inertia as they become institutionalized and normalized, making for a tendency towards only incremental change (of course, this is only a tendency rather than a rule, as decision-makers can and do institute basic policy shifts).

Moreover, the supposedly simple answer suggested above is not an objective assessment but is, in international relations theory terms, a realist one. The basic thrust of this version of a realist view is that the sanctions are instrumentally necessary to deal with a major, even apocalyptic, threat to US interests. While some realists might make
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a different, more relaxed assessment of the threat, the key enabling feature of realism is a particular view of identity and the ethics of responsibility. For realists, the practical and ethical responsibility of decision-makers is solely to the citizens of their own state, hence costs borne by populations of other states are simply irrelevant unless they result in political pressures which may undermine the achievement of national political goals. John Mueller and Karl Mueller argue that Americans do not care much about the death of foreigners. However, they do not probe why it is that Americans (supposedly) think that way. They also take us in the wrong direction by essentiallyizing the notions of “American” and “foreigner.” In other words, they treat those concepts as if they have a single, fixed and self-evident meaning. Not all Americans actually think that way – not all are indifferent to the loss of foreign lives, either generally or in this specific case, as can be seen in the work of the US citizens within the Iraq Action Coalition (IAC) which opposes the sanctions on principled, humanitarian grounds. Writing the way Mueller and Mueller do unwittingly excludes from “American-ness” those who do care. To such IAC activists, a US citizen who does not care about the human cost of the sanctions is in significant respects more “foreign” than a citizen of another state that does care about them. How one comes to see oneself and others is a vital part of making it possible to accept or reject the continuation of the sanctions with their related human cost. In the end we need a more complex picture of how the sanctions have been maintained, and an important element of that picture has been the representation of the human cost of the sanctions as unintended.

REPRESENTATION OF THE HUMAN COST OF THE SANCTIONS AS UNINTENDED

Intentions matter, and intending to inflict human cost is morally worse than not intending to inflict it. Hence, for example, whereas some leaders have sought the death of vast numbers of people, mass death is not an objective of the sanctions. Furthermore, remedial measures have been instituted which have been intended to reduce the scale of suffering in Iraq, especially since 1996 and the establishment of the UN Oil For Food (OFF) program permitting Iraqi oil exports from which most of the proceeds go towards the purchase of humanitarian goods under UN supervision. Another difference is that the killing is indirect rather than direct; in other words, the
deaths are caused by shortages of necessary items rather than by individuals being executed or bombed. As Mueller and Mueller put it, the deaths caused by sanctions are “dispersed rather than concentrated and statistical rather than dramatic.”

This means that responsibility for the deaths is much less obviously attributable or intentional. However, when we say that we did not intend something to happen, it usually means that a consequence was not functional to the pursuit of our objectives, was unexpected, the product of omissions rather than actions, unavoidable, something we try to end or reverse once we become aware of it, or some combination of these. There is a clear sense in which the human cost of the sanctions is functional to various versions of the objectives of the sanctions. Iraqi society is a resource for Saddam Hussein to survive and be powerful. Damaging Iraqi society can contribute to limiting his power or reducing his chances of survival, and it can also be seen as a means of putting pressure on Saddam Hussein to comply with the relevant UN resolutions. Consequences matter as well as intentions, and where consequences are anticipated and, once they have occurred and are known, culpability is increased. From the outset, the huge scale of death and suffering in Iraq was a fully anticipated consequence of the sanctions due to their reinforcement of the effects of Iraq’s long war with Iran in the 1980s and especially of US-led bombing in 1991. When those anticipated consequences became a reality, the sanctions continued.

Furthermore, the human cost in Iraq is not merely a product of omissions, but of actions as well. The sanctions were set up and run one way rather than some other way even though it is correct to say that the sanctions would not have been imposed if Iraq had not invaded Kuwait. This is particularly important in that international law and human rights conventions do not give decision-makers, at the state or UN level, the right to act in any way they see fit in pursuit of their perceived interests. In this vein, the UN General Assembly’s Inter-Agency Standing Committee of UN, non-governmental and inter-governmental humanitarian agencies emphasized to the Security Council that: “The design of a sanctions regime should take fully into account international human rights instruments and humanitarian standards established by the Geneva Conventions.” In a report commissioned by the UN, Belgian law Professor Marc Bossuyt concluded that: “The sanctions regime against Iraq is unequivocally illegal under existing international law and human rights law” and “could raise questions under the genocide Convention.” Hence culpability is
further deepened by the fact that these omissions and actions are those not of just any actors but of those with specific role responsibilities.

The avoidability or otherwise of consequences also comes into play. Even within the sanctions regime, much of the human cost could have been avoided by offering from the outset a large-scale program of supervised oil sales for humanitarian supplies. Instead, the offers that were made by the UN in 1991 involved an unspecified share of a one-off lump sum of money (working out at approximately $73 per person). A revised offer made in 1995, and accepted by an economically shattered Iraq in 1996 as the OIF program, at least specified and increased the amount of money to be available for humanitarian supplies. The offers of remedial action allowed pro-sanctions officials to refuse to accept blame for the human cost by enabling them to argue that a humanitarian program had been offered to Iraq; making a strictly humanitarian offer aimed at saving Iraqis was not a priority.

In sum, the human cost of the sanctions has been instrumental in the pursuit of policy objectives, anticipated, known, a product of actions rather than omissions, avoidable, subject only to limited remedial action and that remedial action has clearly not been motivated primarily by a desire to avoid that human cost. These points do not undermine the unintentionality defense completely, because we need to retain the capacity to identify and condemn those who do intend such things in the sense that the human cost of a policy is seen as an end in itself. However, even here the distinction is not absolute because what they have in common is a strong streak of indifference, involving both an uncaring awareness of human cost and also a sheer lack of attention to that human cost through avoidance of thinking about it or acting to avert it. What I wish to turn to next is a consideration of the extent to which the US public – the people in the state which matters most in retaining the sanctions through the US veto in the UN Security Council and UN Sanctions Committee, and through US political efforts more broadly – are aware of what is going on and are indifferent even if they are aware.

MANUFACTURE OF CONSENT FOR THE SANCTIONS THROUGH THE MEDIA

One of the main tactics of anti-sanctions campaigners has been to publicize the human cost of the sanctions in the belief or at least hope that public disquiet would bring about the end of the sanctions
on humanitarian grounds. Whether or not this belief or hope is valid needs to be examined. One possibility is that the US public do know of the human cost and most of them do not care greatly for the reasons indicated above. This is the view of Mueller and Mueller: "In fact the news media have covered the story, albeit limitedly, but stories that do not incite much response from their audiences tend not to be followed up (so much for the famed 'CNN effect')." We do not have the research to support or refute this analysis. It is just as plausible that there is a correlation in general terms between the limited amount of coverage and the limited amount of public concern – more coverage could therefore produce more public concern. A productive line of enquiry here might be to explore the role of the Internet. Having had their concern triggered by a small amount of coverage, some may have responded not by writing to traditional outlets such as the New York Times but may instead have turned to Internet sources, including those of anti-sanctions campaigning groups, to find out more. Madeleine Albright's comment of the price being "worth it" is now staple campaigning material amongst anti-sanctions groups. As Mueller and Mueller note correctly, that statement did not result in a massive US public outcry, but it is unclear whether or not that was because most people in the United States see the world Albright's way.

On the notion of a CNN effect – in which mainstream news media coverage produces a public response which in turn forces a change of a policy to which a government had been committed – Mueller and Mueller are right to be skeptical. Piers Robinson has shown that the CNN effect is a myth: space for news media influence is severely limited, primarily to areas of policy in which the government is divided or uncommitted. Instead, the news media usually manufacture consent in the sense that, while the news media can be adversarial, they are generally only adversarial within a framing of the situation broadly shared by the government. Hence, what matters is not only the volume of coverage of the human cost of the sanctions, but also the nature of it. The manufacture of consent model predicts that coverage will be framed in a way that creates emotional distance with regard to that cost, casts doubt on the role of US policy in bringing it about, or provides justification for it.

For example, Albright's comment was made in the context of a report titled "Punishing Saddam," instead of, say, "Punishing Ordinary Iraqis For the Crimes of Their Dictatorial Leader." Another good example of this kind of framing occurred when the Guardian reported
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the fact that the campaign group Voices in the Wilderness had imported into the UK half a ton of Iraqi dates in deliberate breach of the sanctions as an act of civil disobedience. While Voices will have been gratified to get front-page coverage, they would have been displeased to have the coverage framed by the following headline: "Say No to Saddam This Christmas – Turn Down A Date." This framed Voices as asking people to say "Yes to Saddam", and the headline even instructed the reader as to how to act.

The proposal for supposedly “smart” sanctions (presented as involving plans for tighter control of Iraqi revenues but an increased flow of civilian goods into Iraq) emerged in 2001 from the British government with qualified US support. A major purpose of the proposal was to ensure that Saddam Hussein rather than Britain and the United States would be blamed for the suffering in Iraq. The preceding year, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan was worried that the UN was taking the blame:

here we are accused of causing suffering to an entire population. We are in danger of losing the argument, or the propaganda war – if we haven’t lost it already – about who is responsible for this situation – President Saddam Hussein or the United Nations.24

News media coverage critical of the sanctions was boosted by the fact that Russia and especially France were active opponents of the US and British approach to the running of the sanctions. For example, the French Permanent Mission at the UN actively promoted negative coverage of US decisions on the UN Sanctions Committee not to permit various exports to Iraq in the hope that the United States would be embarrassed into relenting. However, one should not be too quick to assume that the “smart” sanctions proposal was the result of publicity for the human cost of the sanctions. It is at least as likely that it was triggered by the crumbling of the sanctions, principally in the form of increasingly successful efforts by the Iraqi government to earn money through smuggled oil and through under-the-table payments for oil sales permitted by the UN.

If the occasional item is broadcast or published which contradicts the dominant framing, it is unlikely to have more than a marginal impact overall, even if it does produce an initial flurry of attention outside that smaller sub-cultural group which shares its framing. Anti-sanctions campaign groups tend to be well aware of these issues and hence put substantial efforts into challenging the dominant
framing of the sanctions in the news media as well as expanding their sub-cultural group through their campaigning activities. The occasional appearance of an item which contradicts the dominant framing is helpful for the manufacture of consent because it can be held up as “proof” that all voices are heard and the anti-sanctions campaigners are the losers in a free market of ideas.

In order to shape news media coverage and public perceptions in their favor, the US and British governments engage in propaganda exercises. These are characterized sometimes by outright lies (which are easy to refute) and more often by misrepresentations of facts and analyses (principally those of the UN). Reports are quoted selectively so as to change their meaning, and inconvenient facts are left out with the aim of deceiving the audience into arriving at a different conclusion from that contained in the original reports. For example, UN reports indicating that medicine has not been distributed are used as the basis for the claim that the Iraqi government is deliberately not distributing them, when those UN reports indicate that the problems are due to other issues such as large volumes of arrivals that have caused distribution backlogs.

In response to accusations of lying and deliberate misrepresentation, there is an appeal to politeness and some sort of vague liberalism: what can be criticized are arguments but not intentions, honesty or integrity. Robert Solomon has noted the phenomenon of “the belief that even if this particular ‘fact’ is false, the truth that the lie is protecting is far more significant than the act of lying.” I came across a striking case in an interview with an official who accepted that UN reports were misrepresented to play down the human cost of the sanctions and blame it solely on the Iraqi government. However, I was informed that I was merely thinking about “micro truths” when the “macro truth” is that the sanctions policy is the right policy. The defense of this offered was that if officials were truthful about what was happening, the public would be unhappy, and the public do not want to be unhappy and do not want to know, and so it is the democratic duty of the state to comply with these wishes and tell the public either nothing or what they want to hear. When journalists and academics lambast officials for misrepresenting the human cost of the sanctions and responsibility for them, some officials feel that the criticism is unfair because they are doing their democratic duty whereas academics and journalists are elected by no one and are telling the public what they do not want to hear and so are anti-democratic. This is what I call the “propagandist as victim” defense.
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There is an old saying that diplomats are honest persons sent abroad to lie for their country. Whatever lies they tell, they are still honest. Note that the buck stops nowhere—not even with the person committing the act.27 There is an associated defense that, if I didn’t do it, someone else would. This has never been an acceptable defense for a thief or murderer and yet some officials are quite happy to use it for themselves. Officials may engage in self-deception as well as deception of others. Self-deception involves, in Ted Honderich’s definition, “avoidance of evidence, or of pointers or clues, with the aim of avoiding belief.”28 That way one does not have to deal with a situation if one remains unsure that it exists, or is sure that it does not exist. Officials will sometimes not see a connection between their actions and the resultant human cost because they do not want to see it. Distance between cause and effect assists both deception and self-deception. Self-deception is made much easier when one operates in an environment in which those deceptions are shared, and even more so where internalizing the deceptions is vital as proof of loyalty and indeed competence. Great value is placed on skill in making those deceptions at least plausible so that people who are reasonable and open-minded, but have not examined the original sources, come to believe them or at least are willing to entertain the possibility that they are true. Self-deception plays an important role in sustaining indifference because it allows for the evasion of personal responsibility. Indifference and irresponsibility can reinforce each other strongly within bureaucracies, and the sanctions policy has spawned an extensive bureaucracy.

INDIFFERENCE, BUREAUCRACY AND EVASION OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Within bureaucratic roles there is substantial room for individual choice and thus for personal responsibility. Some find their position within a bureaucracy intolerable and resign so that they can work for fundamental policy change. This has famously been the case with Denis Halliday and Hans von Sponeck, both of whom resigned the post of UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq to campaign against the sanctions. Their job was not to enforce the sanctions directly but to try to run a humanitarian programme within its limitations. Others stay in their posts and speak up vigorously about significant aspects of the policy. Kofi Annan, current UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, Tun Myat and Executive Director of the UN Office of the Iraq
Program (OLP), Benon Sevan, fall into this category. Myat has stated: "If by resigning today sanctions would be lifted tomorrow I would be very happy to do so." Most commonly, bureaucrats are loyal. Some have doubts, but keep their heads down and look forward earnestly to the day they get transferred to a new posting in another area. Others with doubts push them to the back of their mind. Those who remain loyal often argue that they can achieve more working from within than from outside. This tends to be the case with British officials who will not disagree publicly with the United States on sanctions policy, and who claim that they can exercise a moderating influence on the United States in contrast to France and Russia which they say criticize the United States openly and are ignored. Voicing disagreement publicly is thus presented as self-indulgent and ineffective, and they feel hard done by in being categorized with the United States when the sanctions are criticized. While that can be true, it is also the case that, as Albert Hirschman noted: "Opportunism can...be rationalized as public-spirited, even better it can masquerade as secret martyrdom."

For some, doubts never surface. The mutual reinforcement of individual indifference and the dynamics of bureaucratization is brought out clearly in Hannah Arendt’s study of Adolf Eichmann, the SS Lieutenant-Colonel who was chief of the Jewish Office of the Gestapo during World War II. His task was to arrange for the killing of Jews and others deemed undesirable by the Nazi regime. Eichmann escaped to Argentina after the war but was abducted by Israel and tried and convicted by an Israeli court in 1961 and hanged in 1962. Experts in Israel found Eichmann to be psychologically normal in terms of his relationships with family and friends and to be devoid of fanatical anti-Semitism or ill-feeling at all towards his victims. Similarly, those who run the sanctions are neither crazy nor driven by a passionate desire to bring about the deaths of Iraqis. Iraqis have died in huge numbers nonetheless. In referring in the subtitle of her book to "the banality of evil", Arendt is suggesting that such people are not characterized by great drives. On Eichmann she commented:

Except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement, he had no motives at all…. Hemerely, never realized what he was doing... It was sheer thoughtlessness – something by no means identical with stupidity – that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals of that period."
Those who run the sanctions are career officials, with their performance in handling this difficult and important assignment likely to have a substantial impact on their career trajectory. What some of them worry about more is a dead-end job than the kind that are the end result of their job, just as what Eichmann felt most pained by was his belief that he had not been promoted as fast or as far as he thought he should have been. This kind of individual indifference reinforces and is reinforced by the dynamics of bureaucracy. Arendt suggests that “the essence of totalitarian government, and perhaps the nature of every bureaucracy, is to make functionaries and mere cogs in the administrative machinery out of men, and thus to dehumanize them.” It appears to be “the rule of Nobody.”

For those relatively low down in the system, there can be a sense of not really being in charge of the policy because of their minor role, and so they will tend to concentrate on trying to carry out their allocated task to the best of their abilities. For those further up the bureaucratic ladder, the sanctions will be only one of many tasks they are juggling at any one time and this also promotes disengagement from the realities of the task. They can comfort themselves that they are acting on expert advice and therefore in making a decision, actually have no choice. Leaders like British Prime Minister Tony Blair and US President George W. Bush know very little about Iraq, while many of those supposed experts are actually officials who have rotated in their posts from other completely unconnected areas and hastily occupy themselves with becoming fluent in, and internalizing, existing propaganda. In other words, it is possible for everyone involved in carrying out a policy to not really feel responsible for it. A policy can thus appear to acquire a momentum of its own, and that appearance assists the evasion of responsibility. As Herzfeld puts it, blaming the system “is the ethical alibi that enables its own functionaries to function.” Blaming the system is a way of saying that there is no point in opposing the bureaucracy, rather than saying one fears the costs to oneself of doing so.

A way of blaming the system is to reify bureaucratic rules, that is, act as if the rules are transparent and have fixed meaning; then officials can hide their politics and personal choices behind them. They can present their actions as simply following fixed rules and deny to others and themselves that they are interpreting the rules for ideological or personal purposes. When others with different ends do the same, what is really going on— a battle of reifications as part of a power struggle—becomes obscured by what is claimed to
be going on - a struggle over the true meaning of words. Opponents in this situation try to beat each other at the game of who is most in line with "transparent" language. As long as this is the case, the parties to this dispute effectively "institutionalize the evasion of responsibility in the name of responsibility itself." All of the bureaucratic rules and resolutions which make up the sanctions require interpretation, and those interpretations are informed by normative values and political objectives. This does not mean that interpretations are completely arbitrary. For example, whether or not an item is on the UN's "1051 list" (that is, its list of items related to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1051, some of which Iraq is not allowed to import and most of which it is allowed to import as long as the UN gives its permission) can usually be verified against the fairly precise descriptions on the list.

The rules by which the sanctions are run on a day-to-day basis still leave plenty of wiggle room for politics, as all such things must. When Iraq wishes to import something, the contract for that import must be approved by the UN OIP or the UN Sanctions Committee, the membership of which mirrors that of the UN Security Council. The system up to May 2002 for contracts that went to the Sanctions Committee was that any member of that committee could "block" a contract (that is, veto a contract completely) or put it on "hold" (that is, refuse to approve it until some specified condition is met or concern is addressed). Only the Sanctions Committee members who imposed the hold could lift it. In practice, few OFF contracts were blocked whereas many were put on hold. Nearly all of the holds were imposed by the United States, and nearly all of the remainder by Britain. The application of the rules was driven predominantly by political choices presented by those who made those choices as being derived from the rules. The US representative on the Sanctions Committee imposed "holds" on contracts for proposed Iraqi imports, claiming that they contained 1051 items. When the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) challenged those claims in some cases, the US representative was sometimes forced to drop the claims. The new reason given was that holds were imposed because contracts contained items which were "dual use" for civil and military purposes, without providing a definition of dual use or explaining why the 1051 list was inadequate. This persistent vagueness meant that some holds could be effectively permanent because the action required to get the hold lifted was unclear, allocated funds were tied up and unavailable for other urgent
humanitarian purposes, and it would not be possible to ensure that items to which the United States might object could be omitted from future contracts. One British official interviewed defended the US position by saying that "UNMOVIC is not serious about arms control." The reason given was that UNMOVIC's job is merely to check items against a list, whereas the job of the US representative on the Sanctions Committee is to look out for US national security interests. The same official also argued that when US Department of Defense experts looked at the contents of contracts, they were worried that if they let an item go through they could end up in trouble for looking too soft and they knew that all the political rewards lay with appearing to catch Iraq trying to do something underhand. When being quizzed on holds, an exasperated Benon Sevan said: "Don't look for logic in the Iraqi programme. There is no logic." Similarly, the UN's oil experts complained that there was no consistency in whether or not a hold would be placed on proposed exports of particular items of oil industry equipment to Iraq.

There is no logic if by that we mean the straightforward application of clear rules, but that can never be the case - rules invariably work within one political logic or another, and avoiding serious damage to the UN's humanitarian program is not at the forefront of the political logic used by Britain and especially the United States. This is not necessarily a concern with preventing Iraq from getting prohibited items: it has also provided a way of expressing more general hostility towards the Iraqi government. Efforts to alter the UN's procedures for running the sanctions are part of an effort to wrest as much power as possible from the United States in the running of the sanctions to protect the OFF humanitarian program. In December 1999, the United States agreed to accept the establishment of "green lists" of goods which could be approved by the OIP bureaucracy and not require the approval of the US representative on the Sanctions Committee. However, the United States fought a rearguard action to restrict what went on the green lists, right down to objecting to paint and light switches. Around $7.9 billion of the total $31.3 billion of contracts approved by January 2002 had been fast-tracked through the green lists system. The United States also compensated by imposing many holds on contracts containing non-green list items. In January 2002, Sevan wrote to the Chair of the Sanctions Committee to express his "grave concern at the unprecedented surge in volume of holds placed on contracts." The figure for holds was already at a record high of $3.93 billion on 7 September 2001. By January 2002 it had risen to
$4.96 billion.\textsuperscript{44} Despite Sevan's voicing of his concern, holds reached another all-time high of $5.32 billion on 28 February 2002.\textsuperscript{45} This seems to be part of the hardening US line on Iraq after the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States rather than a result of the failure of the contracts to conform to the rules of the sanctions.\textsuperscript{46}

The new system which the US and British government called "smart" sanctions was adopted via UN Security Council Resolution 1409 of May 2002. All items which are not on the UN Goods Review List of dual use items (that is, civilian technologies which also have potential for use in developing prohibited weapons) are approved automatically. Items which are on the GRL may be blocked or may still be approved, possibly with the requirement for specific additional UN monitoring in Iraq. Hence entire contracts are not put on "hold" over the presence of specific items, and the green lists were abandoned in favour of the GRL. Furthermore, with the green lists everything that is not specifically permitted for export could possibly be denied, whereas with the GRL everything that is not specifically an item of concern is to be permitted. By 7 March 2003, $2.2 billion worth of holds on 1118 contracts had been lifted through the GRL system. However, it does not address the fact pointed out by Sevan that the OFF program "is increasingly facing a financial crisis" due to falling Iraqi oil income. As of 7 March 2003, there was no money to pay for 2,632 approved OFF contracts worth some $5.1 billion.\textsuperscript{47} Even more important, if "smart" sanctions are meant to be ones which minimize the human cost of such a policy, then the new system is certainly not "smart" because it does not address the basic reason for the continuing suffering in Iraq. According to Myat: "The markets are quite full of things, the problem is whether or not there are people who have the purchasing power to buy them. Until such time as people can reasonably afford to buy and live naturally everything else you will see will only be superficial.\textsuperscript{48} Ordinary Iraqis need proper wages rather than handouts, the economy needs international investment and the sanctions have prevented both.

These inter-bureaucratic struggles on holds, green lists and the GRL underline the point that all bureaucrats are not equally indifferent or evasive of personal responsibility. There is clear evidence of individuals speaking out publicly and/or working quietly to use their resources to reduce the human cost of the sanctions. Some UN officials emphasize that the OFF program was only meant to be temporary,\textsuperscript{49} and that it was never expected to be able to meet all the needs of the
people of Iraq or be a substitute for a return to normal economic activity. OIP officials put pressure on both the US and Iraqi governments to act in ways which would optimize the effectiveness of the UN's humanitarian programme. For instance, they attack a characteristic feature of the exercise of power and expression of indifference through bureaucracy, namely, acting as if time is a matter of no importance. Clearly, in a situation in which there is large-scale suffering and death due to lack of vital items, time is of the essence. In its weekly updates and other reports the OIP has sought to draw attention to this. It pointed out that, as of January 2002, over $1.7 billion of contracts were still on hold even though information requested by the "holding" Sanctions Committee member (in nearly all cases the United States) had been submitted over 60 days previously. At the same time the OIP pointed out that $0.3 billion of contracts had been on hold for over 60 days as additional technical information demanded by the "holding" Sanctions Committee had not been submitted by suppliers. In addition, it drew attention to the fact that the Iraqi government had not yet spent around $1.8 billion and $0.6 billion available to it in the OFF account (it had done so by late February 2002). The prompt and extensive posting of documentation to the OIP website has in many respects been a crucial resource to those who are challenging indifference to what is happening to people in Iraq. However, it has also been a resource for those propagandizing in favor of the sanctions. The OIP presents itself as an even-handed advocate of a non-political approach to the OFF program but all of its statements are politically significant. It needs to judge carefully whether its statements are having the political effects it intends (but does not always do so). Despite its self-proclaimed image, it is not and cannot be non-political.

CONCLUSION

The sanctions on Iraq have been maintained despite their human cost because US officials believe that the sanctions serve US interests while the cost to people in Iraq is acceptable. How it has been able to portray the situation that way with some success has been the subject of this chapter. With British assistance, it has worked hard on propaganda campaigns based on misrepresentations of what is actually going on. US and British officials often end up believing their own propaganda, as it is psychologically easier to accept it as the truth and also because their facility in working within that framework is an indispensable
part of being accepted within their national bureaucracies. Underlying this is a basic indifference to the human cost in Iraq of the sanctions which is made possible by seeing those people as less worthy of concern. Comments made by Bush are instructive: "any time anybody suffers in Iraq, we're concerned about it...[T]o the extent that the sanctions are hurting the Iraqi people, we're going to analyze that."53 This is not an expression of total indifference – he did not state "I do not care." However, the basic indifference is evident: there is an evasion of any direct admission that the sanctions are hurting anyone in Iraq, by suggesting that this is something in need of analysis at some undefined point in the future and by the United States. The vast amount of evidence gathered by many international bodies for many years counts for nothing. Claims of humanitarianism are false if thought and action are premised on the denial of common humanity. The maintenance of the sanctions for so long has been assisted by self-deception and indifference among officials of other states and the UN itself, and by some mix of indifference and propagandization of the public in the United States and elsewhere. Noam Chomsky made a comment on the war fought by the United States in Vietnam which applies equally to the sanctions policy:

the...very...terrifying aspect of our society, and other societies, is the equanimity and detachment with which sane, reasonable, sensible people can observe such events. I think that's more terrifying than the occasional Hitler or LeMay or other that crops up. These people would not be able to operate were it not for this apathy and equanimity...[The] sane and reasonable and tolerant people...share a very serious burden of guilt that they very easily throw on the shoulders of others who seem more extreme and more violent.53

The people of Iraq face a long haul beyond the sanctions in relation to their country's crippled economy, compensation to be paid for losses related to the invasion of Kuwait, and external debt.54 Bossuyt's recommendation that the people of Iraq be compensated for the damage caused by the sanctions has gone unheeded.55 Instead, the UN Compensation Commission has awarded $36 billion in compensation against Iraq and is considering further claims of $217 billion: if the pattern thus far is anything to go by, it will agree to $83 billion of that amount. The UN has already paid out $13 billion in compensation from the proceeds of Iraqi oil sales. Iran is also seeking $100
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billion for losses due to the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. By the beginning of 2002 Iraq had about $130 billion of external debt, and the figure is increasing steadily due to compound interest. As long as the sanctions are in place Iraq cannot even begin to address it. Against all of this, Iraq has exported $51 billion of OFF oil exports in five years, and has made some much smaller, uncertain amount through smuggling. To expect Iraqi society to bear this horrendous burden for the crimes and borrowings of a leader over whom it has had no control and who received Western backing while committing many of those crimes and amassing many of those debts is to combine indifference and evasion of responsibility in great measure.

NOTES

5. The two landmark critical security studies (CSS) books are Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams (eds), Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases (London: UCL Press, 1997); Richard Wyn Jones, Security, Strategy, and
The Maintenance of Economic Sanctions on Iraq


8. For an analysis in which I assess which objective has been of most importance, see Eric Herring, “Between Iraq and a Hard Place: A Critique of the British Government’s Case for Sanctions,” Review of International Studies, Vol. 28, No. 1 (April 2002), pp. 39–56. Whatever my view there, the point I am making in this chapter still stands: the simple view that the sanctions are still in place because they achieve goals at acceptable cost does not get us very far. For more of my papers on the sanctions on Iraq, go to www.ericerring.com/.


11. leb.net/IAC.


Iraq


23. Ewen MacAskill. “Say No to Saddam This Christmas - Turn Down A Date,” Guardian (20 December), www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4323468,00.html. The VirW website is www.nonviolence.org/vfw/.


29. See note 3. For a study of the choices facing those who work within bureaucracies and those who are their "clients", see Albert O. Hirschman.

30. See note 4. For a study of the choices facing those who work within bureaucracies and those who are their "clients", see Albert O. Hirschman.


34. Ibid., p. 289.

35. Herzfeld, Social Production of Indifference, p. 149.

36. Ibid, p. 118. See also Jeff Schmidt’s wonderfully perceptive book Disciplined Minds: A Critical Look at Salaried Professionals and the Soul-Battering System That Shapes Their Lives (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002). Excerpts and reviews are on Schmidt’s website disciplined-minds.com. It uncovers the ideological content of supposedly neutral professional training and bureaucratic procedures, and offers detailed practical recommendations for how to survive as a professional with your values intact.

37. Herzfeld, Social Production of Indifference, p. 156.

38. In contrast, there were many blocks as well as holds on contracts for proposed imports outside OIP paid for by whatever resources the Iraqi government can muster through activities such as oil smuggling.


56. Iraq


53. Quoted in Mark Achbar (ed.), Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media (London: Black Rose Books, 1994), pp. 69–70. Arndt made a similar comment about Eichmann: “such remoteness from reality and such thoughtlessness can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together which, perhaps, are inherent in man” (Arndt: Eichmann in Jerusalem, p. 288).


3  British Policy Towards
Economic Sanctions on Iraq,
1990–2002

Milan Rai

HUNGER AS A WEAPON

While British policy-makers would no doubt rather place the sanctions
on Iraq within the context of international non-proliferation efforts,
or the defense of small nations (such as Kuwait) from "rogue states", it is much more appropriate to consider the siege of Iraq in the light
of a long-standing British military tradition, a shameful but consistent strand of British "counter-insurgency" strategy over the centuries.

By the late Middle Ages, we are told, European war "consisted very largely of military pressure involving the destruction of the means by which life is maintained." This lesson was taught to the Irish by the British with brutal repetition over the ages. In the 1580s, during the long Desmond rebellion, Sir William Pelham pursued a fourfold strategy against the Irish: drive the rebels out of Limerick and into the poor mountainous county of Kerry; blockade the Kerry coast to deprive them of supplies; devastate the country to deprive them of any sustenance; and finally, drive Desmond into one corner of the territory to be destroyed. In 1599 and 1600, the Earl of Essex and Lord Deputy Mountjoy scored significant victories against Irish rebels. The Earl surprised the O'Connors before they had hidden their corn, and his troops burned the harvest "so that all the county was on fire at once", as a contemporary (English) observer put it. The Lord Deputy, on the other hand, led a successful expedition to Leix and Offaly to cut down the corn and confiscate a number of cattle in July 1600, and then continued his campaign into the winter: "The enemy's cattle were wasted by being driven to and fro. The stored grain was sought out and burnt. The seed could not be sown. The Irish were driven into woods now bare of leaves."
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The control of food continued to be a critical element in British (and US) “counter-insurgency” warfare throughout the imperial and post-colonial period. In the post-World War II Malayan Emergency, Britain expended considerable energy in attempting to cut off the food supply of the Communist Party of Malaya. Sir Robert Thompson, whose expertise in Malaya in the 1950s earned him the position of Special Adviser to the US military in Vietnam in the 1960s, remarked later on the stringency of Emergency Regulations: “Very strict food control was enforced and in some areas rice was not only rationed but had to be cooked before issue (it quickly goes sour)” and “Tins of food had to be punctured as they were sold.” The guerrillas could not be defeated militarily; they could be overcome only by hunger.

The tactics employed in Ireland became part of an Anglo-Saxon military tradition transmitted to the United States. US General Sheridan explained the matter clearly in his memoirs: “I do not hold war to mean simply that lines of men shall engage each other in battle...war means much more and is far worse than this...Reduction to poverty brings prayers for peace more surely and more quickly than does the destruction of human life.”

The principle of attacking the civilian population was of course carried out more directly. In Ireland, the most famous of the many British massacres was carried out in September 1649 in Drogheda, when Cromwell’s soldiers took the lives of 3,500 men, women and children. Cromwell justified the blood-letting because it would “tend to prevent the effusion of blood for the future, which are the satisfactory grounds for such actions, which otherwise cannot but work remorse and regret.” A corollary principle was set out by the plain-speaking General Sheridan, contemplating one aspect of the destruction of Native America: “If a village is attacked and women and children killed, the responsibility is not with the soldiers, but with the people whose crimes necessitated the attack.”

Here we have two principles underlying British and US policy towards Iraq over the twelve years under review: the destruction of thousands of civilian lives (hundreds of thousands in the case of Iraq) is justified to prevent future loss of life (unquantified); and the burden of responsibility for this massive loss of life lies not with those who initiate and continue the attack, but with those whose actions “necessitated the attack.”
CONSEQUENCES: DEEPENING HATRED

11 September has cast an enormous shadow across world affairs. The terrorist atrocities have provoked an extraordinary degree of self-questioning in the United States, alongside the predictable jingoist reaction. Western society has asked, "Why do they hate us?" and some painful answers seem to have been arrived at quite widely. *Time* magazine commented two months after the attacks: "Liquidating the al-Qaida command will only fix part of the problem...The long-term solution requires tackling the underlying political, economic and social roots of terrorism - unresolved demands for Palestinian rights, perversion of Islam by radical clerics, corruption and poverty in many Arab states and grievances over US policy in the region" (emphasis added).8 Newsweek carried an article by US historian Stephen Glain which observed that: "The embargo [against Iraq] fed the anti-Americanism now consuming the Middle East and became a recruiting tool for Islamic militants, including Osama bin Laden."9 As momentum grew for a new US invasion of Iraq, *Time* warned that: "By fostering more anti-American resentment, a long-term neo-colonial presence in Iraq could breed a new generation of suicide bombers ready to wreak havoc on the US."10 One of the roots of 11 September seems to lie in the suffering inflicted on the people of Iraq for over a decade.

Within Iraq, the economic sanctions have also had an embittering political effect: respected analysts Anthony Cordesman and Ahmed Hashim of the US Center for Strategic and International Studies comment that, "maintaining sanctions inflicts a high cost on the Iraqi people, and makes it progressively less likely that any future regime will not seek revenge."11 One of the "key policy complications" in formulating an Iraq policy, they suggest, is the fact that "The Gulf and the West must live with the Iraq that UN sanctions are creating":

The suffering caused by UN sanctions is creating broad Iraqi resentment of the US, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia - who are now seen as largely responsible for the continued enforcement of sanctions.

The middle class, which had a good level of education and which was liberal and Westernized to a certain extent, is dying out and the West will pay the price for that. Its disappearance will open the way for broad inroads to be made by all the fundamentalist movements, no matter who they are.
Cordesman and Hashim warn that: “The resulting revanchism may well survive Saddam Hussein, and could play an important role in shaping Iraqi politics and actions for several decades.”

Furthermore,

if the UN attempts to enforce all of its current demands on Iraq in terms of sanctions, potential war crimes trials, reparations, and loan repayments, it may end in creating the kind of “peace the allies forced on Germany after World War I”: this was “a peace which J. M. Keynes quite correctly warned the victorious powers could only lead to chaos and a second war.”

CHOICES: DESIGNING A SANCTIONS REGIME

There are at least three separate criteria one can use in evaluating (or designing) a sanctions regime: how much they respect human rights; how targeted they are; and how punitive they are. These different criteria are linked, a matter we will return to.

Clearly, one central concern is the way in which sanctions affect the fundamental human rights of the targeted group. This is particularly the case when the party imposing the sanctions is the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR), a New York-based human rights group, has pointed out that the UNSC is under a legal obligation to protect human rights: Article 24 of the Charter directs the Council “to act in accordance with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations” in the use of its authority to maintain peace and security. The CESR points out that: “Among the most fundamental Purposes and Principles listed in Article I is the promotion of human rights”, and: “Indeed, the Preamble to the Charter begins by stating its determination ‘to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person.’” A large body of human rights law has developed since the end of World War II – from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, unanimously endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 1948, to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified in 1990 by almost every country in the world. While the Security Council is not technically party to these treaties in the manner of a ratifying state, the CESR argues that “each of these treaties represents an elaboration upon the UN Charter’s original vision of human rights, making the treaty principles (if not the specific provisions) binding on the Security Council” through Article 24 of the UN Charter. In
brief, the Security Council is obligated to act in accordance with human rights and humanitarian principles when pursuing collective action. To suggest otherwise is to ignore "not only the Charter but also common sense", observes the CESR, citing a World Court judge: "one only has to state the proposition thus – that a Security Council resolution may even require participation in genocide – for its unacceptability to be apparent."\(^{16}\)

The second important aspect of a sanctions regime is that of "distinction", or targeting. Distinction is an important concept in the "laws of war" – both humanitarian law based on the Geneva Conventions and the narrow laws of war based on the Hague Conventions and recent Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions. The UN General Assembly made it clear in 1988 that belligerents must distinguish between civilians and combatants at all times, and must direct attacks only against military targets – this is the principle of distinction.\(^{17}\) Like military actions, sanctions can either be targeted or indiscriminate in their effects, depending on the means employed, the method of employment and the circumstances in which action is taken. In 2000 the House of Commons Select Committee on International Development considered the issue of sanctions, and "targeted" sanctions in particular. "The idea behind targeted sanctions is that, rather than targeting all imports and exports of all goods and services to a given state under a sanctions regime, a limited range of goods and services are targeted." The UK government, in evidence to the Select Committee, accepted that "quite a lot of the product of our review [of sanctions policy] is precisely the conclusion that we need to move away from blunderbuss, hit the whole population type sanctions towards targeted, hit the regime and its supporters type sanctions."\(^{18}\) The Select Committee focused its attention on financial sanctions and arms embargoes as workable forms of "targeted sanctions."

The third dimension to any sanctions policy is how punitive it is. If punishment is the central goal and motivation of the sanctions, then this will affect both the structure and the thresholds of the sanctions regime. One can distinguish here between sanctions focused on the punishment of past behavior, and sanctions aimed at securing improvements in present and future behavior. Sanctions aimed at changing behavior will clearly offer relief in return for positive changes in behavior. Punitive sanctions will tend not to make such clear distinctions, despite the fact that this lessens the incentive for change. When the sanctions are complex and large-scale, there is the
opportunity for a gradual lifting of sanctions in response to positive changes in behavior. Punitive sanctions, on the other hand, will be all-or-nothing, maintaining the full weight of sanctions measures until total compliance is achieved. Turning to another aspect of "punishment," the thresholds for compliance are of critical importance in determining whether incentives are being provided for positive behavior, or whether the intent is rather to cause harm. A improvement regime will offer clear, realistic and limited benchmarks of achievement, which will secure the end of sanctions. A punitive assault will offer vague, confusing, and extendable thresholds. In sum, a punitive sanctions regime provides sticks without carrots, and moving goalposts.

For each of these three dimensions, one can establish a spectrum. A sanctions system can embody high respect for human rights, low respect for human rights, or no respect for human rights (the zero point). Conceivably, a sanctions system could be designed to violate human rights (the negative region). Similarly, a sanctions regime can be tightly focused on decision-makers (highly targeted), or it can be a "blunderbuss" affecting the civilian population (highly untargeted, the negative region). On our last measure, a sanctions regime can be focused on eliciting positive future behavior (highly positive), or it can be focused on punishment of past misconduct (highly negative). The three measures tend to correlate positively with one another, and it could be argued that they also correlate positively with "legality" and perhaps even with "effectiveness" (depending on the definition of effectiveness). We can apply this three-dimensional analysis to the Security Council’s approach towards the sanctions regime against Iraq, and British Government policy, at key points over the period 1990-2002.

IMPOSING COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC SANCTIONS ON IRAQ: AUGUST 1990

Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 661 of 6 August 1990 called for all countries to halt all trade and financial dealings with Iraq (and Iraqi-occupied Kuwait). The clear purpose, stated in the final paragraph of the resolution, was to "put an early end to the invasion by Iraq." The British Government was, by Margaret Thatcher’s own account, influential in the decision to resort to economic sanctions early on. The crucial point to note here is that the measures instituted by
UNSCR 661 amounted to comprehensive economic sanctions. All economic and financial trade was halted, with some humanitarian exceptions – "supplies intended strictly for medical purposes, and, in humanitarian circumstances, foodstuffs." UNICEF adviser Dr Eric Hoskins comments, "customary international law forbids the starvation of civilians," and Iraq, a net food importer, "was already showing signs of food shortage even before the war had begun, with malnutrition rates on the rise, food prices escalating, and, during the war itself, early signs of famine in evidence." Dr Hoskins notes: "The Security Council's prohibition of foodstuffs is viewed by most legal scholars as being in breach of customary international law."

There is no reference to human rights in UNSCR 661, and the Center for Economic and Social Rights charges the Security Council with a double dereliction of duty on this score. According to the CESR, the Security Council failed procedurally, by not setting up any form of monitoring for the human rights impact of the sanctions imposed, and it failed substantively, by violating the human rights of the ordinary people of Iraq. On the first matter, the CESR believes that the Security Council had a legal duty to "recognize explicitly its obligation to promote and respect core principles of human rights and humanitarian law, and to take concrete measures to monitor and hold itself accountable to these principles." Such procedural duties are "especially important" for the Security Council "given that no other institution has express authority through the UN Charter to review Security Council decisions." The CESR points out that for many years the Security Council "devoted considerable resources and personnel to five newly-created commissions to monitor the implementation of the Council's resolutions in such areas as inspecting Iraqi weapons programs, establishing the border with Kuwait, and locating Kuwaiti prisoners of war," and the work of these commissions "has frequently been supported by actual or threatened military action."

Yet the Security Council has not created a commission or devoted funding to monitor the human rights impact of sanctions, instead occasionally taking note of reports by other UN bodies and independent research groups.

This omission is particularly glaring in light of clear evidence of the enormous suffering in Iraq. The CESR notes that
Shortly after the [1991] Gulf War, UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar warned that: “the maintenance of food supply and consumption as well as the close monitoring of the nutritional and health status of the Iraqi population over the next few months are absolutely necessary to prevent full-scale famine and major human disasters developing in the country.”

Turning to the remaining dimension of our evaluation, the threshold for lifting sanctions was stated clearly in Resolution 661 – Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. On the other hand, US/UK policy undermined the effectiveness of the sanctions by ruling out any negotiated solution to the crisis. Noam Chomsky lists some of Baghdad’s attempts to negotiate a solution: an offer to withdraw on 12 August 1990 (in return for Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, and Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon); a proposal transmitted via a former high-ranking US official to Brent Scowcroft, National Security Adviser to President Bush, on 23 August 1990, offering withdrawal in return for the lifting of sanctions, guaranteed access to the Gulf, and full control of the disputed Rumailah oil field on the Kuwaiti border; and an offer in late December 1990 to withdraw “if the United States pledges not to attack as soldiers are pulled out, if foreign troops leave the region, and if there is an agreement on the Palestinian problem and on the banning of all weapons of mass destruction in the region.” Economic sanctions had succeeded in moving Iraq to what State Department officials described as a “serious pre-negotiation position.” So economic sanctions were successful in moving Iraq to offer a negotiated withdrawal, but this success was negated as all these offers were dismissed out of hand by the United States, with crucial British support. The US and UK were intent on military action. Percy Craddock, Foreign Policy Adviser to Prime Minister John Major during the Gulf War of 1991, has acknowledged that “our special nightmare was an Iraqi partial withdrawal, which would have flung the coalition into disarray and delayed the military campaign, perhaps indefinitely.” On his first meeting with President Bush Sr. as Prime Minister, John Major agreed with the US President that partial Iraqi withdrawal was “the most difficult option.” The Iraqi Government had to be punished militarily, even if it had withdrawn to the border, retaining only the Kuwaiti segment of the Rumailah oil field. Iraqi compliance, in this view, was an obstacle to the desired policy outcome, rather than being the desired outcome itself.
REIMPOSING COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC SANCTIONS ON IRAQ: APRIL 1991

Iraq was finally forced out of Kuwait at the end of February 1991. The sanctions imposed by UNSCR 661 continued to be enforced, however, until they were revised and superseded by UNSCR 687 of 3 April 1991. Sarah Graham-Brown, a former Christian Aid worker, comments on the long list of requirements imposed by 687: "If Resolution 661 had been a coercive measure, the new post-war resolution could also be regarded as punitive." The fundamental character of the sanctions regime remained unchanged: no human rights protection or monitoring was incorporated into the resolution; no targeting was introduced into the economic sanctions; all exports and all international financial flows and all imports continued to be banned - with humanitarian exceptions for medical supplies, and now also for food.

The main innovation of the resolution so far as the sanctions were concerned was the division of the economic sanctions on Iraq into import restrictions and export restrictions, and the setting of different thresholds for the lifting of the two kinds of sanctions.

The sanctions on Iraq's civilian experts

Paragraph 22 of the Resolution said that restrictions on Iraq's exports and the "financial transactions related thereto," would be lifted once Iraq had complied with internationally supervised disarmament of its weapons of mass destruction. "International supervision" was to be conducted by the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM), a new body established by the Resolution, and "largely a British idea," according to British Foreign Policy Adviser Percy Craddock. The core demands (set out in Paragraphs 8 and 12) were that Iraq should "unconditionally accept the destruction, removal, or rendering harmless, under international supervision" of:

(a) All chemical and biological weapons and all stocks of agents and related subsystems and components and all research, development, support and manufacturing facilities;
(b) All ballistic missiles with a range greater than 150 kilometers and related major parts, and repair and production facilities; and (c) Nuclear weapons or nuclear-weapons-useable material or any subsystems or components or any research, development, support or manufacturing facilities related to the above.
Iraq was forced to accept not only a disarmament process (under international supervision), but also a long-term monitoring program (again under international supervision).

Moscow and Paris strongly defended the significance of Paragraph 22 - the Russian view was that: "As soon as the chairman of UNSCOM reports favorably, then paragraph 22 is engaged, allowing oil sales without limits." As the years went by, the US and UK came to a different position. By 1994, the US and UK "believed sanctions should remain in place until 'all relevant resolutions' were complied with, choosing to ignore or play down the separate requirements of Paragraph 22." In April 1994, Warren Christopher, US Secretary of State, wrote in the New York Times: "The US does not believe that Iraq's compliance with Paragraph 22 of Resolution 687 is enough to justify lifting the embargo." The effective deletion of this one "carrot," or staged lifting of the sanctions, was to have fateful consequences in 1998.

The sanctions on Iraq's civilian imports
Paragraph 21 was extraordinarily vague by comparison: restrictions on exporting to Iraq would be lifted by the Security Council after considering "the policies and practices of the Government of Iraq, including the implementation of all relevant resolutions of the Security Council." The punitive nature of the resolution is revealed both in the breadth and depth of the demands made throughout the resolution, but it is revealed particularly in the vagueness of this Paragraph's "policies and practices" threshold. The reference to "all relevant resolutions of the Security Council" was subsequently twisted by the British and US Governments. For example, in May 1994, US Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright's demands included among other things an end to Iraqi military action in the southern marshes - an issue that had been addressed in UNSCR 688. Dilip Hiro comments, "Clearly, the phrase 'all relevant resolutions' applied to the ones that had been passed on or before April 3, 1991. But what Albright had done was to invoke also the Council resolutions passed after that date." The Center for Economic and Social Rights suggested in 1997 that: "A fundamental problem in the application of sanctions on Iraq has been the lack of clearly-defined objectives and steps that Iraq could take to comply with the cease-fire resolutions." The proper course would be for the Security Council to "detail the requirements for compliance, specifying the aspect of sanctions to be removed at each
step of compliance.\textsuperscript{62} In the same year, from a very different position on the US political spectrum, mainstream political analysts Anthony Cordesman and Ahmed Hashim recommended: "Setting forth exact conditions for changes in the behavior of the current regime in return for a step by step lifting of sanctions and/or easing of sanctions."\textsuperscript{63} In April 1991, months after UNSCR 661 was passed, and weeks after the expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait, months and weeks in which Britain and the United States contemplated and shaped policies for the post-war era, the decision was made consciously and explicitly to fashion the comprehensive economic sanction regime in precisely the opposite direction.

The arms embargo
For completeness, it may be worth pointing out that Paragraphs 24 to 28 of the Resolution established a separate conventional arms embargo of Iraq, which would be lifted after "taking into account Iraq's compliance with the resolution and general progress towards the control of armaments in the region." In August 1990, Paragraph 3(c) of UNSCR 661 had banned the sale or supply of "any commodities or products, including weapons or any other military equipment." Now in April 1991, the Security Council had established a distinct arms embargo of Iraq and had made clear that the comprehensive economic sanctions and the targeted arms embargo required different circumstances for their lifting.

OBJECTIVES: LEADERSHIP CHANGE, NOT REGIME CHANGE

In early 2002, both US Secretary of State Colin Powell and British Prime Minister Tony Blair adopted the language of "regime change" in regard to Iraq. Tony Blair embraced the term during his visit to see President Bush Jr. in April 2002.\textsuperscript{34} Colin Powell confirmed that sanctions were aimed at wider political change in Iraq, and not simply the securing of Iraqi disarmament:

sanctions and the pressure of sanctions are part of a strategy of regime change [along with] support for the opposition, and reviewing additional options that might be available of a unilateral or multilateral nature.\textsuperscript{35}
However, the phrase is misleading, as long-standing policy has been to aim at "leadership change" rather than a more thoroughgoing "regime change."

Removing Saddam

What was the real objective of Resolution 687? A glimpse of the truth was given when, at the end of April 1991, Iraq requested the unfreezing of $1 billion of Iraqi assets in foreign assets, to be spent on emergency food and medicine. Iraq offered to spend the released funds in the nations where they were currently frozen. White House spokesperson Marlin Fitzwater demanded exact details of the goods to be purchased, and added: "If he [Saddam Hussein] were not in power, we would probably have a different view on all these issues." British Ambassador to the UN Sir David Hannay commented during the discussions leading up to the passing of UNSCR 687: "My Government believes that it will in fact prove impossible for Iraq to rejoin the community of civilized nations while Saddam Hussein remains in power." There was an ambiguity in the formula, used more than once in the years ahead, in that it could indicate simply a certain pessimism regarding the Iraqi leader's willingness to comply with UN Resolutions. The true British position was announced by Prime Minister John Major: "Britain will veto any UN resolution designed to weaken the sanctions regime we have set in place for so long as Saddam Hussein remains in power."

In the aftermath of 11 September, Major revealed that the Iraqi President had been personally targeted for assassination during the 1991 war (contradicting direct denials by British ministers at the time): "If you mean in the [Gulf] war, did we try and kill Saddam Hussein by finding out where he was and dropping a bomb on him, of course we did, we were at war then."

Major's Foreign Policy Adviser, Percy Craddock, was forthright about the purpose of the economic sanctions in his memoirs:

The combined effect of these measures [economic sanctions, no-fly zones, and so on] was to keep Iraq in the strictest form of tutelage. As I saw it, our object was to demonstrate particularly to the Iraqi people, that while Saddam survived, their country would remain a pariah, impoverished and with incomplete sovereignty. Iraq and its people were to be taught a lesson, a very "strict" lesson, about international politics. On 12 May 1996 the same message was
set out in stark terms in a CBS television program by the then US Ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright. "More than 500,000 Iraqi children are already dead as a direct result of the UN sanctions," said CBS presenter Lesley Stahls. "Do you think the price is worth paying?" Albright responded, "It is a difficult question. But, yes, we think the price is worth it."42

Preserving the regime
While the objective of the economic sanctions was to depose, and presumably to cause the death of, Saddam Hussein, the US and Britain were both constrained by the desire to maintain the current power structure created by that same Saddam Hussein. Sarah Graham-Brown puts the matter well: the post-1991 "containment" strategy

can be seen as an attempt to manage a dilemma for which successive US administrations have found no solution: a strong centralized Iraqi state threatens to become too powerful and pursue regional ambitions to the detriment of US allies; but an Iraq too weakened might fall prey to disintegrative tendencies and interference from US regional foes, especially Iran.43

In July 1991 Thomas Friedman, Diplomatic Correspondent of the New York Times, explained US thinking: sanctions were to be maintained to induce the Iraqi military to overthrow Saddam Hussein. If another general took over, "then Washington would have the best of all worlds: an iron-fisted Iraqi junta without Saddam Hussein," a return to the days when Saddam's "iron fist...held Iraq together, much to the satisfaction of the American allies Turkey and Saudi Arabia." This prospect had been described months earlier by Iraqi opposition leader Ahmed Chalabi as "the worst of all possible worlds" for the Iraqi people.44

The results of over a decade of the "coup-by-sanctions" strategy are plain to see. "Many analysts of the Iraqi political and socio-economic scene, including many Iraqi government officials and intellectuals, felt that sanctions have only had a moderate effect in weakening Saddam Hussein's grip on power." The economic sanctions "focus the Iraqi people's attention on sheer survival," as life has become "a search for food."45 Veteran reporter Robert Fisk reported on the impoverishment of the Iraqi people in 1998. He encountered a "dispirited Western aid official" who told him: "They may not like Saddam, but these people have been reduced to penury. They live in shi. And
when you have no money and no food, you don’t worry about democracy or who your leaders are. All you care about is surviving.’46

In 1997, the two analysts warned that “the time may well have come to focus on the conduct of the Iraqi regime, rather than its leadership, and to use sanctions to alter Iraq’s behavior rather than its political leadership.”47 One option for policy-makers would be to reach “a clear decision as to whether sanctions are or are not tied to the survival of Saddam and his coterie, and making this clear to Iraq.” Cordesman and Hashim judged US, British, Kuwaiti and Saudi policy to be “a de facto attempt to remove Saddam,” but as a policy “it is all stick and no carrot.” “It does not make clear that Iraq would benefit if it does so, or what kind of new government would be acceptable.”48 In the terms of our earlier discussion, the suggestion being made was to move from a punishment-centered sanctions policy towards a behavior-centered one.

CONSEQUENCES: THE HUMAN COST OF ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

An emerging consensus

An international consensus (excluding Britain and the US) has emerged regarding the economic sanctions on Iraq. A panel of humanitarian experts appointed by the UN Security Council reported in March 1999: “Even if not all suffering in Iraq can be imputed to external factors, especially sanctions, the Iraqi people would not be undergoing such deprivations in the absence of the prolonged measures imposed by the Security Council and the effects of war.”49 In the Middle East, Arab opinion has hardened against the sanctions with each passing year, so that in March 2001, even Kuwait signaled its opposition to economic sanctions. Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah announced that: “Kuwait has no objection to the launching of a call to lift the economic sanctions from Iraq.”50 A group of Western non-governmental organizations (NGOs) wrote a letter to the Security Council in March 2000 warning that “human rights principles have been consistently subordinated to political considerations in the [UN Security] Council’s approach to Iraq.” A “radical redesign of the sanctions regime” was required, said the NGOs, including Human Rights Watch and Save the Children (UK).51 French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine marked the tenth anniversary of the imposition of sanctions by observing that the economic sanctions on Iraq were
cruel, ineffective and dangerous... cruel because they punish exclusively the Iraqi people and the weakest among them... ineffective because they don't touch the regime, which is not encouraged to co-operate... [and] dangerous because they... accentuate the disintegration of Iraqi society.  

The UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights observed, soon after Vedrine's statement, that the economic sanctions on Iraq have "condenmed an innocent people to hunger, disease, ignorance and even death."  

The Economist had spoken out on behalf of a section of the international business community a year earlier:  

Slowly, inexorably, a generation is being crushed in Iraq. Thousands are dying, thousands more are leading stunted lives, and storing up bitter hatreds for the future. If, year in, year out, the UN were systematically killing Iraqi children by air strikes, western governments would declare it intolerable, no matter how noble the intention. They should find their existing policy just as unacceptable.  

A group of Anglican Bishops, reflecting widespread concern in their churches, reported in May 1999, "we believe that the vast majority of the Iraqi civilian population is suffering grievous harm both physically and psychologically as a direct result of the sanctions policy imposed on the country by the UN Security Council." The Bishops concluded that: "Sanctions in their present form are ethically untenable, because they are hitting the weakest and most vulnerable. As Christians we find this utterly opposed to the mind of Christ."  

Julian Filochowski, Director of the Catholic aid agency CAFOD, reflecting long-standing Vatican policy, condemned the economic sanctions harshly as he helped to launch a report on sanctions by leading European Catholic aid agencies in February 2001: "The sanctions are humanly catastrophic, morally indefensible and politically ineffective. They are a failed policy and must be changed."  

As these statements indicate, the emerging international consensus has had its counterpart in Britain also. John Nichol, a former RAF pilot shot down over Iraq and held by the Iraqis in 1991, has observed that "sanctions are having little effect on the regime; the only people suffering are the poorest... It is time they were lifted. Whatever the options are, they have to be better than the current stalemate."  

The turning of public opinion has even affected party politics in
Iraq

Britain, altering the position of the Liberal Democrat Party, Menzies Campbell, Foreign Affairs spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats, told his party conference in September 2000: “It should now become the policy of the British Government that sanctions other than those directly relevant to military or military related equipment should be lifted.”

The House of Commons Select Committee on International Affairs, in the report “The Future of Sanctions,” already referred to, concluded that, “although sanctions may well represent a low-cost alternative to war in financial terms, they are all too often as damaging – in humanitarian and developmental terms – as armed conflict.” The Select Committee stated that it was “particularly concerned” at the impact of “comprehensive economic sanctions” and “regional sanctions regimes.” “However carefully exemptions are planned,” said the parliamentarians, “the fact is that comprehensive economic sanctions only further concentrate power in the hands of the ruling elite...The UN will lose credibility if it advocates the rights of the poor whilst at the same time causing, if only indirectly, their further impoverishment.” The committee observed: “We find it difficult to believe that there will be a case in the future where the UN would be justified in imposing comprehensive economic sanctions on a country.” Referring specifically to Iraq, the MPs proposed in February 2000 what amounts to the “radical redesign” called for by Save the Children and the other NGOs in their letter to the UN Security Council a month later:

Whatever the wisdom of the original imposition of sanctions, careful thought must now be given as to how to move from the current impasse without giving succour to Saddam Hussein and his friends. Any move away from comprehensive sanctions should go hand in hand with measures designed to target the real culprits, not the poor of Iraq but their leadership. Possibilities include a concerted attempt to target and either freeze or sequester the assets of Saddam Hussein and those connected to him, and the indictment of Saddam Hussein and his close associates as war criminals.”

Before war and sanctions

Kana Makiya, an Iraqi exile, one of the harshest critics of the Iraqi regime, penned the monumental Republic of Fear as a savage attack on the Ba’athist system. Nevertheless, even Makiya acknowledges
that the Iraqi Government made a substantial investment in social welfare over the decades:

A regime of terror actually presided over an across-the-board increase in the standard of living in Iraq, and it significantly improved the lot of the most destitute layers, furthering the leveling of income differentials that began after 1958. The changes are impressive: the prices of most basic necessities were stabilized by state subsidy; the minimum daily wage was greatly increased over the rate of inflation, which was kept low; new labor laws provided complete job security; the state became an employer of last resort for all graduates; free education and health care was provided; and per capita national income increased from 195 ID [Iraqi Dinar] in 1970 to 7,564 ID in 1979.60

Stephen Glain, US author of a forthcoming study of the Arab middle class, provides a regional perspective in a post-11 September edition of Newsweek magazine:

Iraq's place on George W. Bush's "axis of evil" obscures the fact that Saddam developed his nation's economy while other Arab leaders were plundering theirs. Viewed from the slums of south Beirut, Jordan's desert villages, the dilapidated hamlets of the Upper Nile, Iraq's economic debility is a more subversive threat to regional stability than its hidden weapons...Saddam was largely responsible for Iraq's development even before he became president. As vice president in the 1970s, he led a modernization drive in the name of Baath socialism. While other Arab states traded their petrol dollars for palaces, Iraq built roads, schools and factories, and sent engineers and doctors to study in the United States and Europe. Saddam ordered sweeping land reform, a health-care system and minimum-wage laws. He opened male-dominated professions to women. Iraqi Airways boasted some of the world's best-trained pilots and engineers. Iraq became the Arab world's first modern economy.61

Glain points out that Iraq's consumption of imported goods and services from its neighbors was a motor of economic growth for the region: "Until the late 1980s, it was Iraq's voracious middle class that buoyed the economies of Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon and even Kuwait." "Iraq was the only major Arab economy diversified enough to weather the collapse of oil prices in
the mid-1980s, providing a lift to the region," according to Glain, while the 1991 Gulf War “all but silenced the beating heart of Arab capitalism.” Between 1990 and 1999 the aggregate per capita income of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Egypt averaged less than 2 percent growth against a population growth of about 4 percent. Glain warns that: “The wider war on terror cannot be won without an Arab middle class, which cannot be rebuilt with Iraq choked by sanctions.”

Returning to the pre-war situation in Iraq itself, Cordesman and Hashim summarize the situation: “Before the war, Iraq had achieved a high level of economic and social development which had placed it in the World Bank category of upper middle income countries like Greece, Venezuela, and Czechoslovakia.” The per capita calorie intake of Iraqis in the late 1980s was “just under 3,000 per day – above average for an upper middle income country.” The two analysts observe that: “Iraq’s health system was one of the best in the Third World.” According to the World Health Organization, prior to 1991 free state health care reached 96 percent of the urban population and 78 percent of rural residents. By 1990, nearly all urban dwellers and 72 percent of rural residents had access to clean water. During the 1985-89 period, in other words, in the midst of the Iran-Iraq war, the proportion of fully immunized one-year-olds increased from 15 to 65 percent. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the literacy rate in Iraq increased from an estimated 52 percent of the adult population in 1977 to 80 percent in 1987, as the result of a “massive literacy campaign conducted during the late seventies and early eighties”. The Government of Iraq was awarded an international trophy for this remarkable progress in eradicating illiteracy.

The steady investment in social welfare had measurable impacts on life expectancy and child survival rates. Between 1960 and 1990 life expectancy climbed from 49 to 67 years, a level comparable to many Latin American countries, including Brazil and Mexico. There were also dramatic declines in infant and child mortality (deaths of children under one year of age, and under five years of age) during the same period. According to figures compiled by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), between 1960 and 1990 infant mortality in Iraq dropped steadily from 117 deaths per 1000 live births to 40 deaths per 1000 live births, while child mortality dropped from 171 deaths per 1000 live births to 50 deaths per 1000 live births (see table).
Table 3.1  Under-5 and infant mortality rates (USMR and IMR) in Iraq, 1960–98

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>USMR</th>
<th>IMR</th>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>117</td>
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<td>1970</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>98</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>103</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Mortality rate deaths per 1000 live births. UNICEF, August 1999.68

A group of economists from the London School of Economics (LSE), Peter Boone, Haris Gazdar, and Athar Hussain, pointed out in 1997 that the Iraqi commitment to social welfare “is not new-founded,” and “must be viewed in the historical context of welfarist interventions by successive governments in Iraq”.

These interventions, which include action by the government on a variety of social and welfare issues, such as education (particularly the education of girls), public health care, development of infrastructure and indeed radical land reforms, have been consistent and substantial features of public policy at least since the late 1950s.70

After war and sanctions
There have been dramatic effects on well-being in most if not all parts of Iraq as a result of the war of 1991, the post-war uprising, and the ongoing sanctions.

Child mortality after war and sanctions
One measure is provided by death rates among children under five and infants under one year of age. A 1999 UNICEF survey revealed that in the south and center of Iraq – home to 85 percent of the country’s population – under-five mortality more than doubled from 56 deaths per 1000 live births (1984–9) to 131 deaths per 1000 live births (1994–9). Likewise infant mortality – defined as the death of children in their first year – increased from 47 to 108 deaths per 1000 live births within the same time frame. UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy noted that, if the substantial reduction in child mortality throughout Iraq during the 1980s had continued through the 1990s, there would have been half a million fewer deaths of
Iraq

children under five in the country as a whole during the eight-year period 1991 to 1998.\textsuperscript{71} 500,000 children died who would otherwise have lived. UNICEF were careful not to attribute all these deaths to economic sanctions, but emphasized the judgment of the Security Council's own Humanitarian Panel investigation of the situation in Iraq: "Even if not all suffering in Iraq can be imputed to external factors, especially sanctions, the Iraqi people would not be undergoing such deprivations in the absence of the prolonged measures imposed by the Security Council and the effects of war."\textsuperscript{72}

Child malnutrition after war and sanctions

The World Health Organization reports that before 1990, "calorie availability was 120 percent of actual requirement, nutritional deficiencies were at very low levels, while clinical disorders due to excessive and unbalanced consumption of foods were increasingly encountered."\textsuperscript{73} Before turning to the post-war situation, we should perhaps distinguish between two main forms of child malnutrition. Acute malnutrition, also known as "wasting," is more life-threatening than chronic malnutrition or "stunting," but it is also more easily remedied. According to Linda S. Adair, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Nutrition at the University of North Carolina:

High levels of stunting among children suggest that there will also be long-term deficits in mental and physical development that can leave children ill-prepared to take maximum advantage of learning opportunities in school. This can also have consequences for children's success later in life.\textsuperscript{74}

Immediately after the Gulf War, a number of independent nutrition surveys were carried out in Iraq, the most representative sample being taken by the national International Study Team, which found 12 percent of children under five experiencing chronic malnutrition.\textsuperscript{75} UNICEF uses a lower estimate of 9.2 percent for children in south/central Iraq in 1991. In May 1997 the children's agency reported that the rate of malnutrition had risen to 25 percent, "or some 750,000 children."\textsuperscript{76} In November 1997, UNICEF announced that the rate of chronic malnutrition among children under five had risen to 32 percent - "some 960,000 children" - a rise of 72 percent since 1991. Almost one quarter of children under five were underweight - twice as high as the levels found in neighboring Jordan or Turkey. "It is clear that children are bearing the brunt of the current economic hardship,"
said Philippe Heffinck, UNICEF Representative in Iraq. “They must be protected from the impact of sanctions. Otherwise, they will continue to suffer, and that we cannot accept.” Almost two years into the UN oil-for-food program, almost a million young children in south central Iraq were at risk of lifelong deficits in mental and physical development. UNICEF observed in 2000 that child malnutrition continued to be “entrenched” in south central Iraq.

An FAO/WFP Nutrition Assessment mission in 2000 found the prevalence of acute malnutrition (low weight-for-height) in children under five years of age to be over 10 percent in three south center governorates surveyed. This is slightly better than the figure of 12 percent obtained by the mission in 1995 in the same governorates, but remains much higher than the 1991 level of 3 percent.

The September 2000 Nutrition Assessment mission by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the UN World Food Program found that since the six-monthly surveys began in 1997 it appears that there has been little further improvement in child malnutrition rates except for chronic malnutrition which decreased from 27 percent to 21 percent.” Despite this reduction; “Still, at least about 800,000 children under the age of five are chronically malnourished.”

Chronic malnutrition can lead to lifelong physical and mental stunting. Anupama Rao Singh, UNICEF’s director in Baghdad and a veteran of African famine work, points out that chronic malnutrition is “extremely difficult to reverse, if not irreversible.”

The wide impact

While international concern has focused on the persistence of high levels of child malnutrition and high levels of excess child mortality in Iraq, there are other grave consequences of the sanctions. “Iraq’s population has been devastated socially, economically, and psychologically.” Cordesman and Hashim observe that there has been a “dramatic rise in corruption and bribery in a government which prided itself on being one of the least corrupt in the region.” “Social ills such as theft, begging, prostitution and rural thievery that were rare or efficiently controlled in this once well-policing authoritarian state have become widespread.” The two analysts add that the sanctions “game” has reduced Iraq to “an economic and social ‘basket case’ and may limit its economic development for several decades to come.” US epidemiologist Richard Garfield notes in particular the
Iraq

decline in adult literacy from 80 percent to 58 percent, suggesting
that this is "perhaps at least as condemning a statement about human-
itarian conditions in Iraq as data on mortality," a dramatic
deterioration in the "long-term assets" of Iraqi society.82

A human rights assessment

Earlier we discussed the procedural duties of the Security Council
with regard to protecting human rights. The Center for Economic and
Social Rights has also focused attention on the "substantive duties"
of the UN's highest body; to ensure that its activities do not result in
violations of human rights principles, "particularly among
vulnerable populations such as children and women, which enjoy
special protection under international law." "The foreseeable and
avoidable deaths of hundreds of thousands of children clearly
implicate a number of fundamental human rights," the CESR notes.
Most important among them is the right to life, considered by the
UN Human Rights Committee to be "the supreme right from which
no derogation is permitted even in time of public emergency." The
New York-based NGO points out that the comprehensive economic
sanctions have also contributed to violations of the rights to health
and to an adequate standard of living, guaranteed by the Universal
Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on
Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and other international treaties:
"It is significant that children have suffered disproportionately from
sanctions." Under human rights law, children are considered uniquely
vulnerable and are granted special protection. More countries have
ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child than any other
human rights treaty in history, including all permanent members of
the Security Council. The Convention specifically recognizes that
"every child has the inherent right to life." It calls on all states "to
ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development
of the child" and "to take appropriate measures to diminish infant
and child mortality." The CESR comments:

It is hard to think of a more grave breach of child rights in modern
history than the suffering and death of hundreds of thousands of
children under the age of five caused by a political dispute between
"their" government and the international community.83

The CESR also assesses the economic sanctions against humani-
tarian law, the laws of war. Two basic principles of the laws of war
are "distinction" – the imperative to distinguish between combatants and civilians, and to attack only military targets – and "proportionality." The principle of proportionality is designed to ensure that attacks against military targets do not cause excessive civilian damage. In relation to the issue of targeting, the CESR observes that: "Imposing comprehensive sanctions that cause total economic collapse and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians appears on its face to violate the principle of distinction." The Center also refers to an Additional Protocol to the Geneva Convention which explicitly outlaws the use of starvation as a method of warfare: "in no event shall actions...be taken which may be expected to leave the civilian population with such inadequate food or water as to cause its starvation." It is hard to see how the comprehensive economic sanctions can be said to be aimed at the regime, causing collateral damage to civilians. It appears much more plausible that the economic sanctions are targeted at the entire population as a means to influence the regime – "a clear violation" of international law, the CESR comments.

If one takes the position that the economic sanctions are directed against the regime rather than against the people, the Security Council must still demonstrate that there has not been a disproportionate impact on civilians. The Geneva Conventions define proportionality as prohibiting any "attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects...which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated." The CESR refers to "the authoritative legal commentary on the laws of war" for some guidelines:

A remote [military] advantage to be gained at some unknown time in the future would not be a proper consideration to weigh against civilian loss...The advantage concerned should be substantial and relatively close...There can be no question of creating conditions conducive to surrender by means of attacks which incidentally harm the civilian population.64

It is difficult to see when, in the period 1991–2002, there has been the prospect of a "substantial and relatively close" advantage to the international community from the economic sanctions, compared to the massive loss of life that sanctions have caused, and the general demoralization, "lobotomization" and impoverishment of an entire nation as a result of the economic sanctions. The CESR points out
that it is difficult to know how much progress on Iraqi disarmament is attributable to restrictions: "Iraq has often revealed valuable information" regarding its weapons of mass destruction programs "in response to high-level defections or threatened military strikes."85

In brief, a careful examination of the law demonstrates that the sanctions regime has violated both human rights law and the humanitarian laws of war – on a considerable scale. Hence the judgment of Marc Bossuyt, Belgian law professor, in a report for the UN Subcommission on Human Rights, that the continuation of economic sanctions on Iraq, despite knowledge of their toll in human lives, was "unequivocally illegal."86

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

One can discuss the causes of what UNICEF calls the "humanitarian emergency" in two ways: a chronological examination of the sequence of events that created the crisis, or a logical analysis of the obstacles that must be overcome. We will follow both procedures.

Macroeconomic shock I: the fiscal crisis (before oil-for-food)

The economic sanctions imposed in August 1990 were extraordinarily successful in cutting off all trade with Iraq. Shortly before the 1991 war the CIA estimated that sanctions had been 97 percent effective in stopping Iraqi exports.87 Boone, Gazdar and Hussein observe that the sanctions on Iraq "stand out in their scope and effectiveness," compared to multilateral sanctions against other states.

Iraq was heavily dependent on oil revenues, so that at the market exchange rate, oil exports provided 75 percent of national income: "These oil revenues formed the basis for Iraq's economic structure and policies," comment Boone, Gazdar and Hussein. They point out that "during the 1970s and early 1980s the [Iraqi] government built up state industry and agriculture by introducing sizeable direct and indirect subsidies, but since it grew with the aid of subsidies and inexpensive foreign exchange, it was, in effect, highly dependent on oil revenues." There was also considerable investment in education, health and welfare, including subsidizing the cost of a range of food items. "In short, the state was a key player in all areas of the economy: production, employment, private consumption and provisioning of public goods." The interdiction of oil exports cut off oil revenues, and therefore government revenues and government spending collapsed, creating a fiscal crisis. The economy was severely damaged and there
was, quite predictably, a direct and serious impact on the civilian population—"One of the most important results of sanctions is that the government has sharply curtailed producer and some consumer subsidies." The government was starved of revenues (there were, and are, few if any taxes in Iraq) and therefore suffered what is known as a "fiscal crisis." Baghdad responded by allowing public sector salaries to lag behind inflation, and by printing money to pay these salaries, creating hyperinflation. The result was that by 1996, public sector workers were earning $3–$5 per month, in contrast to their pre-sanctions salaries of $150–200 per month.

In other words, there was a direct link between the economic sanctions, the fiscal crisis, economic deflation, and mass poverty. At the macroeconomic level, sanctions collapsed government revenues, thereby badly damaging the provision of public services. At the microeconomic or household level, families could barely earn enough to survive and the prices of necessities were no longer subsidized in the way that they had been.

**Macroeconomic shock II: the foreign exchange crisis**

The LSE analysts argued in 1997 that: "The most important impact of the decline in oil revenues was a severe tightening of the available funds for imports." Prior to 1990 Iraq imported over 75 percent of the calories consumed in the country, at a cost of over $2 billion in 1989. As with food, most of Iraq's industrial base was heavily dependent on the import of sophisticated machinery, equipment, spare parts, and raw materials procured abroad. Agriculture depended on imported seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, spare parts for irrigation systems, and harvesting and processing equipment. With a decline in the availability of foreign exchange to buy imported goods, they became more expensive in relation to domestic goods, and in particular in relation to labor. Imported goods became more and more difficult for ordinary people to purchase. The LSE economists comment, "we believe the greatest impact of sanctions has come through the oil export restrictions - with reduced purchasing power, people are simply unable to buy the goods they used to purchase." Iraqi companies reduced production (by over 70 percent in many cases), and therefore employment, not because there was a corresponding shortage of inputs (spare parts, raw materials and so on), but because there were "limits on market demand associated with reduced incomes." The external market was denied by sanctions,
and the internal market was radically shrunk as a result of sanctions-induced impoverishment.

One key to the crisis: family purchasing power

The crucial factor here is "purchasing power." Household purchasing power is of critical significance to the revival of the Iraqi economy; it is also critical to the capacity of families to provide for their needs. Economists Jean Dreze and Haris Gazdar warn against the focus on "aggregate commodity supplies":

The "effects of sanctions" have often been analyzed in terms of what these sanctions do to aggregate commodity supplies – how far food supplies, or medical supplies, or the supply of cement, fall short of ordinary levels. What really matters, however, is how the sanctions affect the ability of households (or enterprises, in the case of raw materials and intermediate inputs) to acquire the commodities in question. "Effective sanctions" in that sense can be quite different from what sanctions look like on the basis of supply-centered analysis.5

The food supply in a country might be cut in half by sanctions, but if the average nutritional value of those supplies rose dramatically, and if the food was shared much more equitably than before sanctions, the human impact of sanctions might actually be positive (rather in the way that food rationing is said to have produced healthier children in Britain during the World War II). The key factor is the capacity of families (or businesses) to acquire the goods and services they need. In Iraq, family purchasing power is affected by state subsidies for necessities, employment (in both the public and private sectors), government wages and salaries, and the value of the Iraqi dinar – the currency in which wages are paid.

After the passing of UNSCR 687 in early 1991, Dreze and Gazdar commented, "now that the embargo on food imports has been lifted, it is tempting to assume that there is no need to worry about the food situation in Iraq." While food was "readily available" from neighboring countries, and in that sense "food supply" was no longer a problem, "nutritional deprivation continues to remain endemic, and may even be increasing":

Effective sanctions on food remain, due to the crippling effects of general sanctions on economic activity and employment, despite
the formal exemption spelled out in Resolution 687 and the ready availability of food from neighboring countries.26

This is the key to understanding the persistence of child malnutrition and mass suffering even after the influx of humanitarian goods under oil-for-food. “Real earnings fell by around 90 percent in the first year of the sanctions, and then fell by around 40 percent more between 1991 and 1996.”27 The average Iraqi income in 1993 was 400 Iraqi dinars; “whereas ID 1000 was needed to feed a family adequately.” As a result of the depreciation of the Iraqi dinar, “its buying power was 100 times less than in mid-August [1990], whereas salaries had only doubled.”28 The UN World Food Program notes that the amount of food consumed by the Iraqi family with an average income in 1993 was only 31.3 percent of what that family had consumed in 1988; by 1993 an average of 72 percent of household incomes were used for the purchase of food; and the Family Purchase Power Index (FPPI) for Iraq declined steadily from 3.62 in 1990 to 0.15 in 1993, and then to 0.06 in 1995. The FPPI is the ratio between the lowest monthly income and the total cost of a basic food basket for a six-member family, including an infant. The post-1990 FPPI values are well below the 1.25 level which FAO considers as signal of household nutritional deficiency; this level means that at least 80 percent of a family’s income is spent on food.29 Millions of breadwinners were either denied employment altogether, or were paid starvation real wages as a direct result of the economic sanctions, and millions of families were therefore unable to provide for their younger and more vulnerable members.

Macroeconomic shock III: the war and the uprisings

The Arab Monetary Fund estimated the value of destroyed infrastructure and economic assets during the 1991 war at $232 billion.30 (By contrast, the decade-long Iran–Iraq war caused only $67 billion worth of economic damage.)31 For over five years Iraq was completely prevented from exporting oil, and was thus denied tens of billions of dollars of revenues, sharply deflating the economy, and preventing reconstruction.

Infrastructure damage: the water sector

In the water sector, Hoskins points out that “there were some early postwar gains” as Iraq drew on its prewar stockpile, and cannibalized damaged facilities. “Yet, the condition of the water sector began to
deteriorate again after the initial restoration effort," as Iraq was prevented by sanctions from acquiring the equipment and the chlorine supplies needed to purify water. Poor water quality has caused many deaths through the spread of diarrheal disease, including cholera, typhoid, and dysentery. The UN Development Program noted in March 1999 that: "The quality of [drinking] water deteriorated substantially from an average 5 percent of water samples contaminated in 1989 to 35 percent in 1997."

The effect of sanctions on the supply of clean drinking water was not simply in terms of water purification and pumping equipment and supplies of chlorine; there was also the underlying problem of electricity. For an anodyne account, we may turn to a sequence of UN reports. In November 2000, Kofi Annan warned in his regular report on the progress of oil-for-food that "treated water" was "at risk from the incidence of cross-contamination in the distribution network." In September 2001, the UN Secretary-General noted that, while the incidence of most communicable diseases seemed to be declining, amoebic dysentery and typhoid showed "slight increases". He commented: "The high incidence of water-borne diseases can be largely attributed to the poor state of water and sanitation infrastructures in the country." While the overall efficiency of water treatment plants had increased somewhat because of the arrival and installation of equipment and spare parts bought through the oil-for-food program, "the lack of continuous power supply lessened this benefit, reducing actual performance efficiency of water treatment plants by 10 percent."

For a vivid appreciation of the interconnection between the electricity sector and clean drinking water, Robert Fisk, reporter for the (London) Independent, interviewed Philippe Heffinck, UNICEF Representative in Baghdad. He explained to Fisk in early 1998, "it's not just the water-treatment plants that need repairing in Iraq but the pipes as well. Then you have the lack of electricity that contributes to the deterioration in health." Fisk noted:

I already understood the revolting mechanics of electrical power and water; a UN hygiene official had explained it to me, equally coldly, 24 hours earlier: when electricity is cut – which it is every three hours, for example, in Basra – the pumps stop and the pressure in the leaking water pipes falls. Into the vacuum is sucked sewage
which runs out of the taps. Even the original source of the water is now contaminated in Iraq.  

The electrical power system was in disrepair because it was deliberately targeted during Operation Desert Storm. Dr. Hoskins observes that: “Eighteen of Iraq’s twenty power-generating plants were rendered inoperable [during the 1991 war], reducing [immediate] postwar electricity to just 4 percent of prewar levels.” Food storage facilities, industrial complexes, oil refineries, sewage pumping stations, telecommunications facilities, roads, railroads, and dozens of bridges were destroyed during the war. Hoskins comments: “It took Iraq many decades, vast amounts of foreign currency, and considerable foreign expertise to build the estimated $232 billion worth of assets destroyed in the forty-three-day bombing campaign.” Significantly, this damage was deliberate. “Gen. Buster Glosson, responsible for compiling the target lists [for the US-led bombardment] commented that after the war the US and its allies expected to rebuild the damaged infrastructure,” according to an interview with the Chicago Tribune. General Glosson’s colleague, Colonel John Warden, explained after the war that, “Saddam Hussein cannot restore his own electricity. He needs help. If there are political objectives that the UN Coalition has, it can say, ‘Saddam, when you agree to do these things, we will allow people to come in and fix your electricity.’”

Contaminated drinking water is a major contributor to the increased level of child deaths and the increased level of child malnutrition in Iraq.

Contaminated water supplies and poor sanitation have created health conditions enabling diarrhea to emerge as the leading child killer during the post-war period. During both 1991 and 1992, mortality due to diarrhea was estimated at more than three times the 1990 levels.

UNICEF observed in 2000 that the “case fatality rate” due to diarrheal diseases in children under five years “has remained high at 2.4 percent”: “Diarrhea leading to death from dehydration, and acute respiratory infections together account for 70 percent of child mortality.” This is due in large part to the deliberate destruction of Iraq’s electricity system in the 1991 war, and the deliberate prevention of reconstruction by comprehensive economic sanctions in the years thereafter.
War and sanctions: the allocation of responsibility

Cordesman and Hashim comment: “There is no question that the war and the rebellions caused extensive damage”; they observe that it may be “methodologically impossible” to distinguish the cost of these “calamities” from the effects of sanctions.112 While acknowledging that it is “extremely difficult” to separate the effects of sanctions from those of the 43-day bombing campaign and subsequent ground war (and from the uprising that followed the ground war), Eric Hoskins suggests that, with the passage of time “the effects of sanctions have increased and have come to outweigh the lingering effects of the war.”113 In particular: “A nonsanctioned country could reasonably be expected to achieve at least partial recovery from wartime damage within two to three years of the end of a conflict”, but sanctions prevented Iraq from acquiring the revenues necessary for reconstruction.114 The early, temporary, signs of recovery in the water sector, and the restoration of the power generating system (though at a much reduced level), are indications of the kinds of improvements that might have been possible in the absence of economic sanctions, despite the destruction caused by the war. In fact, Cordesman and Hashim acknowledge that while “sanctions are scarcely the only problem that the Iraqi economy has faced since 1990,” “they are the primary cause of its present crisis”: the economic sanctions “have done much more damage to Iraq than the Gulf War.”115

THE OBSTACLES TO RECOVERY

If we recast the discussion in terms of the requirements for recovery, and the obstacles which must be overcome if the humanitarian emergency is to be resolved, there seem to be at least six areas to be addressed. From the foregoing discussion it is clear that two critical domains are, on the one hand, the reconstruction of essential civilian infrastructure, such as water purification and pumping stations, sewage and sanitation facilities, health centers and hospitals, power stations and electricity distribution networks, and so on; and, on the other hand, the restoration of family purchasing power, through the generation of employment, the appreciation of the Iraqi dinar, and the general re-inflation of the Iraqi economy.

UNSCR 1409, passed in May 2002, introduced a set of amendments to the “oil-for-food” deal which were popularly referred to as “smart sanctions.” We will address the resolution below in more detail, but
it is worth noting that as the first drafts of the Resolution were being circulated, The Economist, among others, commented,

although the country would be able to import more, it would still be denied the free movement of labor and capital that it desperately needs if it is at last to start picking itself up...Iraq needs massive investment to rebuild its industry, its power grids and its schools, and needs cash in hand to pay its engineers, doctors and teachers. None of this looks likely to happen under smart sanctions.¹³⁶

The Financial Times observed that “the US plan [i.e. “smart sanctions”] will not revive Iraq’s devastated economy while control over Iraq’s oil revenues remains in the hands of the UN, and foreign investment and credits are still prohibited.”¹³⁷ The Economist again:

To recover from its 11 years under the sanctions battering-tam – which has crushed the country’s industrial and agricultural infrastructure – Iraq needs the freedom, and overseas investment, of a huge reconstruction effort...the British proposal of ‘smart sanctions’ offers an aspirin where surgery is called for.¹³⁸

Here, foreign investment and foreign loans are identified as critical to the reconstruction effort, and direct access to foreign exchange is seen as vital to restoring the real pay levels of public servants.

In general, as the UN Security Council’s own Humanitarian Panel observed in March 1999, “the humanitarian situation in Iraq will continue to be a dire one in the absence of a sustained revival of the Iraqi economy.”¹³⁹ A Western aid agency official in Iraq said of the so-called “smart sanctions” package: “It won’t improve life for the ordinary Iraqi. It will be a dole, a handout to Iraq as a whole. It will do nothing to tackle the real issue – how to stimulate the internal economy and allow civil society to come back.”¹⁴⁰ The essential ingredients of a serious recovery package should include free access to foreign investment, foreign loans, foreign exchange, and foreign markets – to allow Iraqi businesses to earn their way in the world.

A moratorium on debt and compensation

Cordesman and Hashim state unequivocally, “one thing is clear, any strategy for dealing with Iraq must deal with debt and reparations as well as sanctions.” Iraq’s debt burden in mid-1990 was an estimated $80 billion. With unpaid interest, this will have swollen to even
greater dimensions. The two Center for Strategic and International Studies analysts quote estimates of the total cost of Iraq's debt, reconstruction and reparations burden to 2000 amounting to $141 billion. Clearly, "unless debt and reparations are reduced or forgiven, they will be a major hindrance - if not a crippling burden - on Iraq's ability to rebuild its economy regardless of how and when sanctions are lifted." For Cordesman and Hashim, "Iraq's rich oil resources should be used to rebuild and rehabilitate the country and not to pay punitive damages to be shouldered by the next generation." They warn of the dangers of another Versailles.

DESIGNED TO BE REFUSED: THE FIRST 'OIL-FOR-FOOD' DEAL

For many years, the British and US governments were able to absolve themselves of responsibility for the mounting human toll resulting from the economic sanctions by referring to the refusal of an early form of the oil-for-food deal by the Iraqi Government in 1991. Paragraph 23 of UN SCR 687, passed in April 1991, opened up the possibility of allowing Iraqi oil exports "when required to assure adequate financial resources on the part of Iraq to carry out the activities under paragraph 20 above." Paragraph 20 dealt with the purchase of food, "medicines", "health supplies." It also referred to the possibility of Iraq being permitted to purchase other materials and supplies for "essential civilian needs" identified in "the report of the Secretary-General dated 20 March 1991," and in "any further findings of humanitarian need by the [Sanctions] Committee." To my knowledge, the Sanctions Committee has never made any "findings of humanitarian need" in Iraq.

The Ahtisaari report

The "report of the Secretary-General dated 20 March 1991" was a report on conditions in Iraq compiled by UN Under-Secretary-General, Martti Ahtisaari, after a visit to the country from 10 to 17 March 1991. This report contained the famous phrase, "nothing that we had seen or read had quite prepared us for the particular form of devastation which has now befallen the country":

The recent conflict has wrought near-apocalyptic results upon the economic mechanized society. Now, most means of modern life support have been destroyed or rendered tenuous. Iraq has, for some time to come, been relegated to a pre-industrial age, but with
all the disabilities of post-industrial dependency on an intensive use of energy and technology.\textsuperscript{121}

Ahtisaari identified a number of "essential civilian needs" which should then have become candidates for any oil-for-food deal, including the lack of inputs for the agricultural sector. The mission recommended that "sanctions in respect of food supplies should be immediately removed, as should those relating to the import of agricultural equipment and supplies." In the subsequent UNSCR 687, the sanctions on food were finally lifted, but those on agricultural equipment and supplies were not. The mission also identified the "energy and communications vacuum" as possessing "far-reaching implications" for the nature and effectiveness of the international response to the humanitarian crisis in Iraq. It was seven years before "the need to restore electrical power was accepted by all Sanctions Committee members" in UNSCR 1153, passed in February 1998.\textsuperscript{122} It was another year after that before telecommunications were finally accepted as part of the oil-for-food deal.\textsuperscript{123} Water and sanitation were identified as key areas, as was transport in support of the health system. None of these sectors was identified in UNSCR 687 as of particular significance.

The Sadruddin recommendations

Following UNSCR 687, mounting international pressure led to passing of UNSCR 706 in August 1991 (clarified by UNSCR 712 the following month) offering a limited, one-off oil sale by Iraq to fund humanitarian purchases. It was the refusal of this offer by Baghdad that led to Western condemnation of Iraq, and which for many years led to the blame for the human suffering being laid at the Government of Iraq's door. For example, Cordesman and Hashim wrote in 1997: "The human cost of sanction [sic] to Iraq's people has scarcely, however, been the fault of the UN," as it was Baghdad that refused UNSCRs 706 and 712.\textsuperscript{124} The actual course of events is instructive.

Following the passage of UNSCR 687, the UN Secretary-General sent an Executive Delegate, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, to visit Iraq and to report on humanitarian conditions. Sadruddin reported in July 1991. He estimated that it would cost $22 billion to restore the power, oil, water, sanitation, food, agriculture and health sectors to pre-war levels, and argued that Iraq should be allowed to sell $6.9 billion over one year to restore the health services fully; the electrical sector to 50 percent of its pre-war capacity; the water and sanitation services
Iraq

to 40 percent operation; northern oil facilities to a limited extent (to be able to supply more oil in the future, to fund more humanitarian spending); to rehabilitate agriculture; and to provide subsistence food rations to the entire population. As a short-term measure, Sadruddin proposed an initial sale of $2.85 billion worth of oil over the four months (a third of the total amount, plus a small sum for start-up costs), to be renewed if arrangements were satisfactory. During discussions in the Security Council, the period for the one-off oil sale was lengthened to six months, which under the Sadruddin formula would have required $3.8 billion worth of oil sales (half the annual amount, plus start-up costs of $350 million). The UN Secretary-General, seeing the way the argument was drifting, argued for Iraq to be allowed $2.4 billion worth of oil sales. However, not all of these revenues were to be available for humanitarian goods. The Security Council had decided by then that 30 percent of all Iraqi oil revenues should be reserved for war compensation payments, and a small proportion was also set aside for UN costs. Under the Secretary-General’s proposal, instead of Iraq receiving $3.8 billion for humanitarian spending over the six months, as suggested by the Secretary-General’s own Executive Delegate, Iraq would receive only $1.6 billion for humanitarian aid – just over 40 percent of its assessed needs for six months. This proposal was rejected by the UN Security Council – by the United States, in effect – and UNSCR 712, passed in September 1991, actually offered Iraq only $1.6 billion in total oil sales over the six months, reducing the sum available for humanitarian aid to “approximately $930 million over six months”, less than 25 percent of the UN’s expert assessment of humanitarian needs.¹²⁵

According to an aid agency staff member involved in the discussions in Baghdad, UN officials had already become convinced by late July 1991 that “the US intention was to present Saddam Hussein with so unattractive a package that Iraq would reject it and thus take on the blame, at least in western eyes, for continued civilian suffering.”¹²⁶ This objective was achieved: Iraq did reject the offer contained in UNSCRs 706 and 712, and did take on the blame for the humanitarian crisis. James Fie, who was in Iraq in 1991 as a consultant to the American Friends Service Committee on relief and reconstruction later revealed that, in July 1991, “Iraqi officials told UN humanitarian administrators in Baghdad that Iraq would accept the Executive Delegate’s recommendations.”¹²⁷ But they refused the 25 percent offer.
Apart from the monetary value of the offer, there was also the
curious way in which Resolution 687 bundled together into one
account funding for the humanitarian program, war reparations, and
funding for the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM)
weapons inspectors. According to Graham-Brown, humanitarian
observers, “argued that humanitarian needs should have been entirely
separated from questions of compensation and payment for the work
of UN weapons inspectors.” The latter issues were for the Iraqi state
alone, and government resistance to paying for these items should
not have been allowed to affect the condition of the civilian
population. Graham-Brown says there were “many humanitarian
observers who felt that the ‘package’ deal offered under Resolutions
706 and 712 was one which it could have been anticipated Iraq would
refuse.”

Much of the hostility to UNSCRs 706 and 712 lay in the infringe-
ment of Iraqi sovereignty. According to the former UN
Secretary-General, Resolution 986 “took into account some of Iraq’s
concerns over Resolutions 706 (1991) and 712 (1991) by reaffirming
the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty and territorial
integrity of Iraq” and describing the new exercise as “temporary.”
Citing this statement, Boone, Gazdar and Hussain remark,

This implicit admission that Iraqi objections to those resolutions
could be and were accommodated somewhat contradicts the
position taken by the Security Council over a period of three years
of stalled negotiations [1992-95] that Iraq bore “full responsi-
bility” for the suffering of its civilian population.

Similarly UN staff were asked to “monitor” the distribution of oil-
for-food goods in UNSCRs 706/712, while under UNSCR 986, UN
officials were to be allowed to “observe” the distribution of humani-
tarian goods. UNSCR 712 specified that oil must be transported
by the Kirkuk-Yumurtalik pipeline passing through Turkey. “This
was meant not only to benefit Ankara, but also to give a lever to the
anti-Saddam leaders in Iraqi Kurdistan which had been placed under
the Western air umbrella since June 1991.” Iraq protested against
this inflexibility. This diktat was also dropped three and a half years
later in UNSCR 687.

Another device used to make the 706/712 offer unpalatable to the
Iraqis involved the financial arrangements for the scheme. Sadr
Aga Khan had proposed that Iraq’s existing oil revenue accounts in
the United States be used for the channeling of funds for the new humanitarian program. According to Fine, privy to the discussions among international humanitarian staff in Baghdad: “Under these proposed control and monitoring safeguards, Iraq would have had no more opportunity to divert or misuse relief supplies than under the very similar arrangements eventually mandated by the Security Council in August [UNSCR 706] and September [UNSCR 712].”

However, instead of using Iraq’s State Oil Marketing Organization (SOMO) account, the Resolutions established a new UN “escrow” account, through which Iraq’s oil wealth would flow. “The escrow account afforded the UN no greater measure of security of control, but provocatively raised the issue of national sovereignty by taking direct possession of Iraqi national resources.” Despite this, and all the other unnecessarily insulting arrangements, according to Sarah Helms, diplomatic editor for the (London) Independent, “President Saddam might have accepted the resolution if the higher sum [proposed by Sadruddin] had been agreed.”

Shoring up the sanctions
Some of the pressure for an oil-for-food deal came from Kuwait and other Arab states, seeking war reparations from Iraq (recall that there was a 30 percent compulsory deduction for compensation built into the oil-for-food scheme). France, the Soviet Union and China all supported oil sales for their own reasons. Part of the picture was the considerable international concern aroused by bodies such as the International Study Team (IST), which were documenting the human suffering in post-war Iraq. The IST conducted a survey in August 1991, the month that UNSCR 706 was passed, which indicated that 47,000 children under the age of five had died in the first eight months of 1991 as a result of war and sanctions. In April, Ahtisaari had warned: “It is unmistakable that the Iraqi people may soon face a further imminent catastrophe, which could include epidemic and famine, if massive life-supporting needs are not rapidly met.” In July, Sadriddin Aga Khan reported, “it is evident that for large numbers of the people of Iraq, every passing month brings them closer to the brink of calamity.”

In London and Washington, however, these were not the overriding concerns. Sarah Graham-Brown reports that an observer “closely involved in the discussions suggested that the main preoccupation of the US and UK was to ensure that the pressure on Iraq was maintained.” She quotes a US official as saying that the proposal for
a limited oil sale was "a good way to maintain the bulk of the sanctions and not be on the wrong side of a potentially emotive issue." She also refers to British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd's statement that the arrangements had to be "limited and watertight." The "potentially emotive issue" was, of course, the deaths of tens of thousands of Iraqi children in an oil-rich country. In May 1998 the US Under Secretary for Political Affairs and formerly US Ambassador to the UN stated, "In a very real sense, the 'oil-for-food' program is the key to sustaining the sanctions regime until Iraq complies with its obligations." As Iraq was unlikely to comply: "That means, as far as the US is concerned, that sanctions will be a fact of life for the foreseeable future."  

**London diverges**

Interestingly, during the failed negotiations around this first oil-for-food proposal, the British Government indicated greater openness than was shown by Washington. "In January [1992], the British Government had indicated to the new UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, that it was willing to see minor 'face-saving' adjustments if the Iraqis agreed to the resolutions as a whole." The modifications Britain and other Security Council members adopted "proved too drastic for the US Government, which refused to accept them."Washington had crafted a resolution designed to be refused: no softening of its terms was to be permitted, despite the international pressure and the mounting evidence of a humanitarian emergency. This was an early sign of British quiescence, which was to result in some important initiatives.

**Rights, distinction and punishment**

Neither UNSCR 706 nor UNSCR 712 mentioned the human rights impact of the sanctions, or indeed of the oil-for-food deal. Neither resolution referred to the need to monitor any human rights impact. Neither resolution improved the accuracy of the comprehensive economic sanctions. Neither resolution showed any deviation from the punitive stance embodied in UNSCR 687. Consciously and deliberately offering a quarter of the funds that a UN humanitarian mission had calculated were necessary amounts to a deliberate assault on the general population, and a premeditated violation of their human rights on a large scale. Offering these funds in the most insulting possible fashion, to minimize the risk of the offer being accepted, confirms the punitive character of the sanctions regime.
A RESIGNING MATTER: THE SECOND “OIL-FOR-FOOD” DEAL

As the humanitarian situation inside Iraq experienced a “rapid deterioration” in 1994, pressure mounted for a response from the Security Council. “Some observers maintain that that the US promoted a new resolution for a limited sale of oil for humanitarian purposes in order to lessen the pressure for sanctions to be lifted.” Graham-Brown points to the Congressional testimony of US Assistant Secretary of State Robert Pelletreau – “Implementation of the resolution is not a precursor to lifting sanctions. It is a humanitarian exception that preserves and even reinforces the sanctions regime” – and a remark by US Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright – “Frankly it is the best of all possible ways to make sure that the sanctions regime remains in place so that Saddam Hussein is not entitled to pretend he is concerned for his people and shed a lot of crocodile tears.”

Growing US isolation had become visible in March 1994, when the Security Council had to discontinue presidential statements on Iraq, as Russia, France and China demanded a statement reflecting Iraq’s cooperation with UN Resolutions. UNSCR 986, adopted by the Security Council in April 1995, was “drafted by the US, which this time was interested in getting Iraq to accept.” Iraq finally accepted the Resolution in principle in January 1996, and negotiations began, which Washington – and London – did little to help. “The US and UK directly intervened in negotiations between the UN Secretariat and the Iraqi Government, prolonging the process of agreeing to a memorandum of understanding for its implementation.” The UN Secretariat and other Security Council members “did not conceal their annoyance at this approach.” In April 1996, an agreement was delayed when US and British negotiators “insisted on 20 new conditions before the deal could be ratified.”

Raising and abolishing the ceiling on oil sales

As noted, UNSCR 986 introduced some soothing phrases regarding Iraq’s sovereignty and transformed UN “monitors” into UN “observers.” It also established a separate escrow account for the purchase of goods for the three northern governorates of Iraq, which had established a semi-autonomous Kurdish administration under the protection of US and British power. Under Paragraph 8(b), roughly 13 percent of Iraqi oil revenues would go into this account, mainly to be used by the UN itself to buy goods for the northern governorates.
Crucially, the resolution also increased the amount of oil that Iraq could sell every six months from $1.6 billion to $2 billion—still roughly $1.5 billion short of Sadruddin Aga Khan's recommendations. The ceiling on oil sales then underwent two more stages. In February 1998 UNSCR 1153 more than doubled the amount of oil Iraq was allowed to sell, as that the six-monthly maximum income was set at $5.52 billion. With deductions, that meant that Iraq could earn up to $3.6 billion for humanitarian purchases. Almost two years later, in December 1999, UNSCR 1284 removed the ceiling on oil sales entirely.

At its original level of $2 billion per six-month phase, oil-for-food was clearly incapable of addressing the infrastructural needs of Iraqi society. In a February 1998 review of the operation of the oil-for-food deal, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan demanded the provision of more resources to begin to halt the continuing deterioration of the civilian infrastructure, and, in particular, to address the needs of the electricity sector. UNSCR 1153, which adopted his figure of $5.52 billion per phase, was passed on 20 February 1998, in the midst of a protracted international crisis over weapons inspections in Iraq. The military crisis drew international attention to the humanitarian crisis, setting a pattern for a new period in Iraq's fortunes. Graham-Brown comments that the massive increase in revenues "was evidently intended to send a signal that the Security Council was not targeting the Iraqi people, so retaining the high moral ground for hard-line states and ensuring that sanctions remained in place."

The lifting of the ceiling on oil sales at the end of 1999 raised the question of why, given the extensive controls over oil revenues and humanitarian purchases, there had ever been any ceiling at all.

**Some limitations of oil-for-food**

Earlier, we noted the dual challenge of recovery: reconstructing the public health infrastructure in Iraq, and restoring family purchasing power. The oil-for-food program could hope to stem deterioration in certain sectors, and in the case of the food ration in particular it could increase the nutrition available to family members, but it was inherently incapable of repairing the infrastructure to create a healthier environment, or of re-inflating the economy to provide jobs and higher real incomes. Hence the protest resignations of, first, Denis Halliday, and then Hans von Sponeck, from the position of UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, in charge of the operation of oil-for-food on the ground in Iraq in September 1998 and January 2000.
respectively. While the ceiling on oil sales existed, the revenues available were clearly inadequate: in April 1998, Denis Halliday told reporters that $10 billion was required to restore the electrical system, "but only $300m can be afforded" every six months under oil-for-food. Human Rights Watch, Save the Children (UK), and four other NGOs pointed out in August 2000 that, "short-term emergency assistance is no longer appropriate to the scale of this crisis": "The deterioration in Iraq's civilian infrastructure is so far reaching that it can only be reversed with extensive investment and development efforts." Estimates of the sums required for reconstruction of the infrastructure range from $50 billion to $100 billion, "of which $30bn must be spent on imported equipment, machinery and spare parts". Hence the need for foreign investment and foreign loans, as suggested by The Economist.

As for family purchasing power, the oil-for-food deal can barely affect this vital parameter. Tun Myat, von Sponeck's replacement as UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, said in January 2001, "the sad fact is that the average poor Iraqi household has become so poor that they can't afford to eat all the food they get for free...For many of these people, the food rations they get on a monthly basis represent the major part of their household income." Part of the ration must be sold to purchase clothes, travel, medicines, and so on. Harry Megally, director of the Middle East and North Africa division of Human Rights Watch, said in August 2000:

Sanctions intended to block the government's access to foreign exchange have contributed to pervasive life-threatening public health conditions for millions of innocent people. An emergency commodity assistance program like oil-for-food, no matter how well funded or well run, cannot reverse the devastating consequences of war and then ten years of virtual shut-down of Iraq's economy.

As the Humanitarian Panel observed in March 1999, "the humanitarian situation in Iraq will continue to be a dire one in the absence of a sustained revival of the Iraqi economy." The simple supply of goods — "aggregate commodity supplies," as Dreze and Gazdar referred to them — cannot solve the problems of family purchasing power.

The essential ingredients of a serious recovery package seem to include free access to foreign investment, foreign loans, foreign exchange, and foreign markets — to allow Iraqi businesses to earn their way in the world.
The Sanctions Committee

Under the oil-for-food deal, each six months there is a new “phase” of the program. Iraq submits a “distribution plan” to the UN, setting out the humanitarian budget in each sector for the next phase. Once the UN Secretariat agrees to the plan, Iraq then arranges contracts to acquire these goods from suppliers around the world. In its original form, once the contract had been signed, it was submitted to the Sanctions Committee for approval. The Sanctions Committee is made up of the 15 members of the UN Security Council—five permanent members, and eleven temporary members rotating in and out of the Council, and therefore also in and out of the Sanctions Committee. If a contract is approved, the money is released, and the goods supplied to Iraq. Contracts can be vetoed by a single member state—no reason need be given. No record has ever been published of the Committee’s proceedings. Graham-Brown notes that: “Until 1995, no record of its discussions or decisions was made public or even circulated to interested parties such as Humanitarian Organizations, Security Council members, or the sanctioned state, Iraq.”133 Interestingly, no list was compiled of “banned items”, until UNSCR 1051 formalized the procedures for potential dual-use items in March 1996.

According to Graham-Brown, the Sanctions Committee came to a “gentleman’s agreement” in December 1991 that members would “generally look favorably on requests” within certain categories of humanitarian items. Among these items were civilian clothing, supplies for babies and infants, and, most important, spare parts and materials for water treatment and sewage disposal plants. The Ambassador for Zimbabwe, on behalf of the non-aligned members of the Security Council, argued for certain sectors to simply be exempt from the Sanctions Committee veto—to be pre-approved. “However, the hard-line members of the Committee would not accept this, and the informal understanding was a compromise.”134 Britain and the US were not to relent for another eight years.

OPERATION DESERT FOX

The events of 1998 marked a turning point for Iraq, as the military crises at the beginning and end of the year moved the country to the center of international attention, and the human suffering caused by economic sanctions gained salience. I do not propose to examine either crisis in detail here, but there is an aspect of the December
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...crisis which is relevant to our concerns. The bombardment of Iraq in December 1998 followed a long, slow decline in relations between Iraq and the UNSCOM weapons inspectorate. The reason given by Britain and the United States for their bombing raids was that the head of UNSCOM, Richard Butler, had found Baghdad guilty of non-compliance with its obligations under UNSCR 687, and that Iraq had ceased cooperating with UNSCOM. On the first charge, Richard Butler's hardline report took UN diplomats by surprise: "The whole diplomatic community, which has been closely monitoring these inspections, was surprised by the report," said a senior Western diplomat. "We did not consider that the problems reported during the one month of inspections were major incidents." This was not to justify Iraqi actions, "but many of the problems encountered point to the need to establish clearer rules for inspections," according to the diplomat. "UNSCOM's mandate says it should have full access but take into account Iraq's sovereignty, dignity and national security concerns. This leaves room for questions, and will always give rise to problems."155

As for the ending of cooperation with UNSCOM, the Financial Times reported that "Mr. Saddam's decision to cripple UNSCOM was triggered by the US refusal explicitly to commit itself to lifting the oil embargo if Iraq complied with disarmament requirements – as stipulated by" Article 22 of UNSCR 687.156 Iraq had been seeking various reassurances from the Security Council before resuming full cooperation with the weapons inspectors. It had asked in particular about Paragraph 22 of UNSCR 687. On 30 October 1998, the day before Iraq ended cooperation, "the US rejected proposals by Russia, France and China that would have clearly committed the security council to a lifting of the oil embargo if Iraq complied with requirements to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction."157 The Economist observed: "Iraq interpreted this as confirmation of its long-held – and plausible – belief that, even if it did come clean on all its weapons, no American administration would lift the oil embargo so long as Mr. Hussein remained in power."158 Paragraph 22 of UNSCR 687 says that once nuclear, chemical, biological and missile disarmament has been verified, the oil embargo will be lifted. The US, with crucial British support, refused to reaffirm this. The 30 October Security Council clarification, which refused to reaffirm Article 22 was "drafted by Britain"; it "triggered Saddam's decree on 31 October that stymied UNSCOM entirely." The Independent commented,
“Saddam had some reason for anger – the integrity of Article 22 is crucial for him.”

Britain and the United States said that there was no alternative to the use of force in response to Iraqi obstructionism. There was an alternative: It was to reaffirm the provisions of UNSCR 687. A Security Council Resolution was subverted not by Baghdad, but by London and Washington, and the consequence was the collapse of the weapons inspection process and more loss of life and property destruction during Operation Desert Fox.

**THE FIRST MAJOR REFORM OF OIL-FOR-FOOD: UNSCR 1284**

At the beginning of 1999, Washington was forced to repair some of the diplomatic damage caused by the December raids. One reason for international anger was that the US/UK attacks had violated Paragraph 5 of UNSCR 1154, passed in March 1998, which stated that the Security Council would “remain actively seized” of the matter concerning Iraqi non-compliance, explicitly reserving to itself any decisions on how to respond to future Iraqi non-compliance. The Anglo-Saxon alliance was also on the defensive once again, as France introduced a proposal that the oil embargo be suspended as soon as a long-term weapons monitoring system was established.

On 13 January 1999, the US responded by calling for the removal of the ceiling on Iraqi oil exports – though this was not actually implemented until December 1999. *The Times*, reporting Britain’s support for the US proposal, commented:

> Since Iraq cannot meet existing UN oil sales quotas because of the low price of crude, the practical effect would be small. But the political effect would be huge: Britain would be free of claims that it is punishing the Iraqi people, while Baghdad could claim success in ridding itself of the embargo.

Britain could replace a formal ceiling on oil sales with a de facto cap, and would undermine the mounting criticism of the two sponsors of the sanctions. The *Washington Post* noted that: “The growing sense in many countries that the sanctions have outlived their usefulness seemed a major factor in spurring the US proposals.” It was “an open secret” that a growing majority of countries on the Security Council favor “or are leaning toward” lifting the sanctions. If the trend continued, UN diplomats believed the United States could become
Iraq

so isolated that it would be able to maintain the sanctions only by using its veto. "In that case, the same diplomats predict, it would be only a matter of time before Arab countries and possibly France and Russia, which are in line to win concessions in the Iraqi oil industry, start to break the embargo."\(^{164}\)

The Green Lists

The ceiling on oil sales was finally lifted in December 1999, with UNSCR 1284. A number of other reforms were also introduced, including the first of the "green lists". Early in the life of the Sanctions Committee, according to Hoskins, lists of approved items were occasionally circulated "to guide member states and other applicants."\(^{165}\) The Green Lists were an expansion and public formalization of this process, along the lines Zimbabwe had proposed eight years earlier. In each favored sector, items that were uncontroversial were described in a list of pre-approved goods that need not come before the Sanctions Committee, and which therefore could not be subject to the veto of the Committee members.

The water sector

Earlier we referred to what Graham-Brown described as a "gentlemen's agreement" in December 1991: not to interfere overly with imports in certain sectors, including spare parts and materials for water treatment and sewage disposal plants.\(^{166}\) We do not know how long the "agreement" lasted, or how well it functioned, but it is clear that water and sewage treatment did not receive "favorable" treatment in later years. In October 1999, Benon Sevan, the Executive Director of oil-for-food, reported that 54.4 percent of all applications in the water and sanitation sector circulated under phase V of the program had been placed on hold. An anonymous UN official told the US magazine Counterclock: "Basically, anything with chemicals or even pumps is liable to get thrown out."\(^{167}\)

The Secretary-General reported in September 2000 that: "In the area of water and sanitation, infrastructural degradation is evident across the sub sectors, from water treatment to water distribution." He noted that the "the decay rate of the entire system is accelerating." Four years of oil-for-food had resulted not in an improved situation, or in a stabilization of the situation, or even a steady decline. Four years of oil-for-food in one of the most critical sectors for child health had produced an "accelerating" rate of decay within the sector. The cause being "the absence of key complementary items currently on hold"
and adequate maintenance, spare parts and staffing.\textsuperscript{166} As of 31 April 2000, $702 million worth of contracts had been submitted to the Sanctions Committee for the water and sanitation sector. $447 million (63.8 percent) had been approved, and $168 million (23.4 percent) remained on hold.\textsuperscript{167} As in many sectors, the absence of some of the goods on hold may have impaired or blocked the performance of equipment which had been approved and imported and installed. This is the problem of “complementarity”, described by oil-for-food coordinator Benon Sevan in a report in October 1999. Sevan noted that a “serious issue” arises when applications are approved by the Sanctions Committee, and the equipment arrives in Iraq but then has to be kept in storage for an extended period “because another interrelated or complementary application is on hold”: “The absence of a single item of equipment, sometimes insignificant in size or value, can be sufficient to prevent the completion of an entire project.”\textsuperscript{170} “What is the use,” Sevan asked, in a statement to the Council in September 2000, “if approval is given for the purchase of a very expensive truck and the application for the purchase of its ignition key is placed on hold?”\textsuperscript{171} On this occasion, Sevan also made the following extraordinary remarks:

I am sure some of you will now tell me: “Benon, come on, not again, you sound like a broken record!” Well, so be it. As the Executive Director of the Iraq Program, I feel duty bound to draw the attention of the Council to the unacceptably high level of holds placed on applications.

A Green List for the water and sanitation sector, containing over 1500 items was approved by the Sanctions Committee on 11 August 2000. Despite this, in November 2001 the Secretary-General was still forced to complain that, “In order to significantly increase and improve water production and quality in the 15 governorates, major rehabilitation of water treatment plants is necessary and can be undertaken only when electromechanical equipment for the plants are released from hold.”\textsuperscript{172}

**Suspension of sanctions**

The other main plank of UNSCR 1284 was the offer to suspend sanctions in return for Iraqi cooperation with a new UN weapons inspection body named the United Nations Monitoring, Verification
and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) were to develop work programmes identifying "the key remaining disarmament tasks to be completed by Iraq," where "what is required of Iraq for the implementation of each task shall be clearly defined and precise" (Paragraph 7). On the other hand, this work program was not drawn up for up to two months, during which time Iraq was to permit new weapons inspectors into the country. Then, Iraq was asked to cooperate "in all respects" with the inspectors for another four months before sanctions on imports and exports might be lifted. The Security Council expressed its "intention" of suspending sanctions on civilian goods in those circumstances (Paragraph 33). Calling the Resolution's wording "too ambiguous," French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine said "we think it may give rise to an interpretation allowing some countries to keep on forever saying that the co-operation hasn't taken place and that, consequently, the embargo can't be suspended. That's what we fear."³⁷³

**The Anglo-Dutch proposal**

An interesting aspect of the resolution is that it originated in an independent initiative by London, one that Washington was quite unhappy with. Britain co-sponsored a draft UN resolution with the Netherlands which offered Iraq more than the US was willing to contemplate. For example, it seemed at one point as if the Anglo-Dutch proposal contained an offer to allow foreign firms to invest in Iraq's oil fields if Baghdad cooperated with UN weapons inspectors. The BBC reported that the United States was backing "most provisions" in the Anglo-Dutch draft resolution.³⁷⁴

In the event, the foreign investment component was watered down - the Secretary-General is supposed to establish a group of experts to "make recommendations on alternatives" to increase Iraqi oil exports, "including on the options for involving foreign oil companies in Iraq's oil sector." The Council "expresses its intention to take measures" based on these recommendations, after being notified by UN inspectors that Iraq has demonstrated "full cooperation" with inspectors for a period of 120 days (Paragraphs 30, 37).

The Anglo-Dutch draft also included a pledge to (temporarily) reduce the proportion of Iraq's oil revenues diverted to non-humanitarian purposes. Paragraph 24 stated that one-third of the funds
which would otherwise be transferred to the Compensation Fund shall be loaned, "on a fully reimbursable basis," to the humanitarian escrow account for northern and south-central Iraq. In other words, the proportion deducted for war reparations would fall from 30 to 20 percent. This was dropped completely from the final resolution.

The British initiative had succeeded in shaking the US sufficiently for Washington to accept the lifting of the ceiling. British and Dutch officials argued that, "America had for the first time agreed to a graduated easing of sanctions as a trade off for Iraqi co-operation with UNMOVIC and IAEA inspectors, instead of demanding cast-iron evidence of Iraq's total compliance on disarmament and/or Saddam's overthrow."  

On the other hand, White House National Security Adviser Sandy Berger revealed the traditional motivation for US support for the reforms when talking to CBS News: "I think the sanctions will have, in some sense, a greater degree of legitimacy and acceptability around the world because we offered them [the Iraqis] an opportunity to a path to come out of sanctions if they disarm, which they've rejected."  

SAME OLD STUPID SANCTIONS

Oil-for-food has now embarked on its third stage. The humanitarian program entered its second stage when the ceiling on oil sales was removed and the Green Lists were introduced. Now, with UNSCR 1409, the Green Lists have changed color, and it owes a great deal to British efforts.

UK/US convergence?

Observers detected somewhat divergent paths taken by Britain and the United States nearly a year after UNSCR 1284 had been passed. According to The Times,

In a move that could cause serious friction with the United States, which is working for the overthrow of the Saddam regime, Peter Hain, the Foreign Office Minister responsible for the Middle East, said that he wanted to see the decade-long embargo lifted.

Hain restated the need for six month's cooperation with weapons inspectors before sanctions could be suspended. "Although his message was a broad restatement of existing policy, the tone was
vastly different from earlier statements." Again according to The Times, "Britain has been under growing pressure from moderate Arab countries to ease the ten-year embargo on Iraq, which is being broken almost daily by flights, VIP visits and cross-border trade." Across the Arab and Islamic worlds, Britain and America's tough stand against Baghdad has been "widely criticized" for punishing the Iraqi people and leaving the regime intact. Hain revealed publicly that Britain had been making indirect approaches to Baghdad through friendly Arab governments in an effort to persuade the Iraqis to change their minds. He even hinted that if the Iraqis began to cooperate there could be movement on the question of the no-fly zones, the areas of northern and southern Iraq being patrolled by British and American warplanes. "Taken together, Mr. Hain's remarks suggest a reorientation of British policy towards Iraq," BBC News Online reported that: "Both Britain and the US are worried about the erosion of sanctions around the edges, demonstrated by a wave of international flights to Baghdad which have taken advantage of loopholes in the air embargo. The flights had been one powerful symbol of a dramatic upwelling of sympathy with ordinary people in Iraq, part of a wave of concern around the tenth anniversary of the imposition of sanctions -- note that most, if not all of the anti-war statements in the earlier section come from precisely this period.

However, there had been similar stirrings in Washington. US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Thomas Pickering, had said in 1998 that sanctions would continue "in perpetuity." In August 2000, Pickering rejected any alternatives to total sanctions as having "huge consequences and great difficulties." Then, in November 2000 Pickering declared that while US Iraq policy had been "a very effective course of action", it was "inevitable" that "time marches on and circumstances require us to adapt." Pickering laid out what was seen at the time as "a blueprint for the next administration" for narrowing the sanctions: keep sanctions on "dual-use items," "weapons of mass destruction delivery vehicles" and "the full range of military capabilities." Crucially, "make certain the UN and not Saddam Hussein continues to control money that comes from Iraqi oil exports." Faint traces of new thinking could be found at the beginning of the year. The Christian Science Monitor reported that on 25 February 2000, President Clinton said he was considering if there was "some way to continue our policy of meeting human needs without allowing Saddam Hussein to rearm."
It is a curious coincidence that Hain and US Under Secretary of State Pickering made their more conciliatory remarks on almost the same day in November 2000, just days after a high-level meeting between UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Vice-President Ezzat Ibrahim of Iraq. In this connection, it is worth noting that Menzies Campbell, in his November 2000 condemnation of the government's "undeclared war" on Iraq, also reiterated his party's call for the lifting of non-military sanctions against Iraq. The Guardian reported: "His remarks, coming at a time when sanctions against Iraq are crumbling fast, are particularly significant since Mr. Campbell is close to the Foreign Office establishment. There are many in the FO [Foreign Office] who believe that the government's policy towards Iraq is unsustainable."

So there is reason to believe the Daily Telegraph when it reported that: "Foreign Office officials have been privately rethinking the sanctions policy given the growing difficulty of defending it in the Arab world, and even at home." "According to British and American sources, the British recently told the Americans that the allies needed a new, more focused and effective strategy against Saddam. While the context suggests these remarks were primarily concerned with military strategy, the evidence suggests that British pressure almost certainly addressed the sanctions issue as well, and that there was a convergence in Washington and London - in some policy-making circles, at least. Hence, the reports at the beginning of 2001 that, "America and Britain are preparing to offer radical changes to answer charges that the sanctions disproportionately harm the Iraqi people." 

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1409
The first step came from Norway, which took charge of the Sanctions Committee in January 2001, and promptly proposed lifting the export ban "on around 80 percent of the goods on the sanctions list." "We have gone through all the rejected export applications to Iraq, and shown where unsubstantiated withholding of contracts have taken place," said Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorbjorn Jagland. "We have shown this to other members of the Security Council, and received a positive response," he said. This initiative became the basis of UNSCR 1409, passed in May 2002, which was, in essence, very simple. Instead of having Green Lists of pre-approved goods which did not have to go before the Sanctions Committee, the new oil-for-food program would have an Amber List (or "Goods Review List") of suspect dual-use goods, which would have to go before the
Sanctions Committee. The presumption of innocence was introduced – unless the item was identified on the military or dual-use lists, it was acceptable.

The problem here is that the flow of goods is not in itself the root of the problem. The humanitarian crisis cannot be solved by increasing “aggregate commodity supplies.” The framework created by UNSCR 1409 merely reformulates the perennial problems of human rights impact, lack of distinction, and punitive structure and intent. There is no effort to address the problems of massive infrastructure costs and collapsed family purchasing power. There is nothing here to facilitate direct access to foreign investment, foreign loans, foreign exchange or foreign markets. The purpose is still to buttress rather than erode sanctions. As an unnamed US official said in May 2001: “In reality this is a change in perceptions.”

CONCLUSION

Applying the three-dimensional analysis of human rights, distinction, and punishment, it is clear that throughout the twelve years under discussion, the economic sanctions have retained their lethal power even as the flow of humanitarian goods has increased dramatically. Insofar as the sanctions have been concerned, Britain has never championed either a human-rights-impact assessment, at the procedural level, or internationally recognized human rights themselves, at the substantive level. While sponsoring discussions developing the concept of “smart sanctions” for use elsewhere in the world, London has steadfastly refused to accept a withdrawal from comprehensive economic sanctions with regard to Iraq, despite the concerns raised by, among others, the House of Commons Select Committee on International Development. Britain has played a crucial part in attacking the integrity of UNSCR 687, supposedly the foundation stone of the sanctions regime, by denying the validity of Paragraph 22, which promised Iraq an end to restrictions on its exports in return for an internationally validated disarmament process. It was the October 1998 Security Council letter drafted by Britain – which refused to reaffirm Paragraph 22 – that led to the final breakdown in relations between Baghdad and UNSCOM; which led to Operation Desert Fox and the withdrawal of UN weapons inspectors at the behest of the United States; and which led to the inspections vacuum from December 1998 to the time of writing in June 2002. On the other hand, Britain has played a part in reducing the punitive
character of the sanctions – for example, by helping to develop the offer of a staged suspension of economic sanctions in UNSCR 1284. Unfortunately, such changes have been marginal in character. They have been part of a series of tactical retreats by both Britain and the United States, in response to increasing pressure from world opinion. Both London and Washington have remained committed to the priority of their own interests over the basic needs and human rights of the 22 million people of Iraq. The fundamental dual objective of the United States and of Britain appears to have been the defeat and destruction of Saddam Hussein while retaining the Ba'athist regime. This goal has remained steady, regardless of the human cost, and the strategy has experienced only tactical modifications as the political costs have mounted. Britain has shown signs of feeling greater pressure than the United States, hence its early wobbles on UNSC Resolutions 706 and 712, when it apparently indicated its willingness to accept a removal of some of the more humiliating aspects of the oil-for-food deal, and its sponsorship of the precursor to UNSCR 1284 – the Anglo-Dutch draft resolution which went considerably beyond Washington’s zone of tolerance. There is evidence to suggest that Britain also played an important part in the process leading up to the latest revision of the sanctions regime, the presumption of innocence for civilian imports into Iraq built into UNSCR 1409, and that it has sought strenuously to achieve Iraqi acceptance of the disarmament/suspension process involved in UNSCR 1284. However, the block on direct access to foreign investment, foreign loans, foreign exchange and foreign markets has remained absolute. The civilian infrastructure has been denied speedy reconstruction, and millions of ordinary Iraqi families have been denied the opportunity to earn living wages. Foreign Office Minister, Brian Wilson, was forthright in June 2001: “There can be little doubt that the resumption of normal economic activity would benefit the Iraqi people” – he went on to repeat the disingenuous line that “this cannot happen while the Iraqi regime continues to defy UN resolutions.” The core of the UN resolutions is the disarmament process, and Iraq’s incentive for complying with the disarmament process was fatally wounded by Britain’s sabotage of Paragraph 23. Britain remains committed to maintaining Iraq in “strict tutelage”, and the lessons are learned every day by Iraqi children. Lessons taught in Drogheda. Lessons which have been taught through the centuries. Lessons of hunger and despair.
NOTES

3. Ibid., pp. 240, 264, 255.
12. Cordesman and Hashim, Iraq, pp. 4, 146.
13. Ibid., p. 160.
15. Ibid.

(Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998, 2nd edn), p. 257. Disinfectants, surgical instruments, surgical gloves, needles and syringes, and other basic medical supplies were not exempted from the sanctions.

21. CESR, UNSanctioned Suffering, p. 35.
27. Graham-Brown, Sanctioning Saddam, p. 78.
28. Ibid., p. 79.
30. There were also three other demands in UNSCR 687, though none of these was explicitly linked to the lifting of economic sanctions. First, the Kuwait–Iraq border was to be defined by a UN Commission; Iraq was to accept the findings of this Commission, and to accept the sovereignty of Kuwait itself; and Iraq was to accept the establishment of a monitored, demilitarized zone between Iraq and Kuwait. These demands were fulfilled with a declaration from the Iraqi parliament in November 1994. Second, Kuwaiti and third-party nationals held in Iraq were to be separated, and some Kuwaiti property returned. On this issue, the Kuwaiti Government continues to accuse Baghdad of holding 600 missing Kuwaiti citizens; most state-owned property has been returned, but Kuwaiti military equipment and most privately-owned assets taken in 1991 appear to remain in Iraqi hands, according to Eric Hoskins (Hoskins, “Humanitarian Impacts”, p. 139). Strictly speaking, Iraq was not actually required by the Resolution to return property—Paragraph 15: “Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on the steps taken to facilitate the return of all Kuwaiti property seized by Iraq, including a list of any property that Kuwait claims has not been returned or which has not been returned intact.” As for the prisoner issue, Paragraph 30 merely required Iraqi cooperation with the Red Cross; it did not demand the return of all missing individuals. Third, Iraq was to renounce international terrorism, and was no longer to allow any organization dedicated towards the commission of such acts to operate within its territory. According to Paragraph 33, these were conditions, along with the disarmament provisions, for the declaration of a formal ceasefire between Kuwait and its allies on the one hand, and Iraq on the other. So there were four different sets of conditions required for lifting export sanctions; for lifting import sanctions; for ending the arms embargo; and for a formal end to the war.
32. CESR, UNSanctioned Suffering, p. 43.
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34. "Use of the phrase 'regime change' marks an important strengthening of Mr Blair's rhetoric, clearly echoing the White House's increasingly bellicose language since 11 September, and signals a break by the Prime Minister from traditional Foreign Office caution on the issue." Independent (8 April 2002).
35. Financial Times (14 February 2002).
40. The Times (28 September 2001), p. 2, reporting an interview on BBC News 24. Times journalist Philip Webster comments that this is the "first time it has been explicitly admitted." However, the Sunday Times reported during the war that "the Americans have established an elaborate system to try to track the Iraqi president...so he can be targeted in an operation called 'The Yamamoto Option', named after the Japanese admiral assassinated by the US during World War II" (17 February 1991), p. 3. For an example of a direct denial by a British minister, see Douglas Hogg, then Foreign Office minister, "Saddam's removal is in no sense a war aim" Guardian, 20 February 1991).
42. Cited in Hiro, Neighbors, Not Friends, p. 129.
45. Cordesman and Hashim, Iraq, pp. 154, 155.
47. Cordesman and Hashim, Iraq, p. 159ff.
48. Ibid., p. 358.
52. Reuters (2 August 2000).
54. The Economist (8 April 2000).


60. Sami Al-Khalil, Republic of Fear: The Inside Story of Saddam’s Iraq (London: Century Hutchinson, 1990), pp. 93. Al-Khalil was a pseudonym, dropped from later editions.


62. Ibid., p. 29.

63. Corderman and Hashim, Iraq p. 127.

64. Ibid., p. 144.


66. Ibid., p. 92.


68. Ibid., p. 92.


71. UNICEF press release, “Iraq surveys show ‘humanitarian emergency,’” 12 August 1999, (CF/DOL/FR/1999/29) available at www.unicef.org/newsline/99p29.htm. The cumulative mortality estimate is available at www.unicef.org/ireseval/pdfs/iraqSext.pdf. As we see from Table 3.1, the under-five mortality rate declined quickly and smoothly over the period 1960 to 1990. UNICEF observes: “If this mortality rate trend had continued through the 1990s, the rate would have been around 30 per 1000 live births in 1999. However, the latest surveys show that the actual mortality rate in 1999 is around 130.” The mortality estimate
is derived by estimating the excess of actual over potential deaths in each of the eight years under consideration.


75. See Table 4.2 in Hoskins, “Humanitarian Impacts,” p. 115, for the results of the IST and other 1991 surveys.


83. CESR, *Unsanctioned Suffering*, pp. 34, 36.

84. Ibid., p. 38.

85. Ibid., p. 39.


89. Ibid., p. 12.

92. Ibid., pp. 107, 108.
94. Ibid., p. 12.
96. Dreze and Gazdar, *Hunger and Poverty*, p. 3.
99. UN World Food Program, "Destitution", in UNOCHI, Special Topics. 
100. UNOCHI, Special Topics. FPII estimates from Food and Agriculture Organization, *Evaluation of food & nutrition in Iraq* (Rome, 1995). It is not clear whether the Government of Iraq food ration was included in the FPII estimates.
103. Ibid., pp. 136, 137.
109. Ibid.
114. Ibid.
119. *Humanitarian Panel report*, para. 8. The full sentence reads as follows: "In presenting the above recommendations to the Security Council, the panel reiterates its understanding that the humanitarian situation in Iraq will continue to be a grave one in the absence of a sustained revival of the Iraqi economy, which in turn cannot be achieved solely through remedial humanitarian efforts." This document can be found via an entry for 7 April 1991 on the official UN Office of the Iraq Program chronology at www.un.org/Depts/iraq/background/chron.html.
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124. Coesmans and Hashim, Iraq, p. 147.
126. Ibid, p. 75.
129. Boone, Gazdar and Hussain, Sanctions against Iraq, p. 38.
132. James Fine. Iraq Sanctions Catastrophe”.
133. Ibid.
136. Hoskins. “Humanitarian Impacts”, p. 120.
139. Ibid, p. 76.
140. Ibid, p. 81ff.
141. Ibid, p. 78.
142. Ibid, p. 82.
143. Ibid, p. 83.
146. Ibid, p. 83.
149. Cited in Coesmans and Hashim, Iraq, p. 140.
152. Humanitarian Panel report, para. 58. See note 119 for the full text.
153. Graham-Brown. Sanctioning Saddam, p. 70ff. Graham-Brown goes on to note that “the lack of access to the Council’s discussions makes it very difficult to either substantiate or discount any specific allegation.”
155. Financial Times (17 December 1998). Note that “in his report to the UN, Mr Butler conceded, In statistical terms, the majority of the inspections
of facilities and sites under the ongoing monitoring system were carried out with Iraq's cooperation” (The Times, 22 December 1998). Russian ambassador to the UN, Sergei Lavrov, “said the report's conclusion was biased, and he echoed Iraq's contention that Butler had only cited five incidents in 300 inspection operations” over the previous month (AP, 17 December 1998) One crucial incident, on 9 December, was the refusal of entry to 12 UNSCOM inspectors at a Ba'ath Party regional headquarters in Baghdad - not a weapons factory, an event later described by the Sunday Times as “a decisive moment in the Iraqi leader's war of attrition with the West” (20 December 1998, p. 135). A declassified section of the Butler report “included the disclosure that dismantled missiles were being stored in wooden boxes hidden underground at the Baath party offices on the outskirts of Baghdad...concealed in a cellar below a shed normally used to house uniforms.” The Butler report states that “during the last months of 1997” the Iraqis moved the “sensitive military material by night to a large shed within the compound of the offices of the Aadhamiyya district of the city (The Times, 17 December 1998). Note that the information used by the inspectors was, even if correct, a year old. Scott Ritter, who resigned as UNSCOM inspector because he felt the West was trying to rein in UNSCOM, claims: “Butler wrote that he had solid evidence of 'proscribed materials' at the Ba'ath headquarters. I believe from my sources that is not true” (Mail on Sunday, 20 December 1998). At the time, the turning away of the inspectors was reported simply as Iraqi defiance. The true story was much more complex, however.

The FT reported that inspectors were turned away “because modalities for inspections agreed in 1996 stipulated that a limited number of inspectors would enter such sensitive sites”. Butler argued, on the other hand, that “these modalities had been revised in subsequent discussions with Iraqi officials.” The FT concluded by quoting an unnamed “senior Western diplomat” in Baghdad: “the revised modalities for inspecting sensitive sites, and allowing more inspectors to enter, had been targeted at large military installations, whereas the Baath party building over which Iraq and inspector clashed was located in a Baghdad house” (17 December 1998, p. 8). The Guardian reported: “In the December 9 run-in, Iraqi officials allowed four inspectors to tour the site's yard” (where the vital shed was located) in accordance with the 1996 agreement (16 December 1998, p. 14). The Iraqis appear to have observed the correct procedures in relation to sensitive sites other than large military installations. There may well have been a genuine disagreement over which arrangements applied to inspections of the headquarters complex, a disagreement which ought to have been clarified and negotiated between the Security Council and Baghdad. This crucial incident was portrayed as a straightforward case of defiance and noncompliance, when, in fact, it was anything but straightforward, and a neutral Western diplomat is reported to have believed that the Iraqis had some arguments on their side.

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158. The Economist (7 November 1998).
160. William Arkin, an influential US military commentator, has suggested that the bombing raids were actually targeted at the regime's internal security apparatus, "using the intelligence gathered [secretly] through UNSCOM", William Arkin, Washington Post 17 January 1999, cited in Graham-Brown, Sanctions and Saddam, p. 103 n.
174. BBC News Online, "Iraq spurns Anglo-Dutch offer" (30 May 1999), available at news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/peace/iraq/533401.stm.
175. Draft Anglo-Dutch resolution available from CASI site at www.casi.ac.uk/societies/casi/info/uk-dutch.html.
177. Reuters, "US Says UN Vote Adds Legitimacy to Iraq Embargo" (19 December 1999).
180. UPI (29 November 2000).
181. UPI (20 November 2000).
188. Financial Times (28 May 2001).
189. See Richard Butler, Saddam Defiant: The Threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the Crisis of Global Security (London: Phoenix, 2001), p. 224, for details of the encounter with the US Ambassador to the UN, Peter Burleigh, that led to the immediate withdrawal of UNSCOM officials from Iraq. P. 202 gives details of the earlier meeting with Burleigh which precipitated Butler’s first order to UNSCOM to withdraw.
4 Oil, Sanctions, Debt and the Future

Abbas Alnasrawi

Looking at the world map of oil we find certain facts that have shaped the history of Iraq and its regional context and will continue to do so for a long time to come. At the end of 1999 world oil reserves amounted to 1033 billion barrels of oil, with two-thirds of these reserves to be found in five countries (Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates). Similarly, in that year these countries were responsible for nearly one-third of the world’s oil production of 72 million barrels per day (mbd) and over 40 percent of the world’s oil exports of 41 mbd. In relation to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), these countries command more than four-fifths of the organization’s reserves and two-thirds of its output and exports. Therefore, what happens to the oil industry in any one of these countries will affect the fortunes of its neighboring countries. Moreover, the high degree of concentration of oil reserves, output and exports in these five countries makes them a constant target of outside power machination and interference. Additionally, it is recognized that the oil sectors in these five countries have until recently been under the direct control of a handful of multinational oil corporations (BP, Exxon, Shell, Texaco, Gulf, etc.).

This chapter will attempt to deal with six topics: (1) historical background; (2) oil and the Iraqi economy; (3) the Iraq-Iran war; (4) the invasion of Kuwait; (5) the United Nations sanctions regime; and (6) Iraq’s foreign debt. I will conclude with some speculative thoughts on the future of the Iraqi economy.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The home governments of multinational oil corporations (US, UK, France) have all played significant roles in enabling their companies to acquire oil concessions, to penetrate markets and to deal with the governments of oil-producing countries. Depending on the situation and the historical context, these governments have at times cooperated with each other and at times opposed one another. In the
case of the United States, evidence of the close relationship between the US-based oil multinational corporations (MNCs) and the US government is abundant and goes back to the early part of the twentieth century.

During World War II, and because of the war conditions, American oil companies could not produce enough oil to provide the funds promised to the Saudi government. Instead, these companies were able to persuade the Roosevelt administration to provide these funds in order to not jeopardize the oil concession. The American President solved the problem in 1943 by stating to the administrator of the Lend-Lease program that: “in order to enable you to arrange Lend-Lease aid to the government of Saudi Arabia, I hereby find that the defense of Saudi Arabia is vital to the defense of the United States.”

Following World War II, Secretary of State Dean Acheson instructed the Economic Cooperation Administration, or the Marshall Plan, that “in every petroleum transaction an American company must be involved” and “deliveries [of oil] from sources other than the United States and possessions will be eligible only if made by American owned and operated companies.”

The policy of insisting that American companies be the ones to sell oil to Europe was most conducive to the MNCs’ plans to expand oil output in the Middle East for their operations in Europe. Again, following the nationalization of BP operations in Iran, the State Department, in cooperation with the British government (following the 1953 overthrow of Iranian Prime Minister, Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh), was instrumental in finding the solution which introduced American companies to Iran’s oil and reintroduced that oil to the world market.

In 1958, when the monarchy in Iraq was overthrown, the US government gave strong consideration to military intervention to undo the revolution. The intervention could not be justified as long as the new government respected Western oil interests, which it did. This near intervention led at least one observer to note that gunboat diplomacy was clearly in line with the State Department commitment to pipelines and profits.

In the early 1970s, the US government provided legal dispensation to oil companies in order to enable them to enter into collective negotiations with OPEC over prices. One does not have to review the whole record to establish the interest in and the commitment of the US government to oil issues. This relationship was assessed by the US Senate Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations, a division
of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, in a 1975 study in which it said that the oil companies administered the system of allocating output between oil producing countries with the assistance of the US government. The system was premised on two basic assumptions: (1) that the companies were instruments of US foreign policy; and (2) that the interests of the companies were basically identical with US national interests. The US foreign policy objectives were identified to be: (1) that the United States provide a steady supply of oil to Europe and Japan at reasonable prices for economic recovery and sustained economic growth; (2) that stable governments be maintained in pro-Western oil producing countries; and (3) that American-based firms be a dominant force in the world oil trade.3

Again in the 1970s, the 1980s and the 1990s, working through Saudi Arabia, the US government ensured that OPEC oil supplies were at such levels as to keep prices from either skyrocketing or collapsing. Thus, in its study, *The Changing Structure of the International Oil Market*, the General Accounting Office of the United States Congress described the policy coordination between the two governments in these terms:

To achieve the US objective of access to adequate supplies at "reasonable prices," the United States uses its bilateral relationships with friendly producers in an attempt to influence their pricing and production decisions. This is especially apparent with Saudi Arabia with which the United States has a "very active" bilateral policy. Frequent visits by cabinet-level officials including the Secretaries of State, Treasury, Defense, and Energy during the past several years illustrate this bilateralism.4

In the 1990s the US government and its allies went to war in order to keep oil from falling into unfriendly hands.

**THE ROLE OF OIL IN THE IRAQI ECONOMY**

Statistically, one way to measure the relative importance of oil in the Iraqi economy is to trace the behavior of oil revenue. In 1960 Iraq's oil income was $266 million and rose to $521 million in 1970. However, the extraordinary developments of the 1970s such as the phenomenal, OPEC-led rise in oil prices, the nationalization of the oil sector, the Iranian revolution and the continued rise in exports pushed Iraq's oil income from $1 billion in 1971 to $26.1 billion in
1980. With such a rise in income there was an associated increase in the relative importance of the oil sector from a mere 3 percent of GDP in 1950 to 56 percent in 1980. This meant that Iraq's dependence on oil became irreversible.

What does it mean to be an oil-based or an oil-dependent economy? It means among other things the following:

- **Economic activity, employment and income are determined by the amount of oil revenue the economy receives from selling its oil abroad.** In other words people's livelihood and economic security become highly dependent on what happens to the world oil market.

- **Oil revenue becomes the foundation of the state in that oil income, which flows into state coffers, becomes its primary source of revenue instead of tax revenue. The state now can use its newly found source of income and power as it pleases: to build its armed forces and security organizations, to provide social services, to expand the civil service, to distribute funds to its favorite groups and regions of the country and to wage wars.**

- **Oil also becomes the main source of funds for investment in industry, agriculture, health and education and the nation's infrastructure.**

- **Oil revenue enables the state to break its financial dependence on its citizens. In other words the state no longer needs its citizens to pay taxes to finance its activities.**

It is worth pointing out that the 1970s was Iraq's prosperous decade. The spectacular rise in oil revenue made it possible for all economic and social indicators to rise at very impressive rates. That performance was never to be repeated. The decade of the 1970s also witnessed the growth of Iraq's oil industry in all its components, as funds were available for investment. This investment was never to be duplicated in the next two decades because of the Iraq–Iran war and the UN-imposed sanctions following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. An oil-dependent country has no control over its oil income, since such income is determined by how much it can sell and at what price factors, which are determined by forces in the international political economy which are beyond the control of any one oil-exporting country. This was very clearly the case when Iraq's oil income
collapsed, first in the context of the Iraq-Iran war, and then in the context of the UN sanctions regime.

In the 1980s several market factors, such as the stagnant conditions of the world economy, the success of energy conservation measures and the emergence of new oil exporting regions, had a depressing effect on OPEC's and Iraq's oil fortunes. The problem for Iraq was compounded by the devastation of the Iraq-Iran war, which resulted in a sharp decline in the contribution of the oil sector from 86 percent of GDP in 1980 to 23 percent in 1989. For the first few years of the 1990s this contribution declined to some 4–5 percent as Iraq ceased to be an oil exporting country.

OIL AND THE IRAQ-IIRAN WAR

When the government of Iraq decided to launch its war against Iran in September 1980, the Iraqi economy was on the threshold of another decade of economic growth. The immense increase in oil revenue mentioned earlier had made it possible for the government simultaneously to increase spending on the infrastructure, the bureaucracy, goods-producing sectors, social services, foreign assistance, imports, and the military. In addition, it was in a position to have a balance of payments surplus and thus to accumulate unprecedented levels of foreign reserves. However, the war-caused destruction and the closure of oil facilities led oil output, export and revenue to decline very sharply—by 60 percent between 1980 and 1981.

In a country that had grown dependent on a single export these external shocks forced the economy to cope with a number of serious problems, some of which had become structural. Among such problems were the following:

- Iraq's major oil exporting capacity was either destroyed, blocked or closed;
- Iraq's heavy industries were destroyed or in need of major repair;
- the infrastructure was extensively damaged;
- a major segment of the labor force (one-fifth) was in the armed forces;
- agricultural and industrial growth was either stagnant or negative;
- rural workers had either been drafted into the army or drifted to the city;
• the large number of foreign workers imported during the war had become a burden on the economy;
• dependence on food imports increased;
• inflation became a structural problem;
• privatization was not succeeding according to expectation;
• Iraq became a major debtor country;
• levels of imports declined;
• development spending virtually ceased; and
• the higher living standards which were promised during the war could not be delivered in the post-war period.

In short, the government’s big gamble of winning a quick victory over Iran led the economy to a dead end with no prospect for recovery. What staved off total economic collapse was the pumping in of funds and credit by the Gulf states, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the former Soviet Union.5

MILITARIZATION OF THE ECONOMY

One of the most significant changes to take place in the Iraqi economy in the decades of the 1970s and the 1980s was the massive shift of labor from the civilian economy to the military and the sharp increase in military spending and military imports. In 1975 Iraq had 3 percent of its labor force in the armed forces. By the time the war with Iran ended in 1988 the government was employing more than 21 percent of the labor force, or 1 million persons, in the armed forces.

The other side of this expansion in the armed forces was the sharp rise of the military’s claims on Iraq’s fiscal resources. Thus, in 1970 the government spent less than $1 billion on the military, or 19 percent of the GDP – a high ratio by world standards. By 1980, the government raised military spending to $12.1 billion, or nearly 23 percent of GDP. The share of military spending, which amounted to $111 billion during the period 1981–88 was 40 percent of that period’s GDP.

Another way of looking at the burden of military spending is to relate it to Iraq’s oil revenue. During the eight-year period 1981–88, military spending, which amounted to $111 billion, was 154 percent of the same period’s oil revenue of $72 billion. According to the Iraqi president, the country imported and used $102 billion of foreign military equipment during the Iraq-Iran war. This bankrupting effect of the war explains why Iraq had to exhaust its external reserves, increase its foreign debt and suppliers’ credit, resort to international
Iraq entered the post-war period with a smaller and disorganized economy that was overburdened with unemployment, inflation and foreign debt. To cope with the economic crisis, and to also fund an ambitious program of military industrialization, the government had to rely on a shrinking source of oil revenue, which in 1988 generated only $11 billion compared to $26 billion in 1980.

The exhausted state of the economy was made worse by the 9 percent decline in GDP in 1989 over 1988 – a decline that constituted a severe blow to the government and forced it to adopt an austerity program of spending. However, to reduce government spending in a period of severe economic crisis had the effect of worsening the crisis. What the economy needed at that particular juncture was an increase in the supply of goods to dampen inflation and restore some of the living standards that were severely eroded during the war. In order to achieve these objectives, the government had only one option – to raise oil revenue and it was in this particular arena that the stage was set for Iraq's conflict with Kuwait.

The collapse of the price of crude oil in the mid-1980s persuaded OPEC member countries to agree in October 1986 to return to their system of quotas and to set the price at $18 per barrel, a price that they deemed to be necessary for their economic and social development. Yet several countries, especially Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, chose not to comply with their quotas, thus forcing the price to decline to $12 per barrel by October 1988. Although market conditions improved, causing the price to reach $20 per barrel in January 1990, Kuwait and other non-complying OPEC countries decided to raise their output to such a level that the price declined by one-third by June 1990 – a decline that wiped out a major portion of the oil income of Iraq and other OPEC countries. In the case of Iraq, a decline in the price of $6 per barrel meant a reduction of $6 billion in oil revenue per year, a loss that Iraq could not afford. The Iraqi president characterized oil actions leading to above-quota production and lower prices as causing damage to the Iraqi economy that was similar to the economic damage inflicted by conventional wars.5

In addition to the issue of oil production and prices, Iraq accused Kuwait of using diagonal drilling to pump oil from that part of the
Rumaila oil field that was located inside Iraqi territory. On 17 July 1990 the Iraqi president accused rulers of the Gulf states of being tools in an international campaign to halt Iraq's scientific and technological progress and to impoverish its people. On 27 July 1990 and in the shadow of Iraqi troop movements along the Iraq–Kuwait border, OPEC decided to raise the reference price of oil from $18 to $21 per barrel and adopt new quotas. But on 2 August 1990, the government of Iraq decided to invade and occupy Kuwait.

The invasion of Kuwait was looked at as a quick solution to Iraq's economic crisis and to the regime's failure to improve living standards. This policy decision was articulated by the deputy prime minister of the economy who stated that Iraq would be able to pay its debt in less than five years; that the "new Iraq" would have a much higher oil production quota; that its income from oil would rise to $38 billion; and that it would be able to vastly increase spending on development projects and imports.7

The invasion of Kuwait prompted the United Nations Security Council, under the leadership of the United States, to vote on 6 August 1990 to adopt United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 661, which imposed a sweeping and comprehensive system of sanctions on Iraq which is still in effect.

**OIL AND THE UN SANCTIONS REGIME**

The centerpiece of the 1990 sanctions system was UNSCR 661. This resolution and subsequent sanctions resolutions created a set of conditions which virtually cut off Iraq from the world economy. The sanctions regime included a ban on all imports enforced by a naval and air blockade, an oil embargo, a freezing of Iraqi government financial assets abroad, an arms embargo, suspension of international flights, and a prohibition on financial transactions with Iraq. The UNSC also called upon member states to enforce naval and air blockades against Iraq. All shipping on the Shatt al-Arab waterway in the south of Iraq was intercepted and all vessels approaching the Jordanian port of Aqaba were boarded and inspected.8 In short, the embargo was intended to prevent anything from getting into or out of Iraq. The embargo appeared to support the contention that the Security Council was using famine and starvation as potential weapons to force Iraq into submission.9

Given Iraq's utter dependence on oil exports and commodity imports, it was not surprising that the embargo succeeded in shutting
off 90 percent of Iraq's imports and 97 percent of its exports and produced serious disruptions to the economy and hardships to the people. Needless to say, these disruptions were aggravated and magnified in the aftermath of the bombing of Iraq's infrastructure. The vast scale of destruction, which has virtually set the economy back to nineteenth-century status, should not be surprising in light of the fact that the initial plan of bombing which had focused on 84 targets was expanded in the course of the war to include 723 targets.  

Between the August 1990 imposition of the UN sanctions and the December 1996 resumption of oil sales, the Iraqi people endured conditions of poverty, disease, economic underdevelopment, social disintegration, and levels of emigration, unemployment, and school dropout rates described by some as genocidal; conditions that have been maintained to this day.

What about oil under the conditions of sanctions? Oil became the focus of attention of both the government of Iraq and the United Nations for different considerations. For Iraq, oil is the foundation of the country's economy and livelihood as well as the state's basis for survival, power and rule. For the United Nations, Iraq's oil is an instrument to be used to enforce its decisions and implement its resolutions from border demarcation to making payments to war victims, as well as divesting Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and monitoring future developments in the country. In other words, by regulating Iraq's oil sales and Iraq's commodity imports, the United Nations sought to control the government's room to maneuver. This has been the posture the UN has taken from the time Security Council Resolution 687 - the ceasefire resolution - was passed in April 1991.

Oil has played a central role in all that has taken place between the United Nations and the government of Iraq since the imposition of sanctions. To begin with, Resolution 687 empowered the Sanctions Committee to approve the financial transactions necessary to provide adequate funding for the importation of humanitarian supplies into Iraq. The Iraqi government's repeated requests to the Committee that it be allowed to sell oil independently of UN controls and to import such supplies, were denied. It is important to note that prior to its adoption of Resolution 687, the UNSC had at its disposal two documents regarding conditions in Iraq. The first was the 20 March 1991 report of the Altissari mission which stated:

I, together with all my colleagues, am convinced that there needs to be a major mobilization and movement of resources to deal
with aspects of this deep crisis in the field of agriculture and food, water, sanitation and health....It is unmistakable that the Iraqi people may soon face a further imminent catastrophe, which could include epidemic and famine, if massive life-supporting needs are not rapidly met....Time is short.\textsuperscript{11}

The other document was the 22 March Sanctions Committee determination which stated:

In the light of the new information available to it, the Committee has decided to make, with immediate effect, a general determination that humanitarian circumstances apply with respect to the entire civilian population of Iraq in all parts of Iraq's national territory.\textsuperscript{12}

Since Iraq's foreign held assets were frozen and its oil exports were embargoed, the Sanctions Committee's determination proved to be of no benefit to the population.

Then there was the mission led by the Executive Delegate of the UN Secretary-General, which submitted its 15 July 1991 report on humanitarian needs in Iraq. The new mission concentrated its work on four sectors: food supply, water and sanitation systems, the oil sector, and power generation. This mission estimated that the cost of rehabilitating these four sectors would be $22.1 billion.\textsuperscript{13}

The mission also offered a one-year estimate of the costs based on scaled-down goals rather than pre-war standards and came up with the figure of $6.8 billion for food imports; power generation; the oil sector; health services; water and sanitation; and essential agricultural inputs. Aside from the humanitarian merits of the case, the mission advanced two other arguments. First, the amount of funds that Iraq required to meet its humanitarian needs were simply beyond what the international community would be willing to provide. Only Iraq had the resources to fund its needs, provided it were to be allowed to export its oil. Second, Iraq should not have to compete for scarce aid funds with a famine-ravaged Horn of Africa and a cyclone-hit Bangladesh.

In August/September 1991 the UNSC finally relented and passed Resolutions 706 and 712 which authorized the sale of oil in the amount of $1.6 billion over six months in order to finance UN operations in Iraq, provide financial resources to the Compensation Fund and pay oil transit fees to Turkey, leaving only $669 million for Iraq's imports,
a level of funding which had been described by the UN Secretary-General as being $800 million short of the minimum necessary to meet Iraq's humanitarian and essential civilian requirements.

The Iraqi government rejected the 706/712 oil sales schemes on the grounds of their restrictive terms, which it considered to be a major infringement upon its sovereignty. It is worth noting that the Iraqi technocrats who were in favor of oil export resumption argued that the restrictive conditions were bound to be relaxed and that it would be in Iraq's long-term interest to re-establish its position in the world oil market and that the initial oil sales would give a much needed boost to the faltering economy and the collapsing Iraqi currency.

Policy-makers in Iraq, however, did not share these views since the thrust of Iraqi government policy was to strive for the total lifting of the sanctions rather than their partial relaxation. This can be seen in the position that the Iraqi president stated in October 1991 when he announced that "it should be clear that Iraq could live under sanctions for 10 to 20 years without asking anything from anyone." Again, in 1992 Iraq's deputy prime minister told the UNSC that Iraq was ready to hold talks with the UN for the purpose of resuming oil exports, provided such sales were not governed by any UN resolutions.15

Although several rounds of negotiations were held between the government and the UN, they failed to bridge the gap between the two sides and were suspended in 1993. The failure to implement Resolutions 706 and 712 meant the continued deterioration of the Iraqi economy and further decline in the living conditions of the people.

OIL-FOR-FOOD UNDER RESOLUTIONS 986/1153/1284/1330

It was not until April 1995, when the UNSC decided to revisit the issue of sanctions, that it adopted Resolution 986 allowing Iraq to sell $2 billion worth of oil in every six-month period to provide more resources to the Compensation Fund and to fund various UNSC-mandated operations in Iraq as well as to help Iraq purchase civilian supplies. Except for the increase in oil income to $2 billion under this resolution, the core of the scheme remained the same. The UNSC retained for itself the required mechanisms to monitor all oil sales and Iraqi government purchases, with all funds moving in and out of a UN-administered escrow account.

With 30 percent of the proceeds to be diverted to the Compensation Fund and other deductions to pay for UN operations, Iraq was slated
to get $1.3 billion every six months to finance its imports. Again, the
Iraqi government decided to reject UNSCR 986 thereby plunging the
Iraqi economy into a deeper crisis. The collapse in the value of the
Iraqi dinar, the resulting hyperinflation, and the further collapse in
what remained of personal income and purchasing power, not to
mention the internal political crisis associated with the defection of
the president's relatives to Jordan, forced the government in January
1996 to reverse its position and agree to enter into negotiations with
the UNSC over the implementation of Resolution 986. It took almost
another year before Iraq's oil was finally exported in December 1996.
In February 1998 the UNSC decided to raise the ceiling for exports
from $2 billion to $5.2 billion per six-month phase under UNSCR
1153, and in December 1999 UNSCR 1284 removed the ceiling on
oil exports altogether, but kept all other restrictions in place. In
December 2000, under UNSCR 1330, the share of the Compensation
Fund in oil revenue was lowered from 30 percent to 25 percent.
Before leaving the topic of oil and sanctions, a few observations
regarding investment in the oil industry are in order. Investment in
the oil industry, like investment in other sectors of the economy,
was disrupted during the Iraq-Iran war and then came to a halt in
1990. The embargo which has been placed on the import of necessary
equipment and spare parts and which threatened the long-term
prospects of the industry was finally acknowledged in 1998 when a
group of oil experts was sent by the UN Secretary-General to study
the conditions of the oil industry in Iraq. The March 1998 report of
the mission concluded that the industry was in a "lamentable state." Following this group of experts' report, the UNSC adopted Resolution
1175 in June 1998, authorizing for the first time the import of up to
$300 million, per six-month phase, of equipment and spare parts for
the oil sector. In January 2000 another group of experts in yet another
report concluded that the lamentable state of the Iraqi oil industry
had not improved and that insufficient spare parts and equipment
had arrived in time to sustain production. In short:

decline of conditions of all sectors of the oil industry continues,
and is accelerating in some cases. This trend will continue, and the
ability of the Iraqi oil industry to sustain the current reduced
production levels will be seriously compromised, until effective
action is taken to reverse the situation.
In response to this new report, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1293 in March 2000, raising the cap on imports for the oil sector to $600 million per phase. The problem, however, is not with the level of oil sector imports, although that is important; it is with the UNSC Sanctions Committee’s refusal to approve all the contracts which the UN Secretary-General had already approved for Iraq’s oil sector imports. The disruptive impact of withholding approval of such contracts was expressed by the Executive Director of the UN Iraq Program when he told the Security Council:

The Council last year doubled the allocation for oil spare parts and equipment. This was most welcome for the sector that is the lifeline of the humanitarian program. However, that was the end of the good news – we continue to experience serious delays and the number of holds placed on applications has become unacceptably high. On the one hand, everyone is calling on OPEC to increase the export of oil. On the other hand, the spare parts and equipment that are the minimum requirements of Iraq’s oil industry have been facing serious obstacles in the Security Council Committee.17

IRAQ’S DEBT PROBLEM

In the 1980s, Iraq changed status from a creditor to a debtor country. As was noted earlier, the decline in the oil sector and the massive financial requirements of the Iraq–Iran war forced this change. Additionally, the sanctions imposed since 1990 have denied Iraq the opportunity to repay any portion of the debt. In a memorandum to the UN Secretary-General dated 29 April 1991, the government of Iraq acknowledged that its external debt obligations (installments and interest) were projected to be $75.1 billion at the end of 1995.18 This figure should be $120 billion by now, assuming an annual interest rate of 8 percent. No other debtor country in the world has Iraq’s debt burden in terms of the relationship of the debt to GDP or to exports. It was calculated that with exports of $5.6 billion and a GDP of $22.3 billion in 1997, Iraq’s debt indicators show that its external debt was more than five times its GDP and 21 times its exports.19 No other indebted country comes close to matching Iraq’s debt burden.

Given the many claims on Iraq’s financial resources in a post-sanctions era it is difficult to see how Iraq will be in a position to pay off its tremendous debt load. Indeed, without the cancellation of all or most of the debt, its payments will only perpetuate Iraq’s economic
and humanitarian crisis. Needless to say, the burden of compensation, if allowed to continue into the future, will greatly complicate the tasks of recovery and growth.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Iraq’s per capita GDP was a small fraction of its level of 20 years earlier. The combined impact of the Iraq-Iran War, the Gulf War, the sanctions, its utter dependence on the oil sector, and the mismanagement of the economy, transformed a once prosperous economy and a vibrant society into a destitute society laboring under poverty and despair. The country has lost decades of growth and social and economic development. In the decade of the 1990s alone, Iraq lost some $140 billion in oil revenue due to the sanctions. No one can tell, of course, when the sanctions will be lifted. But when they are lifted Iraq will face a horrendous task.

Iraq will enter the post-sanctions era with these external claims on its financial resources: over $100 billion of foreign debt; over $200 billion of Gulf War compensation claims; and $100 billion of claims by Iran for its war losses. If to this bill of $400 billion we were to add the replacement cost of infrastructure and other assets destroyed in the course of the Gulf War, we would arrive at an astronomical figure of financial requirements which is simply beyond the capacity of the Iraqi oil sector to generate. The government of Iraq will not be able to do much if foreign creditors and war reparations claimants do not forgive or adjust downward their claims. Oil, while essential, will be of limited assistance because of the magnitude of the financial claims on the oil sector. It has been estimated by the Iraqi government’s own studies that in order to double production capacity to 6 million barrels per day (mbd), ten years and $30 billion will be needed. It is very difficult to say that sufficient foreign investment will be available and if so at what terms.

Given Iraq’s vast low-cost oil reserves and the world oil market’s need for ever increasing oil supplies, one should not rule out that the necessary capital inflow into Iraq’s oil industry will not be forthcoming. According to recent forecasts, world oil demand will be such that Iraq’s oil will have to be developed. Thus, according to International Energy Agency projections, world oil demand will rise from 76 mbd in 1999 to 117 mbd in 2020. To meet such an increase in demand, OPEC oil production is projected to increase from 30
mbd to 58 mbd, while Iraq's output alone is projected to rise from 3 mbd to 6 mbd during the same period. Indeed, it was postulated that a totally rehabilitated and sanctions-free Iraq could expand its production capacity far beyond 8 mbd, easily reaching 10 mbd, and theoretically even 12 mbd under the most favorable conditions.

There is also the important fact that between 1980 and the year 2000 Iraq's population increased from 13 million to 23 million and is projected to be 34 million in the year 2115. In other words, there will be an additional 10 million people who need to be housed, fed, educated, employed and otherwise cared for at a time of diminishing resources and a smaller economic base. This fact gives rise to the question of how oil income will be distributed and spent in the post-sanctions era. On the face of it, the answer should be clear, since all sub-soil minerals in Iraq belong to its people. This means that economic and social policies should reflect the preferences of the majority. This will require democratic institutions, transparency and accountability. This obviously has not been the case during the last three decades. The current system is one where public and private resources are melded and public office serves as a means for the creation of private wealth.

Given what had taken place in Iraq over the last three decades, a complete economic and political overhaul is in order. This overhaul is essential for reasons of social and economic justice. There is another reason for the change which transcends the question of equity. If current institutional mechanisms for the allocation of oil income will continue to function in the future then what guarantees are there that the destructive adventures of the past will not be repeated in the future?

NOTES

3. Ibid.
6. Ibid., pp. 105-18.
7. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 189.
5 Safeguarding “Our” American Children by Saving “Their” Iraqi Children: Gandhian Transformation of the DIA’s Genocide Planning, Assessment, and Cover-up Documents

Thomas J. Nagy

PREFACE – A PERSONAL CONFESSION

I have been deeply shaken by my unplanned immersion into the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) papers. With the greatest reluctance, I have been forced to conclude that these papers enabled genocide of Iraqi children through untreated, contaminated water. I feel a strong need to admit my personal misgivings about making the charge of genocide and to explain why I feel compelled by the evidence and my past. I have written this chapter only after actively seeking credible refutation of my interpretation from the most critical academic/military audience I could identify – the members of the Department of Defense’s professional ethics group, the Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics (JSCOPE) and the Association of Genocide Scholars. I posted Iraq Water Treatment Vulnerabilities (IWTV) and my concerns about it to the JSCOPE Internet discussion group and presented a paper and organized a panel on IWTV at two JSCOPE conferences. In addition I tested my interpretation of the implementation of US sanctions policy as genocide at the Conference of the Association of Genocide Scholars. Finding some anger and some support, but not credible refutation I delved deeper. A historical analogy introduces my confession.

After struggling to write this chapter, after contending with my own fears and doubts, I have learned something about the Germans who remained silent, and my fellow Americans who continue to remain silent, as well as all who remain silent amid mass slaughter.
The US rationale for sacrificing the children of Iraq is that through the agonizing death by dehydration and starvation, it will make the world safe from weapons of mass destruction. In fact, the US has now killed more Iraqis in a putsch war against weapons of mass destruction than the sum total of all people killed by military use of all the weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical and biological) in human history.\textsuperscript{4} Not speaking out against genocide committed in the name of a worthy goal is an irrational taboo. As always, the irrationality of continuing to observe that taboo becomes obvious as soon as we examine its underlying premise. In this case, the lethal assumption consists of accepting the fantastic notion that killing an enormous number of "other" children actually safeguards "our" children rather than endangering our own children.

The problem with depraved foreign policy is the failure to examine its assumptions due to the strength of the taboo associated with it. The solution is to compel an explicit examination of the policy. Detailed consideration of the meaning and degree of implementation of the DIA documents is intended to provide a means of opening the needed discourse.

Evil on an immense scale, evil which devours even small children in huge numbers over the course of 12 years, evil which is documented in the world's pre-eminent medical journals cannot escape notice except by active decision. Culpable ignorance, willed-ignorance, arising from the conscious decision to skip over troubling articles in the most credible literature is pretext for college professors and health professionals who claim ignorance of the continuing genocide wreaked in their names upon the people of Iraq. The haunting cry raised after World War II returns: "Just don't say you did not know."

Some of the strongest voices documenting, witnessing and protesting the sanctions are medical professionals from organizations such as the Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility, the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) and so forth. In contrast, the public health establishment in the US has been shamefully pandering to the Pentagon to attract post-9/11 September funding. The public health establishment has inverted the most fundamental principal of public health: primary prevention first, and tertiary prevention last. To give priority to primary prevention would require research on the causes of terrorism. This line of research would open questions of 'Brazilification' of the income distribution and rampant social injustice resulting from military, paramilitary and structural violence, but such topics are
taboo for the grant-making apparatus of the US government. Instead, the public health sector is enjoying a feeding frenzy by catering to the Pentagon's lavish funding for tertiary prevention of terrorism. The public-health establishment accepts uncritically the Department of Defense's (DOD) limitation of the scope of activity to detecting and mitigating the result of terrorism. Ergo, the permitted scope of action is limited by the government to tertiary prevention only.

It is also taboo to question the prostitution of public health, just as it is taboo to speak of the DOD's inversion of the defining moment in the history of public health. In the nineteenth century John Snow halted a cholera epidemic in London. He discovered the cause of the epidemic (primary prevention) and then dramatically ended it by tearing the handle off the Broad Street pump. Dr. Snow's successors at the DIA have perverted epidemiology to accomplish the opposite effect for Iraq. They have located the vulnerabilities of Iraq's water system so their colleagues in the State Department could block its rehabilitation by putting holds on indispensable items of equipment and chemicals. As a former postdoctoral fellow in public health and a continuing contributor to the public health literature, I am troubled to the core by this debasement.

If I fail to write and act forcefully and consistently on the Iraqi sanctions, it cannot be from genuine ignorance. No, it is not innocent ignorance, but rather succumbing to anxiety resulting from taking an unpopular stance, from the fear of isolation, from the worry about loss of reputation that inhibits me – making me no better than the "good" Aztecs, Germans, and fellow Americans who did not overcome their fear of taboo violation.

If I speak out, despite my palpable fear of violating the deepest American political taboo – opposing the government's foreign policy, particularly in wartime – it is because I am forever haunted by the first five years of my life, the part that I could never bury successfully. The years between my birth until the age of five were those of a refugee/displaced person. Ex-refugees often become fanatical proponents of war, e.g., former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, or they become parapists, study genocides, including American genocides and public health. I took the latter path. Stumbling upon the DIA's "Iraq Water Treatment Vulnerabilities" has ended peaceful slumber and reactivated the need to act, which is often common to refugees.

I write this chapter in the hope of troubling your sleep. I write to hasten the arrival of a world without genocide. I want our American
crimes against the people of Iraq expiated. I want a world where no children of the twenty-first century die the agonizing death of dehydration resulting from water-borne disease. How can we condemn the gassing of Jewish children in the twentieth century, but remain silent on the fate of the Iraqi children of the twenty-first? I corresponded with a reference librarian at the National Holocaust Museum. He had no figure for the number of Jewish children under the age of five killed in the extermination camps, but he did estimate the number of Jewish children killed under the age of 14 at 1.2 million. The estimated number of Iraqi children under the age of five who would be alive except for sanctions ranges from a low of approximately 300,000 to more than 500,000 — and these estimates omit the dead from the years after the studies ended. Of course, there are clear differences and similarities that exist among large-scale crimes, and though the precise mode of death may differ, the end result is the same.

I am old, and have little to lose. I am free to describe the horror of the economic atomic bomb, which detonates daily to produce steady state-sponsored genocide. I am free to describe how the world’s “indispensable democracy” continues to block or delay indispensable elements for the reconstruction of civilian infrastructure and to transform a modern nation into the charnel house called Iraq. I am free, but heart-sick, as I describe documents that planned the crime and assessed its “progress” and aided in its concealment. Do I dare speak the awful truth? Do I dare not?

PART 1. THE DIA REVOLUTIONIZES GENOCIDE: “IRAQ WATER TREATMENT VULNERABILITIES”

In 1998, I serendipitously discovered a partially declassified US DIA document entitled “Iraq Water Treatment Vulnerabilities” (IWTV). This document sat inside an unorganized heap of 40,000 documents on the Department of Defense Gulflink website. As one DOD employee put it, “We did not make it easy for you, did we?” Before summarizing IWTV and offering an analysis, consider Carolyn Scarr’s poem, “Recipe.” Scarr personalizes realities that IWTV abstracts into comfortably remote child-killing.

Into a quart jar
place two cups water
taken from a ditch
beside the pasture

(Recipe, 1999)
where the cattle once grazed.
If you do not live near a pasture
water from any drainage ditch
or from an urban creek
may be substituted.
Add one cup water
from the toilet bowl
where you rinsed the baby's diaper
when she was sick.
Be sure you do not
flush the toilet first.
Ask your husband
to urinate into the jar.
Only a little is needed.
When your neighbor washes his car
scoop up some of the run-off.
Add half a cup to the jar.
Put in a tablespoon or more
of fine dirt.
Screw down the lid.
Shake well.
Although the cholera
and typhoid bacilli
will probably be lacking –
and the amebae –
following this recipe carefully
will result
in a reasonable facsimile
of the solution drunk
every day
by millions of people in Iraq
whose sewage treatment plants
and water purification systems
were bombed to smithereens in 1991
and cannot be rebuilt
under the conditions of siege
referred to as
“sanctions”
and maintained by military blockade
principally by the United States of America.
You might take your jar
to your congressperson or senator.
    Ask that person
to keep it on the table
where he or she sits
in the halls of Congress
until the water runs clean
from every tap in Iraq
and no baby
dies of dysentery.

The US government actively hid IWTV from American voters by classifying the document as a military secret in 1991. What if the public had been permitted access to IWTV and its companion documents in 1991 after the coalition forged by Washington had destroyed 85-90 percent of Iraq’s electrical system generation capacity according to the US Department of Energy, obliterating an indispensable element for the production of safe water? Would the government’s ability to sell economic sanctions as a humane instrument of coercion have failed? What if Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez’s resolution, HR 170, to lift the sanctions, to save the lives of children dying from water-borne diseases, had been buttressed by the authority of the US military documents? These questions remain open, because the government hid the pertinent military documents, forcing Rep. Gonzalez to rely on sources less credible to the public, congress and the media. The secret stamp on the documents limited the basis of Rep. Gonzalez’s plea to UN and NGO reports.

The secrets contained in these documents would not be seen by the public for four more critical years. By that time, the government had driven the lie of humane sanctions on Iraq so deeply into the American psyche that it remains the conventional wisdom to the present day.

IWTV and 40,000 other previously classified documents surfaced because of a breakdown in secrecy. A Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) analyst, Patrick Eddington, revealed the fact that the national security apparatus had lied to Congress. Eddington, at great risk, went public with the fact that contrary to DOD and CIA congressional testimony, US service members had been exposed to chemical agents during the war against Iraq in 1991. The government, fearing that the truth would open a Pandora’s Box of problems for the administration, including America’s supplying Iraq with chemical and biological agents during the war Iraq had fought against Iran for its
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American and Gulf State patrons, increasingly focused on a public vilification of the Iraqi regime. A mixture of damage control and an effort to help veterans of that war understand their medical condition induced the ever pragmatic President Bill Clinton to require the DOD and the CIA to declassify a huge mass of documents with bearing on Gulf War Syndrome.

IWTV emerged from complete anonymity after Felicity Arbuthnot, a remarkable reporter who had personally witnessed the genocide of Iraq, interviewed me about IWTV and broke the story in the Sunday Herald in Scotland. A progressive community news website, Commondreams.org, featured Arbuthnot's story, moving the story around the world on the Internet and into the US Congress. On 26 September 2000 I responded to a request from Rep. Cynthia McKinney's staff for a summary of IWTV. Of all the members of congress, she was the only one to take notice of Arbuthnot's exposé. My submission, reproduced below, is based on direct quotes from IWTV. The parts of the summary that are not direct quotations from IWTV are indicated by square brackets. The submission itself is divided into six parts:

1. Background on IWTV.
2. Overall Summary of IWTV.
3. Why Water Treatment Supplies Must Be Exempt from Sanctions.
4. List of Materials and Chemicals Indispensable to Iraq's Water Treatment System.
5. Why No Possible Iraqi Counter-Measures to Obtain Drinkable Water Can Succeed.
6. DIA's Forecast Regarding the Full Degradation of Iraqi Water Treatment.

1. Background on "Iraq Water Treatment Vulnerabilities" (IWTV)
   • Source: a partially declassified DIA document available at DOD's Gulflink site.
   • Date of document: 22 January 1991.

2. Overall Summary of IWTV
   • Iraq depends on importing specialized equipment and some chemicals to purify its water supply.
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- Failing to secure supplies will result in a shortage of pure drinking water for much of the population. This could lead to increased incidences of not epidemics, of disease and to certain water-dependent industries becoming incapacitated including:

1. petrochemicals;
2. fertilizers;
3. petroleum refining;
4. electronics;
5. pharmaceuticals;
6. food processing.

3. Why water treatment supplies must be exempted from sanctions

- The quality of untreated water...generally is poor. Heavy mineralization suspended solids and, frequently, high salinity characterizes Iraq's water supply.
- Drinking heavily mineralized water could result in diarrhea.
- The entire Iraq water treatment system will not collapse precipitously.
- Full degradation of the water treatment system will probably take another six months [from January 1991].

4. List of materials and chemicals indispensable to Iraq's Water Treatment System

Significance of this list: According to IWTW: "Unless water treatment supplies are exempted from UNSANCTIONS [sic] for humanitarian reasons, no adequate solution exists for Iraq's water purification dilemma, since no suitable alternatives, including looting supplies from Kuwait, sufficiently meet Iraqi needs." [My comment: It is essential to get access to the rest of the document; the designation "(b)(2)" at the end of the document means that according to the Gulflink site a portion of the document was withheld. It is also essential to gain access to the related documents, and to the authors of these documents and of course to the records of the Sanctions Committee to determine the exact fate of the equipment and chemicals listed below.]

Chemicals essential to the Iraqi Water Treatment System

1. Aluminum sulfate and iron sulfates: flocculants and coagulants.
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2. Chlorination...to kill pathogens...and prevent the equipment from liming: possibilities include sodium hypochlorite, calcium hypochlorite, chlorine gas.
3. Caustic soda: to adjust pH of water.
4. Copper sulphate, sulfuric acid: to retard algae growth which could clog pipes.
5. Lime: to soften water and precipitate impurities from the water.
6. Soda ash and zeolites: to remove noncarbonate mineral impurities.
7. Softening chemicals: to produce bottled water.

**Equipment essential to the Iraqi Water Treatment System**

1. Reversible ion exchange electrodialysis systems, reverse osmosis systems, spare membranes: to soften and desalinate water.
2. Polyamide membranes and sodium metabisulphite: needed to pretreat the water.
3. Cellulose acetate membranes.

5. **Why no possible Iraqi counter-measures to obtain drinkable water can succeed**

1. Truck water from mountain reservoirs (Iraq's best source of quality water) requires sufficient quantities of pipe, pumping stations and chlorine purification or boiling [Note: "Some affluent Iraqis could obtain their own minimally adequate supply of quality water...if boiled could be safely consumed. Poorer Iraqis...would not be able to meet their needs."]
2. Use rain water: Iraq could not rely on rain to provide adequate pure water.
3. Drill additional water wells: saline or alkaline content of ground water in most locations would constrain wells.

6. **DIA's forecast regarding the full degradation of Iraqi water treatment**

1. Iraq will suffer increasing shortages of purified water because of the lack of required chemical and desalination membranes. Incidences of disease including epidemics will become probable unless the population were careful to boil water.
2. Locally produced food and medicine could be contaminated.
3. Lack of coagulation chemicals will cause periodic shutdowns of treatment plants...interrupting water supplies. Full degradation of the water treatment system probably will take at least another six months.
To summarize, the primary document, “Iraq Water Treatment Vulnerabilities,” spelled out how sanctions could be employed to prevent Iraq from supplying clean water to its people. IWTV specified in impersonal, abstract, and technical language the DIA’s finding that denying Iraq just a few items of equipment and a few chemicals would enable the US to destroy Iraq’s water treatment and sanitation within six months. Moreover, denying potable water could continue as long as the US maintained sanctions on the identified items.

With artful understatement, IWTV pronounced a death sentence upon the people of Iraq in these words: “Failing to secure supplies will result in a shortage of pure drinking water for much of the population. This could lead to increased incidences, if not epidemics, of disease.” Surely, the authors are too modest, what other outcome can “a shortage of pure water” produce except mass death? The authors reinforce their understated death sentence with the assertion that: “The quality of untreated water generally is poor,” and “laden with bacteria.” So “Unless the water is purified with chlorine, epidemics of such diseases as cholera, hepatitis, and typhoid could occur.” Not to worry, chlorine “has been embargoed” by sanctions. “Recent reports indicate the chlorine supply is critically low.”

The authors revealed another “benefit” of their reverse engineering of the greatest triumph over mortality in the history of medicine: the generation and distribution of safe water. The final triumph of their design was this: it allowed Iraq no escape. Even the most desperate efforts by Iraq could not possibly circumvent the projected destruction-of-service attack on Iraq’s water system. Did any of the authors of IWTV feel any pangs of remorse, did they share any of the nightmares of any of the members of the Wehrmacht, who a few decades earlier had fine-tuned their own technically advanced innovation for the mass killing of civilians? Or did the specialization, compartmentalization, and routinization succeed so brilliantly that no doubt or remorse arose, or that no nightmares troubled their sleep?

In IWTV we can find no qualms about designing the biggest improvement in genocide since the invention of the extermination camp. Instead, we read in a bland pronouncement of the date of the death sentence. “Although Iraq is already experiencing a loss of water treatment capability, it probably will take at least six months (to June 1991) before the system is fully degraded.”
PART 2. SIX ASSOCIATED DIA DOCUMENTS: ASSESSMENT AND CONCEALMENT

I returned to the Gulflink site in 2000, never expecting to find follow-on documents to IWTV, but a few hours of searching with the terms like “children” and “water” yielded six related documents. I interpret these six documents as moving beyond IWTV, into monitoring and deniability or concealment of the crime. The six documents had three themes:

1. Iraqi children were dying in large numbers.
2. The prime cause of death was water-borne disease from contaminated water caused by the “degraded water treatment system” forecast by IWTV.
3. The assertion, without any explanation of its plausibility that the culprit was entirely the Baghdad regime, which could restore public health, in addition to clean water, at will.

Document 1

The first in this batch of DIA documents was entitled “Disease Information,” and is dated January 1991. Its subject line reads: “Effects of Bombing on Disease Occurrence in Baghdad.” It must be noted that even without the “benefit” of economic sanctions, “[i]ncreased incidence of diseases will be attributable to degradation of normal preventive medicine, waste disposal, water purification/distribution, electricity, and decreased ability to control disease outbreaks. Any urban area in Iraq that has received infrastructure damage will have similar problems.”

The document proceeds to forecast and itemize the likely outbreaks. It highlights “acute diarrhea” which is brought on by bacteria such as E. coli, shigella, and salmonella, or by protozoa such as giardia, which will have greatest affect “particularly [on] children,” or by rotavirus, which will also affect “particularly children,” a phrase it puts in parentheses. The report goes on to cite probable outbreaks of typhoid and cholera.

Switching from assessment to deniability, the document warns that the Iraqi government may “blame the United States for public health problems created by the military conflict.” Is this a “heads-up” for the public affairs folk selling the war to the American public? Is there concern that the press might not be totally gullible and acquiescent? The concern for avoiding blame without even a passing
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Reference to medical ethics and the Geneva Convention is chilling in view of the contemporaneous fate of real children, many of whom were dying the miserable deaths of dehydration induced by the water-borne disease tabulated in "Disease Information." A candid subject line might have been: "The synergistic effect of massive bombing with economic sanctions and a heads-up to Public Affairs."

**Document 2**

The second DIA document, "Disease Outbreaks in Iraq," is dated 21 February 1990, an obvious typo for 1991. It states: "Conditions are favorable for communicable disease outbreaks, particularly in major urban areas affected by coalition bombing."

Infectious disease prevalence in major Iraqi urban areas targeted by coalition bombing (Baghdad, Basra) undoubtedly has increased since the beginning of Desert Storm....Current public health problems are attributable to the reduction of normal preventive medicine, waste disposal, water purification and distribution, electricity, and the decreased ability to control disease outbreaks.

No surprise here: the "most likely diseases during next sixty-ninety days (descending order): diarrhea diseases (particularly children); acute respiratory illnesses (colds and influenza); typhoid; hepatitis A (particularly children); measles, diphtheria, and pertussis (particularly children); meningitis, including meningococcal (particularly children); cholera (possible, but less likely)." Again a warning is raised, but it is not in compliance with the US military orders for troops to report war crimes. Instead the warning is another heads-up logically intended for Public Affairs: the Iraqi government might "propagandize increases of endemic diseases." This worry that killing civilians would concern Americans proved tragically unfounded.

**Document 3**

The third document "Medical Problems in Iraq," dated March 1991 states:

Communicable diseases in Baghdad are more widespread than usually observed during this time of the year and are linked to the poor sanitary conditions (contaminated water supplies and improper sewage disposal) resulting from the war. According to a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)/World Health Organization
Iraq

Report, the quantity of potable water is less than 5 percent of the original supply; there are no operational water and sewage treatment plants, and the reported incidence of diarrhea is four times above normal levels. Additionally, respiratory infections are on the rise. Children particularly have been affected by these diseases.13

Then in a leap of heroic illogic, the document claims: “There are indications that the situation is improving and that the population is coping with the degraded conditions.” March 1991, it should be noted, was the time period in which, according to the U.S. Department of Energy, Iraq electrical production had been bombed (and sanctioned) to less than 4 percent of its pre-Desert Storm level.14

Document 4
The fourth document, “Status of Disease at Refugee Camps,” is dated May 1991. The summary indicates: “Cholera and measles have emerged at refugee camps. Further infectious diseases will spread due to inadequate water treatment and poor sanitation.” The reason for this outbreak is clearly stated again. “The main causes of infectious diseases, particularly diarrhea, dysentery, and upper respiratory problems, are poor sanitation and unclean water. These diseases primarily afflict the old and young children.”

Document 5
The fifth document, “Health Conditions in Iraq, June 1991,” remains heavily censored. In one refugee camp, the document says, “at least 80 percent of the population has diarrhea. At this same camp, named Cukurca, “cholera, hepatitis type B, and measles have broken out.” The protein deficiency disease kwashiorkor was observed in Iraq “for the first time,” and “Gastroenteritis was killing children....In the south, 80 percent of the deaths were children (with the exception of Al Amarah, where 60 percent of deaths were children).”

Document 6
The final document is entitled “Iraq: Assessment of Current Health Threats and Capabilities,” dated November 1991. Now that the bombers and cruise missiles had annihilated the infrastructure and the sanctions were preventing their reconstruction, medical reasoning bowed out in favor of proffering a line, however implausible, for use by public affairs.
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On the one hand, IWTV provided a detailed explanation for a method by which Iraqi access to safe water was kept inoperative through United Nations sanctions, at least as long as the US chose to exercise its veto over water purification equipment and chemicals in the sanctions apparatus established by the Security Council. On the other hand, the associated DIA documents claim that the Iraqis can restore potable water "at will." The documents provided no explanation whatsoever of how, in the face of the military and economic annihilation and blockade, it is within the power of the government of Iraq to achieve this massive transformation of their ruined country.

Contrary to subsequent and highly detailed, on-the-ground studies made by the UN, DIA analysts assert that "Iraq's medical supply shortages are the result of the central government's stockpiling, selective distribution, and exploitation of domestic and international relief medical resources." Further, "Resumption of public health programs...depends completely on the Iraqi government."

The next section turns to a consideration of the war crime of denying civilian populations the infrastructure indispensable to its survival and to the worst of crimes, genocide.

PART 3. THE DIA DOCUMENTS, WAR CRIMES UNDER ARTICLE 54 AND GENOCIDE

As these documents illustrate, the United States knew sanctions had the capacity to devastate the water-treatment system of Iraq. In IWTV, the DOD predicted that the consequences could be increased outbreaks of disease and high rates of child mortality. In the six associated documents, the DIA monitored the outcome of the degradation of the Iraqi water supply. The six associated DIA documents showed more concern with a potential public relations nightmare for Washington than with the actual nightmare that the implementation of the sanctions—principally through the UN and the United Kingdom—created for innocent Iraqis. How do the documents and the actions of the US government at the Iraq Sanctions Committee—the 661 Committee—square with the Geneva Convention?

The Geneva Convention forbids absolutely any method of degrading the water system of an adversary state. Article 54 of the 1977 protocol
Iraq

to the Geneva Convention deals with the “protection of victims of international armed conflicts.” Article 54 states unequivocally:

*It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove, or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies, and irrigation works, for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population or to the adverse Party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other motive.*

The language of Article 54 does not permit an escape through the semantics of intent, much less specific intent. Rather, Article 54 prohibits rendering useless “drinking water installations and supplies”...“whatever the motive”...“to starve out civilians...or for any other motive.” But that is precisely what the US government did, with malice and forethought. It “destroyed, removed, or rendered useless” Iraq’s “drinking water installations and supplies.” The sanctions, imposed for more than a decade, almost entirely at the insistence of the United States, constitute an ongoing violation of the Geneva Convention. The sanctions and in particular their implementation by the US— which enjoys an absolute, uncontestable veto on material intended for Iraq—amounts to a systematic effort to, in the DIA’s own words, “fully degrade” Iraq’s water sources.

At a House hearing on 7 June 2001, Representative Cynthia McKinney, Democrat of Georgia, referring to “Iraq Water Treatment Vulnerabilities” said: “Attacking the Iraqi public drinking water supply flagrantly targets civilians and is a violation of the Geneva Convention and of the fundamental laws of civilized nations.” For more than a decade Washington extended the toll by continuing to withhold approval for Iraq to import the few chemicals and items of equipment it needed in order to rebuild its water treatment infrastructure and thereby produce a safe supply of water to its people. In summer 2000 Representative Tony Hall, Democrat of Ohio, became the first member of Congress to visit Iraq since Washington changed the status of Iraq from an ally who waged war on Iran, with the full military support of the US, to a rogue nation, which invaded Kuwait, another client state of the US. On his return, Rep. Hall wrote to then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright “about the profound effects of the increasing deterioration of Iraq’s water supply and sanitation systems on its children’s health.” Hall wrote:
I share UNICEF's concerns about the profound effects of increasing deterioration of Iraq's water supply and sanitation systems on its children's health. The prime killer of children under five years of age—diarrhoeal diseases—has reached epidemic proportions and they now strike four times more often than they did in 1990. Holds on contracts for the water and sanitation sector are a prime reason for the increases in sickness and death. Of the 18 contracts, all but one hold was placed by the US Government. The contracts are for purification chemicals, chlorinators, chemical dosing pumps, water tankers, and other equipment.

Steps have been taken to assure dual-use items are not diverted,...UNICEF follows the United Nations' three-tier monitoring system to ensure equipment and supplies are used as they are intended.

I urge you [Secretary Albright] to weigh your decision against the disease and death that are the unavoidable result of not having safe drinking water and minimum levels of sanitation.16

Part 4 will provide more evidence regarding the extent to which US implementation of the sanctions regime is consistent with the blueprint enunciated in IWTV and assessed in the successor documents. Before turning to that evidence however, let us review the crime of genocide.

The definition of genocide in international law comes from the UN treaty banning genocide. Article 2 of the United Nations Genocide Convention states:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:17

a. Killing members of the group;
b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Some scholars contend that the word "intent" in the treaty's definition calls for a smoking gun. As if this smoking gun must be
produced by the leadership of the country through a declaration stating something to the effect of: "We are engaged in mass killing of this particular national or racial or religious group for the specific purpose of exterminating them." Few perpetrators are so blatant or so single-minded in their motivations. Moreover, the US freely uses the term "genocide" to describe the actions of their enemies while ignoring far greater crimes committed by their allies. Notice, for example, the charge of genocide against the Iraqi regime, but not the Turkish government, which is responsible for far more Kurdish deaths. Similarly, the genocide in East Timor, funded largely by the United States, is not recognized by the United States government itself. As the recent book by Susan Power reveals using recently declassified documents obtained from the National Security Archives at George Washington University, the State Department refused to use the word "genocide" even to describe the blatant genocide in Rwanda. A far less restrictive definition of genocide is provided by prominent members of the International Association of Genocide Scholars such as Israel W. Charny who wrote:

"Genocide in the generic sense is the mass killing of substantial numbers of human beings, when not in the course of military forces of an avowed enemy, under conditions of the essential defenselessness and helplessness of the victims." 

PART 4. ROTATING NOUNS AND OTHER EVIDENCE OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF IWTV

On its face, the DIA’s IWTV gives every appearance of constituting a planning document for the commission of genocide. IWTV provides minute details of a fully workable method to "fully degrade the water treatment system" of an entire nation. From the perpetrator’s perspective, IWTV combines the virtues of concealment, by dispersing the killings across time (more than a decade) and space (an entire country), with high efficiency in liquidating a significant portion of the population of Iraq by creating the conditions for widespread disease, including full-scale epidemics. In a word, IWTV can reasonably be viewed as a plan to carry out the extermination of the Iraqi people without the need of constructing extermination camps. The author recognizes the gravity of these claims. Many, including the author, recoil from contemplating the possibility that a Western democracy,
particularly the US, could commit genocide. However, it is precisely this painful and even taboo possibility which needs to be examined.

The argument that the operation of the economic sanctions regime against Iraq constitutes genocide is now articulated by such prominent figures as former Assistant Secretary-General of the UN, Denis Halliday,20 former Attorney-General Ramsey Clark,21 and legal scholars such as Francis Boyle,22 Shuma Laminani,23 and George Bisharat.24 Halliday resigned his post as UN humanitarian coordinator in Iraq after concluding that even with the palliative “Oil for Food,” sanctions constituted nothing less than “steady-state genocide.” His successor, Hans Von Sponeck followed Halliday in resigning to protest the sanctions regime. The protest continued as the World Food Program’s head in Iraq also resigned.

Even if IWTV and the sanctions regime, which empowers it, fail to rise to the level of genocide according to the most restrictive definitions, then surely the criteria for genocide are met using the definitions of the most prominent members of the Association of Genocide Scholars.25 It is chilling to realize that the US, many decades after its Cold-War allies and adversaries had signed, took several decades to ratify the International Convention against Genocide and did so only with the reservations and understandings that compelled many of its NATO allies to declare that the US had rendered its participation in the treaty worthless. As a condition of ratification, the US asserted that it cannot be charged with the crime of genocide, and instead only granted permission for the charge to be brought.

Prudence dictates that before reaching such grave conclusions, we explore two alternative hypotheses, either of which, if true, would lead to an entirely different interpretation. On the other hand, if neither hypothesis can be accepted, then we are compelled to look for evidence that the prescription of IWTV or some refined successor version of the same notion, has been and continues to be implemented against the people of Iraq by the US government. Let us begin by examining the two hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1

IWTV is a hoax. I viewed IWTV as such a blatant plan for a grave breach of the Geneva Convention and even the Genocide Convention that I hoped the document was a fraud. Only after communicating with the Federation of American Scientists, which also had posted a copy of “IWTV” to its site, www.fas.org, as well as with the DOD’s Guelflink site did I conclude that IWTV is what it purports to be: a partially declassified DIA document.
Hypothesis 2

IWTV is actually benign. To test this hypothesis, I posted a copy of IWTV to the JSCOPE (Department of Defense's Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics) discussion list. The responses from US and Canadian military participants in JSCOPE divided into the following categories:

1. IWTV may be just a training document, only, and as such would be unproblematic.
2. IWTV may actually be a caution to the military to avoid steps which would destroy the water and sanitation system.
3. IWTV, in any case, never says: execute the steps suggested in the document (i.e. use the US veto on the Sanctions Committee to block the items identified in IWTV) in order to achieve the full degradation of Iraqi water treatment and in this way commit genocide.

These interpretations by JSCOPE participants hardly seemed plausible in the light of years of the most draconian sanctions regime in modern history, as well as data from the UN Office of the Iraq Program and the previously cited letter of Rep. Tony Hall to Secretary of State Albright, described in his press release of June 2000.261 quoted three paragraphs from Rep. Hall's letter to Secretary of State Albright. These paragraphs reveal that as late the year 2000, the plan contained in IWTV (or some successor version) was still being implemented by the US government.

The most disturbing aspect of Hall’s letter is that it makes clear that the strategy identified in IWTV in 1991 was still taking its lethal toll nine years later. The prime executioner of the fatal strategy of killing the very young was the US which exercises the vast majority of vetoes on material essential to rebuilding Iraq’s water treatment system. Deprivation of systems essential to life is, of course, explicitly prohibited by the Genocide Convention. The US' junior foreign policy partner, the UK, has wielded the remaining 10 percent of vetoes to the US' 90 percent of vetoes or “holds” on contracts for Iraq.

Another indication that IWTV's strategy for denial of potable water to Iraq continues to be followed in updated if not exact form, comes from the UN Office of the Iraq Program (OIP). OIP data show that as of May 2000, the Iraqi government had requested approximately $1 billion worth of equipment and chemicals to rehabilitate its water system from the proceeds of its oil sales. However, the actions of the
US and its junior partner, the UK, had resulted in only $1.60 million of contracts for water system rehabilitation arriving in Iraq. In addition, $180 million of contracts for water system rehabilitation were currently blocked by the US and UK.27

In 1991, Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez, within the first year of the imposition of the sanctions, introduced House Resolution 170 urgently calling for lifting of the sanctions, because of the great toll of death and suffering they produced, particularly upon children.28 Unfortunately, Rep. Gonzalez was denied awareness, much less access, to the very DIA documents which could have provided the strongest, most credible support for HR 170. Without these key documents, his plea was ignored by Congress and the mainstream media.

In addition, the head of the Office of the Iraq Program, as well as Kofi Annan, whom the US rammed into the position of Secretary-General of the UN, have both repeatedly pleaded with the Sanctions Committee to permit more contracts for water and sanitation to go forward.29 All of the above strongly suggests that the strategy explicated in IWTV has been followed by the US members of the UN Sanctions Committee. The strategy consists of the denial or delay of a huge number of contracts for items indispensable to the restoration of Iraq’s demolished water and sanitation systems. Some items are permitted some of the time, others are delayed for long periods, with or without explanation – explanation is not required to be provided by the 661 Committee – which decides what Iraq is permitted to purchase with funds derived from oil which the US-dominated United Nations permits Iraq to sell. The US can exercise the option to place holds or blocks on any contracts funded by the residue of funds (what remains after huge deductions for “restitution” and for the UN operation of the sanctions apparatus) generated by Iraqi oil under the “Oil for Food” program at its own absolute discretion. In the 661 (or Sanctions) Committee, which determines the life or death of Iraq children, the US power is absolute. The US is answerable to no one but itself. This bizarre arrangement is somewhat comparable to the infamous Versailles Treaty, which also wreaked massive death and suffering upon vanquished nations, compelled the payment of exorbitant restitution, and led predictably to World War II.

This interpretation is further corroborated by the reports of the two key non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved with water in Iraq, the International Committee of the Red Cross and CARE. It is also corroborated by key agencies of the UN such as FAO and UNICEF and other NGOs such as CAWI and Voices in the Wilderness and the
past two heads of the UN Humanitarian effort in Iraq, Assistant Secretary-General Denis Halliday and Hans Von Sponeck. Both resigned to protest the sanctions regime which Mr. Halliday, a Nobel Peace Prize nominee, characterizes as “steady-state genocide.” Rep. David Bonoir has condemned the same sanctions policy as “infanticide masquerading as foreign policy.” In addition Rep. Bonoir’s letter to Secretary of State Powell, dated June 2001, co-signed by several other House colleagues, indicates that the policy first articulated in “Iraq Water Treatment Vulnerabilities” continues to be followed to the present day.30

The result of following the guidance of IWTV has not been the destruction of the top ranks of the Iraqi government. Rather, implementing the strategy outlined in IWTV has killed hundreds of thousands of civilians, and not merely any civilians, but those civilians farthest removed from either the military or political arena: the very young, the very old, and the ill. It is ironic beyond endurance that these three categories of people correspond to the same categories of humans that Nazi doctors “selected” for immediate death at extermination camps a few decades earlier.

Had IWTV been merely a training document, surely it would not have to have been so accurate and so detailed in enumerating the precise items whose denial would have had such devastating effect in degrading the water and sanitation systems of Iraq over the past eleven years. If IWTV were truly a caution against committing the gravest breaches of the Geneva Convention or the Genocide Convention itself, then surely the recipients of the report would have protested the perversion of their “cautions” into a weapon of mass destruction against the most defenseless members of the civilian population of Iraq. Finally, it is naive to assume that so sophisticated a government as the US would put into writing and then declassify any explicit order to implement a scheme as breathtakingly immoral as the complete, long-term destruction of the water and sanitation system of an entire country. The public-relations benefit of identifying, then blocking the machinery and chemicals needed to “un-degrade” the water system as opposed to simply waging an open, direct, and continuous bombing of the water system is clear. However, in terms of the incidence, prevalence and mortality rates of diseases caused by the continuously “degraded” water supply, there is little distinction.

If the true intent of IWTV were to detect unintended consequences of the sanctions, then why did its authors (and those who commissioned it) not simply follow their ethical and legal obligation to end
this abomination by exposing it? Note that IWTV was hidden from the American public by its secret classification until 1995, long after concerns about the sanctions had been smothered. The mainstream media uncritically accepted the US government’s claims that the degree of death and suffering was exaggerated and in any event (following the self-serving words of the latter DIA documents) were entirely the fault of the Baghdad regime. Instead of citing credible evidence, such as the most respected NGO and UN agency reports, the media has almost always attributed the data regarding death and suffering solely to the actions or inactions of the Iraqi government. How many children’s lives would have been spared from death by cholera, induced by “degrading” the water purification systems of Iraq, had the world known in 1991 the information available on the public portion of government websites? I seize on cholera partly because it is listed under the heading of “Biological Warfare, BW” on the DOD’s Gulflink site. Note also that my discovery of IWTV was almost purely by chance, rather than the result of someone alerting people to the existence of the document.

Again, if the intent of “IWTV” were to prevent unintended consequences, then why did the people who commissioned the study, wrote the study and received the study fail to use it to sound the alarm as soon as the impact of the degradation of the water systems became apparent? One might object that they were not aware of the lethal consequences of IWTV. This is unlikely, certainly for the medical personnel involved, in the light of a series of studies on the effect of the contaminated water from the degraded water treatment systems of Iraq on childhood mortality published in the leading US and British medical journals such as the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *British Journal of Medicine*, *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *The Lancet*, and the *American Journal of Public Health*. A collection of these articles and reports is available at Cambridge University’s *Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq (CAS) site*.33

How many thousands of children would be alive today, but for such deadly diseases as cholera resulting from the US deliberative policy of “degrading” the entire water purification system of Iraq? Had the world known back in 1991, even in 1995 how many children would have been saved? Last month an estimated 6,000 children died in Iraq. The leading cause of their deaths continues to be waterborne diseases that could have been prevented. Another 6,000 died needlessly the month before, linking themselves to a chain of small corpses stretching back to 1991. The lowest credible estimate of the
death toll of children under five comes from Garfield who puts the figure into the hundreds of thousands.\textsuperscript{34} Based on a detailed house-by-house survey by UNICEF,\textsuperscript{35} summarized in The Lancet, the figure is put above 500,000 excess deaths of children under the age of five.\textsuperscript{36}

**Some thought experiments**

The most compelling case for the proposition that 1WTV is nothing less than a prescription for genocide is a thought experiment. First, consider a very quick thought experiment then a more extended one. Suppose, the CIA had uncovered a study from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) which detailed precisely how best to poison the water supply of Albanian villages in Kosovo. Suppose further that credible evidence were advanced by a whole score of UN agencies and NGOs that the water in several Albanian villages was being contaminated by the FRY consistent with the discovered plan. Is there any doubt that the US government, the Human Rights community, the Committee of Conscience of the National Holocaust Museum and indeed the Association of Genocide Scholars would and should characterize the conduct of the FRY as genocide and call for indictments and trials?

Now consider a longer thought experiment. Suppose I distributed to you a document entitled “US Water Treatment Vulnerabilities.” For the purpose of this thought experiment, I ask you to assume that the document is a genuine product of the Iraq Defense Intelligence Agency and that this Iraqi document sets forth the following:

1. a detailed and feasible Iraqi plan to destroy the entire water and sanitation system of the United States;
2. an Iraqi plan to prevent the rebuilding of the water and sanitation system of the US for as long as Iraq wishes;
3. an Iraqi plan spelling out the likely health impact upon the population of the US, namely epidemics caused by the resulting contaminated water supply, and
4. an Iraqi plan which explains in detail why no US countermeasures can succeed in rebuilding the American water and sanitation system against the wishes of Iraq.

If we accepted the sourcing of the document and its feasibility, who would have any qualms about:

1. denouncing the “US Water Treatment Vulnerabilities” document as genocidal, as the gravest possible breech of the Geneva
The DIA’s Genocide Planning, Assessment, and Cover-up Documents

Convention, as a plan for infanticide, as a means of selecting for death the very young, as well as the very old, the sick;

2. suggesting massive air strikes against Iraq, citing the “right” of preemptive military action.

Surely the additional discovery of the equivalent of the six related DIA documents for monitoring and concealing this crime of preventing the production of pure water in the US would satisfy any possible skeptics regarding the issue of genocide. Under these circumstances, who would possibly raise the issue of proving “intent” or the absence of an “execute” order?

Before considering how IWTV can be used to end the ongoing genocide against Iraq and prevent other genocides, it is helpful to reflect upon Ken McCarthy’s poetic rendering of mass murders, past and present; from primitive but vividly pictorial mass murders to the latest in efficiency and deniability in mass murder. Mr. McCarthy used the poem as the preface to his posting to an Internet journalism newsgroup of Felicity Arbuthnot’s Sunday Herald article, the first major newspaper expose of IWTV.

When the world was a smaller place, I guess it was easy to ride into town and just kill everyone in sight Mongol-style.

Larger populations take more effort, especially if you’re trying to keep your handiwork secret from the world.

The Nazis rounded up Jews and other minorities and sent them via boxcar to barb-wired concentration camps.

The US and its allies have developed a more economical solution: Turn the entire target country into an open-air extermination camp.

It saves on the barbed wire, guard towers and incinerators.

Ken McCarthy, “Murder at Wholesale Prices”

PART 5. RESOURCES FOR MOVING FROM WILLED IGNORANCE TO ACTIVE RESCUE

Step 1. Overcoming willed ignorance and opposing from the silence of the heart

Every great philosophical and religious tradition demands that when people discover great evil, they take the steps necessary to end the evil. In the Islamic tradition this is rendered as the Hadith:
Iraq

Whoever of you see an evil action, let him change it with his hand; if he is not able to do so, then with his tongue; and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart; and that is the weakest of faith.

al-Nawawi’s Forty Hadiths

Before evil can be ended, it must be recognized. Willed ignorance must be overcome. The first step for moving beyond willed ignorance is to recognize the fact that we are all subject to the control of strong taboos and denial of painful and threatening information which threatens our belief in the conventional wisdom. Thomas Kuhn’s Structure of Scientific Revolution showed that even scientists were largely impervious to the accumulation of anomalies, which threatened paradigms in which they are deeply invested. Most scientists have gone to their graves denouncing new paradigms, even if the new paradigms accounted for the data including previous anomalies far better than the old paradigms. Certainly people – scientists included – are greatly threatened by anomalies that challenge comfortable world views such as the justness of their government, that crimes committed by their government are actually mistakes that are corrected as soon as they are detected. This naive view is made possible by committing large-scale, long-duration crimes against humanity, in increasingly indirect and deniable ways, including replacing military weapons with economic weapons.

People in many countries and eras faced the crisis of overcoming willed ignorance of their nation’s crimes against the people of other nations. Sartre in the profoundly ironically titled essay, “You must be wonderful” pleaded with French citizens to read the testimony of French reservists reporting the French government’s policy of torture and massacre waged in Algeria during the Algerian war of independence.39 Today hundreds of reservists in the Israeli Defense Forces are pleading with their sisters and brothers to read why they are refusing orders to participate in the torture and massacre that marks the occupation of the illegally Occupied Territories. We can learn much from the successes of other people facing similar challenges.

In my case, the heroic witness of Kathy Kelly, Bishop Gambleton, Bert Sachs, Gerri Haynes, former Attorney-General Ramsey Clark, former Assistant Secretary-Generals of the UN, Denis Halliday and Hans von Sponeck, compelled me to stop avoiding the disturbing information about the effects of sanctions. I read the accounts of these members of the Voices in the Wilderness, The International Action Coalition, and the UN. I also started reading the profoundly
disturbing UN reports from the FAO, WHO, UNICEF, International Committee of the Red Cross, and the accounts in *The Lancet*, *the Annals of Internal Medicine*, *the British Journal of Medicine*, and *the American Journal of Public Health*. I was also affected by the cruel response by the US Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control which threatened enormous fines on people “guilty” of bringing toys and medicines to the children of Iraq without proper licenses from the Department of the Treasury. Was this in the tradition of all perpetrators who react savagely to any unauthorized act of humanity towards the condemned? Certainly without the risks and pain incurred by these principled rescuers, I would have continued to accept the implausible accounts of the mass media. To act intelligently and with compassion, it is necessary to learn the truth. Websites of organizations such as Voices in the Wilderness, the International Action Coalition, Citizens Concerned for the People of Iraq, and the American Friends Service Committee, provide excellent information and motivation to act. A daily collection of well-reasoned dissenting views is furnished by Commdreams.org. Perhaps the single most comprehensive site for the history, operation, humanitarian, medical and legal aspects of the sanctions is housed at Cambridge University. This splendid resource is readily available to all worldwide through the CASI website which it hosts.

Once people exercise the moral will to recognize evil, even evil which they find repellant because of its scope and extent and because it is largely or entirely the responsibility of their own country, then at least they can oppose the evil silently in their hearts. This recognition and silent opposition forms a significant step, but is only the start of ending the evil. The next step requires a public act of opposition.

**Step 2. Speaking against the evil of sanctions**

In addition to speaking to friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors, the next step consists of writing letters and articles to human-rights groups, professional groups, the NGOs and the government itself. Since lobbying for the end of human-rights atrocities such as the sanctions violates a taboo forbidding the criticism of American or British foreign policy, the results are often hostility or indifference. It is very useful to share your letters and articles through the Internet to overcome the usual evasion of media and government alike: the claim that yours is the first and only letter or article, op-ed, etc. ever received condemning the sanctions policy, so naturally it cannot be
published or broadcast. Both Voices in the Wilderness\textsuperscript{44} and the Campaign of Conscience\textsuperscript{45} provide another vehicle for speaking out. Thousands of individuals and hundreds of organizations have signed the pledges of Voices and the Campaign of Conscience.

Another tactic is to give papers and organize or participate in teach-ins and panels on the sanctions policy. In 1999 I presented a paper which included the issue of IWTV at the annual meeting of the Department of Defense’s Joint Services on Professional Ethics (JSCOPE). This presentation provided a way of testing my interpretation of the document and of reaching an audience unlikely to read the anti-sanctions literature of Voices in the Wilderness or to visit the CASI website. Many organizations including JSCOPE have an Internet discussion group (Listserv) making it possible to raise vital topics and get feedback outside the limits of annual meetings. I found this resource highly valuable. In 2002, I organized a session for a teach-in on sanctions and water as a weapon of war against Iraqis and Palestinians at the American University in Washington, DC.

The next step beyond the individual paper consists of organizing a panel on the topic of IWTV and the sanctions policy. This I did at JSCOPE 2001 with Prof. Joy Gordon. Since then I have participated in panels on the impact of the sanctions on Iraq at University College, Cork; Trinity College, Dublin; and McMaster University in Canada. Because of the scope and duration of the sanctions against Iraq, it will be necessary to convene truth commissions so the full story emerges, the anguish of the victims is recognized, and the guilt of the perpetrators acknowledged. Anything less invites a recurrence of IWTV and genocide. Finally, it must be recognized that acting as responsible citizens requires an act of the will for which few are prepared. Excellent resources are available as shown in Table 5.1 below.

\textbf{Table 5.1} Resources to help take action

\begin{tabular}{|l|}
\hline
1 & Sam Hussein’s Spectrum of Action \\
3 & If you need to control anger, fear and greed (as I most definitely do), you might try E. Lasl’s, \textit{Meditation: A Single 8-Point Program for Translating Spiritual Ideals into Daily Life} (Tomales, CA: Nigal Press, 1991) which is strongly recommended by Nagler. I have already found it very helpful, though I’m a beginner to meditation. \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
The first item in Table 5.1, is Sam Husseini’s Spectrum of Action.\textsuperscript{47} This proved valuable when I discovered that a prime apologist for the sanctions, Secretary of State Albright, would debase my university by giving the Commencement Address. I became enraged, then inert after my speech opposing honoring her was completely ignored by the Faculty Senate of George Washington University. I was able to enlist others in producing an effective educational protest, when Sam Husseini pointed out that I should find a point of action I was able and prepared to do along the spectrum of potential activities. The result was the construction and successful distribution to several thousand students, faculty and guests of an “Unofficial Commencement Ceremony.” Extremely practical theory and practice of the non-violent alternative to the violence of military and economic force and to structural violence is spelled out in Michael Nagler’s masterpiece \textit{Is There No Other Way? The Search for a Nonviolent Future}. To overcome one’s own anger, fear, and greed, Nagler suggests the book by his mentor Enath Easwagan entitled \textit{Meditation: A Simple 8-Point Program for Translating Spiritual Ideals into Daily Life}. Finally, to keep my perspective and composure, I find useful a fragment of a poem by Denise Levertov and Jan Myrdal’s question. Levertov writes:

\begin{quote}
Cruel America when you kill our people and mutilate our land, 
It is not our spirit you destroy, 
But your own.
\end{quote}

And Jan Myrdal, in \textit{Confessions of a Disloyal European} asks us if we are the Bearers of Consciousness or the Whores of Reason.\textsuperscript{288}

\textbf{PART 6. USING IWTV TO END THE GENOCIDE AGAINST IRAQ AND SAFEGUARD CHILDREN}

Now let’s turn IWTV upside down with the antithetical use of IWTV and its six associated documents to oppose the continuing genocide and to prevent future genocides. Ambitious but fitting constructive Gandhian programs to supplement non-violent protest are possible. Examples include physically rehabilitating the water treatment system of Iraq, even in the face of severe US government threats by the Campaign of Conscience described previously. The challenge posed by the Voices in the Wilderness to the draconian US laws blocking citizen efforts to rescue the people of Iraq from the
collective punishment of contaminated water provides another
Gandhian example.

Let us conclude by asking what could serve as a fitting memorial
and a sign of atonement for the more than 500,000 Iraqi children
under the age of five exterminated by the sanctions policy of the US?
Although the economic sanctions against Iraq are authorized by the
UN, it is the US government’s policy consisting of more than 12
years of blocks (vetoes) and holds (delays) on proposed Iraqi contracts
for the rehabilitation of infrastructure that has given the sanctions
their awesome deadliness, particularly with respect to children. The
sum of $9 billion annually is demanded as a memorial for past victims
of the genocide and to prevent future victims. Such an annual
expenditure can eradicate the scourge of death from water-borne
disease worldwide. More than 2 million children under the age of 5
will be saved annually by this memorial to Iraqi children. Can there
be a more fitting symbol of American atonement? An added benefit
is that this positive expenditure of money, unlike the $18 billion
spent bombing Afghans, has real potential for reducing counter-
terrorism from abroad. This memorial could be the start of a Marshall
Plan for the twenty-first century in which reallocation of 3 percent
of the world’s military budget would give all the children of the world
pure water, rudimentary education and health care.49 Please refer to
Table 3.1 for the estimates on infant mortality.

APPENDIX

Reading the DIA documents on the Internet
All the DIA documents mentioned in this article were found at the
Department of Defense’s Gulflink site.
To read or print documents:

1. go to www.gulflink.osd.mil;
2. click on “Declassified Documents” on the left side of the front
   page;
3. the next page is entitled “Browse Recently Declassified
   Documents”;
4. click on “search” under “Declassified Documents” on the left
   side of that page;
5. the next page is entitled “Search Recently Declassified
   Documents”;
6. enter search terms such as "disease information effects of bombing";
7. click on the search button;
8. the next page is entitled "Data Sources";
9. click on DIA;
10. click on "Disease Information" or any other title.

NOTES

3. My website, "Thomas, J. Nagy Homepage," at hom.gwu.edu/~nagy, hosts a number of my papers and a lecture on Iraq together with a copy of "Iraq Water Treatment Vulnerabilities."
8. "Recipe" is © 2001 Carolyn S. Scott. Permission is granted to read, reprint. Ms. Scott requests that she be informed when 'Recipe' is reprinted. Her email: epicsch@gmail.com
9. "Around 85-90 percent of Iraq's national power grid (and 20 power stations) was damaged or destroyed in the Gulf War. Existing generating capacity of 9,000 megawatts (MW) in December 1990 was reduced to only 340 MW by March 1991." The remaining 340 MW represents a reduction of more than 96 percent from the pre-Desert Storm total. In view of the dependence of water treatment and distribution on electrical power, this statistic alone renders assertions of DIA documents that Iraq could have solved the humanitarian disaster resulting from the absence of sufficient potable water implausible. Department of Energy (US), "Iraq" www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/iraq.html.

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12. Emphasis added by author.
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32. GulfLink Office of the Special Assistant for Gulf War Illnesses. As found at: www.gulflink.oxd.mil.
38. "Murder at Wholesale Price" is used by permission of the author.
39. In 1958, the book La question (The Question) by Henri Alleg was published, in which he exposed his own torture at the hands of the French. Its introduction was written by Jean-Paul Sartre. In 1969, a group of intellectuals around Sartre, including Simone de Beauvoir, Andre Breton, Simone Signoret and many others protested against the war with a "Manifesto of the 121," See Henri Alleg, La question (Paris: Minuit, 1958). Trans. in English as The Question (New York: Braziller, 1958).
40. Citizens Concerned for the People of Iraq. Website: www.s.cnp/cci.
43. To give one example, the CASI site is so complete that it makes available IWTV, a defense of IWTV by an ex-US service member, and my Association of Genocide paper on IWTV. The debate on IWTV is also available by
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searching the CASI listserv (or Internet discussion group) as found at: www.casi.org.uk.


6 The US Obsession with Iraq and the Triumph of Militarism

Stephen Zunes

This US invasion and occupation of Iraq constitutes an important precedent, being the first test of the new doctrine articulated by President George W. Bush of "pre-emption," which declares that the United States has the right to invade sovereign countries and overthrow their governments if they are seen as potentially hostile to US interests. The decision to invade was less a reflection of any real threat posed by Saddam Hussein's regime than a manifestation of a unipolar world system where international legal conventions and institutions - many of which were put forward through the encouragement of such American presidents as Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt in order to build a safer world - can now be abrogated if the world's one remaining superpower deems it necessary.

There has never been much debate regarding the nefarious nature of Saddam Hussein's regime. Given that the United States backed this regime at the height of its repression in the 1980s, however, and that it continues to support repressive governments in the Middle East and elsewhere, there is enormous skepticism as to whether this newfound concern for human rights expressed by the Bush Administration as a major rationalization for its invasion was sincere.

In any case, having a repressive regime has never been a legal ground for invasion. When Vietnam invaded Cambodia in 1978 to overthrow the Khmer Rouge - a radical communist movement even more brutal than the Ba'athist regime in Iraq - the United States condemned the action before the United Nations (UN) as an act of aggression and a violation of international law. The United States successfully led an international effort to impose sanctions against Vietnam and insisted that the UN recognize the Khmer Rouge as the legitimate government of Cambodia for more than a decade after their leaders were forced out of the capital into remote jungle areas. Similarly, the United States challenged three of its closest allies - Great Britain, France, and Israel - before the United Nations in 1956.
when they invaded Egypt in an attempt to overthrow the anti-Western regime of Gamal Abdul Nasser. The Eisenhower administration insisted that international law and the UN Charter must be upheld by all nations regardless of their relations with the United States.

Yet, today both Republicans and Democrats are united in the belief that the United States has the right to invade other countries if the president determines it is necessary.

Part of this shift in attitude comes from the so-called “war on terrorism.” In the months following the 11 September terrorist attacks, there were leaks to the media about alleged evidence of a meeting in Prague between an Iraqi intelligence officer and one of the hijackers of the doomed airplanes that crashed into the World Trade Center. Subsequently, however, both the FBI and CIA declared that no such meeting occurred. It is unlikely that the decidedly secular Ba’athist regime—which savagely suppressed Islamists within Iraq—would have been able to maintain close links with Bin Laden and his followers. Saudi Prince Turki bin Faisal, his country’s former intelligence chief, noted how Bin Laden views Saddam Hussein “as an apostate, an infidel or someone who is not worthy of being a fellow Muslim.” Much of the money trail for al-Qaeda comes from US ally Saudi Arabia, none has been traced to Iraq. Fifteen of the 19 hijackers were Saudi; none were Iraqi. The administration and Congress have noted reports of al-Qaeda operatives in Iraq, yet these alleged al-Qaida elements have been spotted only in the autonomous Kurdish areas in the north of the country, not in areas controlled by the Baghdad government. Various accounts of alleged Iraqi connections with various al-Qaeda operatives alleged by US Secretary of State Colin Powell and others have, upon closer examination, proved to be groundless.

The State Department’s own annual study immediately prior to the build-up for an invasion, Patterns of Global Terrorism 1991, did not list any serious act of international terrorism by the government of Iraq. Iraq’s past terrorist links have largely been limited to such secular groups as Abu Nidal, a now largely defunct Palestinian organization. At the height of Iraq’s support of Abu Nidal, in the early 1980s, the United States dropped Iraq from its list of countries that supported terrorism in order to support Iraq’s war effort against Iran. (They were added back on only after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, despite a lack of evidence of increased ties to terrorism.) A CIA report indicated that the Iraqis had actually been consciously avoiding any actions against the United States or its facilities abroad, presumably
out of fear of retaliation. Abu Nidal himself was apparently murdered by Iraqi agents in his Baghdad apartment in August 2002.

However, the primary concern about an alleged Iraqi threat was not solely from alleged connections to terrorist groups by Saddam Hussein’s regime, but from Iraq itself. This is ironic since Iraq not only had much of its military equipment destroyed during the 1991 Gulf War and subsequent air strikes and UN inspections, but was unable to have access to spare parts due to a strict military embargo first imposed in August 1990. At the start of the US invasion in March 2003 Iraq’s conventional armed forces were barely one-third their pre-1991 strength. Even though they had not been required to reduce their conventional forces under post-war restrictions imposed by the United Nations Security Council, the destruction of their weapons and their economic difficulties led to a substantial reduction in men under arms. The navy had become virtually nonexistent; the air force was not only just a fraction of what it was before the war, but US forces essentially controlled the skies. Military spending by Iraq had dropped to barely one-tenth of its levels in the 1980s. Furthermore, Iraq has never had an effective system of support, sustainability or supplies for its military outside its dependence on foreign imports. Saddam Hussein became a threat to his neighbors in the 1980s only because of foreign military aid, and such military aid ceased in August 1990. Despite widespread calls internationally to liberalize or eliminate the current sanctions on civilian goods for humanitarian reasons, there were no serious calls for ending the military embargo against the country. As a result, there was little reason to believe that Iraq would pose a credible threat to its neighbors in the foreseeable future through conventional arms.

The biggest concern raised by US officials, however, was non-conventional weaponry.

NUCLEAR APARTHEID: THE SOLUTION OR THE CAUSE?

The ceasefire agreement imposed on Iraq by the UN Security Council at the end of the Gulf War in 1991 included unprecedented infringements on Iraq’s sovereignty, particularly regarding the dismantling of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and related facilities. UN Security Council Resolution 687, among other things, provided for the destruction, removal or rendering harmless all Iraqi nuclear, chemical and biological weapons capability, including both the
weapons themselves and facilities for research, development and manufacturing, as well as eliminating ballistic missiles with a range of over 100 miles. In order to follow through on such a disarmament program, the Security Council set up the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM), which would be allowed free access to inspect and destroy such weaponry. The United States and its allies in the UN argued that such stringent measures were a reasonable response to a regime that had indicated its ability to develop and utilize WMDs and commit acts of aggression against its neighbors. Even Arabs who shared American concerns about the Iraqi regime, however, were disturbed that the United States had succeeded in getting the world body to single out this Arab nationalist government for such special restrictions, given US support for Israel, which they point out had also developed weapons of mass destruction and invaded neighboring states.

The US-led militarization of the Middle East has been repeatedly justified in the name of defending the security interests of the United States. However, US military prowess is many times greater than all potential Middle Eastern adversaries combined. Furthermore, the United States is located on the opposite side of the planet from the Middle East, far out of range of potentially hostile militaries, none of which have much in the way of power projection beyond a few hundred miles of their borders. As a result, the greatest single fear for United States security stemming from the Middle East is the possibility that a government or group hostile to the United States will somehow obtain a nuclear weapon and seek to use it against the United States. Despite desperate efforts by the Bush administration to justify the creation of a nuclear missile defense program of dubious efficacy, the primary threat of such an attack comes not from missiles but from less conventional forms of delivery, such as from being smuggled into the country. Putting aside questions of plausibility or method, however, the United States commitment to nonproliferation has been quite inconsistent.

Abandoning decades of efforts to promote nuclear nonproliferation, the Clinton administration in the 1990s moved toward a policy of “counter-proliferation,” signaling that the preferred response to the problem had become that of military force. Related to this was a de-emphasis on export controls and other preventative measures. For example, the nuclear program of Iraq – the Middle Eastern country about which the United States has expressed the greatest concern – was made possible through imports from the West of so-called “dual-
use” technologies, having civilian applications but also capable of producing nuclear weapons or delivery systems. Yet, President Clinton's Secretary of Defense, William Perry, argued before Congress that it was a “hopeless task” to control such dual-use technology, arguing that “it only interferes with a company's ability to succeed internationally.” This Clinton administration's position, upheld by its successor, is in direct contradiction to the position taken by United Nations inspectors in Iraq, who called for “strict maintenance of export controls by the industrialized nations” to prevent the Iraqi regime from once again developing its nuclear program.

In 1981 the Israeli air force attacked Iraq's French-built Osirak nuclear power plant, an operation made possible by the US decision to supply Israel with high-resolution photographs of Iraq from the KH-11 satellite, data that no other nation was allowed access to, as well as through US-supplied F-16 fighter bombers. Though the US government publicly condemned the bombing, in private, according to investigative journalist, Seymour Hersh: “Reagan was delighted...[and] very satisfied.” Publicly, the US suspended the delivery of four additional F-16s fighter-bombers to the Israeli air force. Two months later, that suspension was quietly lifted.

Such a tolerant attitude toward the unilateral use of force was not just that of a conservative Republican administration. Less than ten years after the Israeli air strikes, the US House of Representatives – in an effort led by liberal Democrats – passed a resolution endorsing the Israeli attack on Iraq and calling for the United States to seek the repeal of UN Security Council Resolution 487 that condemned it.

The irony is that Israel's action may have spurred Iraq's effort to procure nuclear weapons rather than curbed it. Not only was the Osirak reactor not the focal point of Iraq's nuclear weapons program, the Israeli attack likely encouraged the Iraqis to redouble their efforts to create a nuclear deterrent and take greater efforts to evade detection of their primary nuclear development facilities.

Israel's air strikes at Osirak paled in comparison with the much wider bombing attacks against suspected Iraqi nuclear-related sites ten years later by the United States during the Gulf War. Like the Israeli bombing, it violated both the spirit and the letter of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and was the final demonstration of the United States' lack of support for law-based approaches to this problem. It also is a reflection of the unilateralist view now even more apparent in US foreign policy that advocates military action rather than reliance on international organizations, international
law, or diplomacy. Such a policy delegitimizes traditional international safeguards against nuclear proliferation in favor of an international anarchy where regional nuclear powers can launch pre-emptive attacks against potential rivals at will. To cite two examples: subsequent to the US bombing of suspected Iraqi nuclear facilities, both the South Korean and Indian governments began talking openly about taking unilateral actions against North Korea and Pakistan, respectively. Tragically, such lawless attacks, ostensibly aimed at preventing proliferation in other countries, create the very insecurity that motivates governments to develop their nuclear programs in the first place. Such attacks will likely set back rather than promote the cause of nuclear non-proliferation. Indeed, it appears that such North Korea’s decision to renounce previous arms control agreements and move forward with its nuclear program was a direct result of the US decision to invade Iraq, apparently believing that it is important to develop a credible nuclear deterrent before being invaded.

The US-led invasion of Iraq has been justified as necessary to enforce UN Security Council Resolution 687 and subsequent resolutions, which call for the destruction of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction and capability of producing such weapons in the future. However, the resolution places this demand on Iraq within the context of ridding the entire region of WMDs and their delivery systems. The United States, however, rejected such a formula, preferring a kind of nuclear apartheid within which the United States, Pakistan and Israel can maintain their nuclear arsenals in the region, but Iraq and other Arab countries are effectively barred from developing them.

Furthermore, throughout the years of controversy regarding UNSCOM inspections of Iraq’s potential weapons of mass destruction between 1991 and 1998, the Iraqis allowed the UN’s International Atomic Energy Agency to continue regular inspections of Iraqi facilities and, in their final report on Iraq’s nuclear program in 1998, recognized that it had effectively been dismantled. “There are no indications that there remains in Iraq any physical capability for the production of weapon-useable nuclear material of any practical significance,” IAEA Director-General Mohammed Elbaradei wrote in a report to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. During the five months between the return of IAEA inspectors and their withdrawal on the eve of the US invasion, they were unable to find any evidence of a renewal of Iraq’s nuclear program. The United States has charged that some aluminum tubes had been discovered in the act of being imported into Iraq that could be used in some nuclear-related centrifuge efforts,
although the use of such tubes are considered an extremely crude form
of nuclear development and also have non-nuclear applications.

Given the risks inherent in unilateral military action and other
problems with US nuclear policy in the Middle East, why does the
United States not pursue a more comprehensive program of nuclear
nonproliferation? One answer may be that the primary concern of
the United States is not preventing nuclear proliferation per se but
preventing a challenge to its military domination in the post-Cold
War world. With American strategic planners moving away from the
prospect of a major East-West confrontation to one involving
medium-intensity warfare against Third World regional powers, the
desire for maintaining a nuclear monopoly by the major powers and
certain allies like Israel becomes all the more important.

Concern over the prospects of nuclear proliferation also serves as
a pretext for the ongoing US military presence in the region and for
attacking countries like Iraq that challenge this American dominance.
Instead of seeing the potential acquisition of nuclear weapons by
Iraq as an inevitable reaction to the American failure to support global
nuclear disarmament, the United States – by labeling it as part of the
threat from international terrorism – can justify its military interven
ventionism in the Middle East.

Nuclear weapons are inherently weapons of terror, given their
level of devastation and their non-discriminate nature. Indeed, the
nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union
during the Cold War was often referred to as “the balance of terror.”
Many people outside the United States see the atomic bombings of
two Japanese cities in 1945 as among the greatest acts of terrorism
in world history. American concerns, however, are not about the
ability of the United States to threaten other countries with nuclear
weapons but how others might threaten the United States. This can
make it possible to portray American attacks against far-off countries
as an act of self-defense.

To cite one example, during the fall of 1990 following Iraq's takeover
of Kuwait, the senior Bush administration was struggling – with only
limited success at that point – to rally a reluctant American public
to support going to war. In November, Bush administration officials
noticed that public-opinion polls indicated that the possibility of an
imminent Iraqi procurement of nuclear weapons was the only issue
that would lead a majority of Americans to support the war. At that
point, the Bush administration started issuing alarmist reports
regarding Iraq's nuclear potential, an issue that had not been seriously addressed until then.

Similarly, President George W. Bush – in an attempt to justify his planned invasion of Iraq – told the American public that the IAEA in 1998 had warned that Saddam Hussein's regime was within six months of developing a nuclear weapon. When the IAEA denied it had ever made such a claim, Deputy Press Secretary Scott McClellan claimed that President Bush was referring to a 1991 IAEA report that was released prior to the dismantling of Iraq's nuclear facilities. However, the IAEA pointed out that they had never made such a claim in 1991 either. On 7 September 2002, President Bush cited an alleged IAEA "report" declaring that the Iraqis had undertaken new construction at several nuclear-related sites. However, the IAEA denied that any such report existed.

Whatever the actual motivations for professed American concerns regarding nuclear proliferation, is nonproliferation in the Middle East even possible? Ironically, Iraq had endorsed calls for a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East, which had been opposed by the United States. Even if such pronouncements by the Iraqis had proven less than sincere, US support for the concept would have provided far greater legitimacy to efforts to control any potential nuclear threat from Iraq than an invasion. In effect, the United States insists that nuclear weapons in the Middle East should be the exclusive domain of itself and Israel. Such a stance will most likely lead not to acquiescence, but to a rush by other nations to counter this perceived American-Israeli threat, as witnessed by Iraq's ambitious nuclear program, aborted by the 1991 Gulf War and the subsequent inspections regime.

Even worse, such a policy increases the likelihood of extremist groups – with or without government support – procuring and detonating a nuclear weapon against the United States.

THE "POOR MAN'S NUCLEAR BOMB": THE THREAT FROM CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

Far more credible than charges on the eve of the US invasion that Iraq was capable of developing any nuclear capability were concerns over Iraq's development of biological and chemical weapons.

When ABC television news correspondent Charles Glass revealed sites of Iraq's biological warfare programs in early 1989, when the United States was quietly supporting Iraq, the Defense Department
denied the facts presented and the story essentially died.\textsuperscript{15} Glass observed that it was not until a few years later – following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, a US ally – that the State Department began issuing briefings on those same sites he had uncovered.

Similarly, the March 1988 massacre at Halabja – where Iraqi government forces killed upwards of 5,000 civilians in that Kurdish town by gassing them with chemical weapons – was downplayed by the Reagan administration, even to the point of claiming that Iran, then the preferred American enemy, was actually responsible. The Halabja tragedy was not an isolated incident, as US officials were well aware at the time. UN reports in 1986 and 1987 documented Iraq's use of chemical weapons, which were confirmed both by investigations from the CIA and from US embassy staff who visited Iraqi Kurdish refugees in Turkey. However, far from being particularly concerned about the ongoing repression, the use of chemical weapons and the potential use of nuclear and biological weapons, the United States was actually supporting the Iraqi government's efforts to procure materials necessary for the development of such an arsenal. It is in this light that later US concerns over Iraq's possession of WMDs ought to be considered.

During the 1980s, American companies, with US government backing, supplied Saddam Hussein's government with much of the raw materials for Iraq's chemical and biological weapons program as well as $1 billion worth of components necessary for the development of missiles and nuclear weapons. A Senate committee reported in 1994 that American companies licensed by the US Commerce Department had shipped large quantities of biological materials usable in weapons production in Iraq. A major task of UNSCOM after the First Gulf War was to destroy the very weapons the United States had helped to build. This report noted that such trade continued at least until the end of the decade, despite evidence of Iraqi chemical warfare against Iranians and against Iraqi Kurds.\textsuperscript{16} Much of this trade was no oversight. It was made possible because the Reagan administration took Iraq off its list of countries supporting terrorism in 1982, making it eligible to receive such items. This redesignation came in spite of Iraq's ongoing support of Abu Nidal and other terrorist groups.\textsuperscript{17}

It was no secret to the Reagan administration that Iraq was using chemical weapons. A New York Times report shows that the US Defense Intelligence Agency provided detailed military assistance in a 1988
Iraqi military offensive against Iran in which they knew Iraq would be likely to use chemical weapons. According to Colonel Walter Lang, the senior intelligence officer at that time: "The use of gas on the battlefield by the Iraqis was not a matter of deep strategic concern." It is ironic that the fact that Saddam Hussein "used chemical weapons against his own people" was repeatedly emphasized as justification for going to war, when the United States was in part responsible for these gas attacks in the first place and appeared to have no qualms about their use.

As late as December 1989, just eight months prior to Iraq's designation as an enemy for having invaded Kuwait, the Bush administration pushed through new loans to the Iraqi government in order to facilitate US-Iraq trade. Meanwhile, according to a 1992 Senate investigation, the Commerce Department repeatedly deleted and altered information on export licenses for trade with Iraq in order to hide potential military uses of American exports. Such policies raise serious questions as to why, if Iraq was really the threat to American security in 2003 that required the United States to invade in self-defense, the United States helped facilitate the development of its military capability and its acquisition of weapons of mass destruction in the first place.

The sincerity of the US obsession with Iraq's potential threat to the region, which began under the Clinton administration in 1997, was weakened by the fact that Iraq's military, including its real and potential WMD, was significantly stronger in the late 1980s than it was at the time of the US invasion. Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein once really was a threat when he had his full complement of medium-range missiles, a functioning air force and a massive stockpile of chemical and biological weaponry and material. Yet, from the Carter administration through the Reagan administration through the first half of the senior Bush administration, the United States dismissed any potential strategic threat to the point of coddling Saddam's regime with overt economic subsidies and covert military support. Why then, beginning in late 1997, when Iraq had only a tiny percentage of its once-formidable military capability, did the United States start to portray Iraq as an intolerable threat? It is no surprise, under these circumstances, that so many Americans, rightly or wrongly, suspected President Clinton of manufacturing the crisis to distract the American public from the sex scandal then surrounding his office. Indeed, the December 1998 bombing campaign began on the very day of his
scheduled impeachment by the House of Representatives, which, in response, postponed the vote.

A review of the chronology leading up to that American military campaign is revealing.

In November 1997, the temporary Iraqi banning of American participants from UNSCOM inspection teams led the United States to mobilize its armed forces for a major bombing campaign, which was suspended when the Russians were able to negotiate an agreement in which the Iraqis rescinded the ban. Soon thereafter the Clinton Administration began to raise concerns about Iraq’s refusal to allow UNSCOM inspectors to visit so-called “presidential sites,” a liberally defined series of buildings and grounds across the country that Iraq claimed were used by government officials. The United States and some UNSCOM officials believed that the reason for the Iraqi restrictions was that anthrax and other biological warfare agents might be under production within some of those sites. The Iraqis, on the other hand, saw granting unfettered access by inspectors as yet another intrusion on their sovereign rights. Given that a number of prominent American political leaders from both parties had called openly for the assassination of Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi leader’s reluctance to allow Americans into presidential palaces may also have been a result of concerns that such access would make him and other top officials personally vulnerable. Furthermore, the Iraqis had complained that, despite a stated policy of avoiding staffing UNSCOM with experts from “intelligence providing states,” there was a disproportionate number of Americans involved in the inspections, who – the Iraqis noted periodically – deliberately prolonged the process and possibly provided information to the US military.21

Even those in the West who were skeptical about Iraq’s alleged concerns were nonetheless suspicious of American motives in raising the issue. Although such Iraqi restrictions on these “presidential sites” had existed since the beginning of the sanctions regime nearly seven years earlier, the United States announced only in January 1998 that it had become an intolerable violation of UN Security Council Resolution 687 that might necessitate a sustained bombing campaign against Iraq. By February a large-scale US military assault seemed likely. However, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan was able to broker a deal late that month that met the United Nations’ insistence that the sites be open to UN inspectors, but with an additional diplomatic presence in recognition of the sites’ special status.
At the end of October Iraq imposed new restrictions on UNSCOM as a result of revelations that the United States was using UNSCOM illegally as a vehicle for spying on the Iraqi government. On 10 November, in response to pressure from President Clinton, UNSCOM chairman Richard Butler announced his decision to pull UNSCOM out of Iraq without the required authorization from the Security Council. Iraq then performed a U-turn and agreed to allow the inspectors to resume their activities. The United States, however, was eager to launch military action, particularly by mid-December in order to take advantage of overlapping American military units on rotation in the Persian Gulf, which made it a particularly auspicious time for major air strikes. Clinton's National Security Adviser, Sandy Berger, met with Butler on 30 November, when the UNSCOM director was instructed to provoke Iraq to break its agreement to cooperate fully with UNSCOM. Without consulting the UN Security Council as required, Butler announced to the Iraqis that he was nullifying previously agreed-upon modalities dealing with sensitive sites that limited the number of UNSCOM inspectors. He chose the Ba'ath Party headquarters in Baghdad as the site to demand unfettered access, a very unlikely place to store weapons of mass destruction but one very likely to provoke a negative reaction. The Iraqis refused to allow the large group into their party headquarters, but did allow them unrestricted access to a series of sensitive military installations. At that point, Butler and the Clinton administration unilaterally ordered the UNSCOM inspectors out of Iraq. Back in New York, American officials then helped Butler draft a report blaming Iraq exclusively for the impasse in a late-night session at the US Mission across from the United Nations. As the UN Security Council was meeting in an emergency special session on how to implement a unified response to Iraq's non-cooperation, the United States - with support from Great Britain - launched an unauthorized four-day series of sustained air strikes against Iraq in what became known as Operation Desert Fox. In response, Iraq refused UNSCOM re-entry. Subsequently, the Clinton and Bush administrations - echoed by much of the US media - claimed that UNSCOM inspectors were "expelled from Iraq" by Saddam Hussein as a means of bolstering the claim that the Iraqis must be hiding weapons of mass destruction that require US military action to uncover and destroy.

In reality, in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War and the subsequent inspections regime, virtually any aggressive military potential by Iraq had been destroyed. Before UNSCOM was withdrawn, its agents
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reportedly oversaw the destruction of 38,000 chemical weapons, 480,000 liters of live chemical-weapons agents, 48 missiles, six missile launchers, 30 missile warheads modified to carry chemical or biological agents and hundreds of items of related equipment with the capability to produce chemical weapons. In late 1997 Butler reported that they had made “significant progress” in tracking Iraq’s chemical weapons program and that 817 of the 819 Soviet-supplied long-range missiles had been accounted for. There were also believed to be a couple of dozen Iraqi-made ballistic missiles unaccounted for, but these were of questionable caliber.

In September 2002 Iraq agreed to a return of United Nations inspectors under the new United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) program. At this point, however, the United States – that had been citing Iraq’s refusal to allow inspectors to return as a major reason for invading the country – suddenly announced that allowing inspectors in was not enough and that the United States would invade anyway. In an effort to legitimize such an attack, however, the United States introduced a new resolution usurping previous US-backed resolutions. These new provisions included the right of a US official (and officials from other permanent UN Security Council members) to accompany inspectors, the right for the United States (or other Security Council members) to determine whether Iraq was in material breach of the resolution and respond militarily, and other provisions that were seen as being designed to delay the resumption of inspections, result in an Iraq rejection or otherwise pave the way for a US invasion under the cover of the United Nations.

A modified version of the US proposal was passed unanimously by the United Nations Security Council as Resolution 1441 in November which required unlimited and immediate access to any and all sites UNMOVIC and the IAEA demanded. Despite Iraq allowing such access, the United States called for an end of inspections the following March and launched its invasion. The major area of alleged Iraqi non-compliance with the resolution involved not inspections, but a failure by Iraq to account fully for some biological and chemical agents that the government was believed to possess. While there was no proof that Iraq still had this proscribed materiel, the United States insisted that it was up to Iraq to prove it did not possess such material.

Combined with a new inspections regime and ongoing satellite and air reconnaissance, most arms-control experts believed it would be extraordinarily difficult for Iraq to hide its chemical and nuclear
weapons development, which could then be destroyed by air strikes, though some leftover stores of chemical weapons from the 1980s could possibly be hidden somewhere. The development of biological weapons, by contrast, would be much easier to conceal due to the small amount of space needed for their manufacture and the fact that Iraq already had the seed stock for such lethal materiel. However, there are serious questions as to whether Iraq possessed the complex delivery systems necessary for an offensive biological weapons capability.

One problem with the two inspection regimes was that the United States never offered any incentive for Iraq to cooperate with inspections. From the outset, the United States made clear that even total cooperation with UNSCOM would not lead to an end to the sanctions. The senior President Bush's National Security Adviser, Robert Gates, stated: "Iraqis will be made to pay the price while Saddam Hussein is in power. Any easing of sanctions will be considered only when there is a new government." Similarly, Secretary of State Albright noted in 1997: "We do not agree with those nations who argue that if Iraq complies with its obligations concerning weapons of mass destruction, sanctions should be lifted." President Clinton, in reference to Saddam Hussein's continued rule, declared: "Sanctions will be there until the end of time, or as long as he [Hussein] lasts." Finally, when the junior Bush administration — with the backing of a large bipartisan majority in Congress — declared in the fall of 2002 that it would invade Iraq with or without inspections, it became apparent that inspections were never really the issue.

The preference of the United States for using military rather than diplomatic means to address the risk from the development of weapons of mass destruction is symbolic of the failure to recognize the paradox of the growing militarization of US Middle East policy — the more the United States has militarized the Middle East, the less secure the United States and its allies have become. As long as the United States fails to recognize that its efforts to militarize the region have backfired, the threat of violence, terrorism and war — even involving weapons of mass destruction — will paradoxically but almost certainly only get worse.

Finally, Saddam Hussein for long demonstrated that he cared first and foremost about his own survival. He presumably recognized that any effort to use weapons of mass destruction would inevitably lead to his own destruction. This is why he did not use them during the 1991 Gulf War while being attacked by the largest coalition of forces ever arrayed against a single nation in world history. He was willing
to use chemical weapons against Iranian forces – with apparent collaboration from the US Defense Intelligence Agency – because he knew Iran had no allies. He was willing to use chemical weapons against Kurdish civilians – with the help of a US cover-up – because he knew the Kurds had no allies. The United States was never able to put forward any evidence as to why he would have ever used weapons of mass destruction in an offensive military operation in full knowledge of the consequences.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE US ROLE IN THE GULF

In the midst of strong anti-interventionist sentiment among the American public at the height of the Vietnam War, an overt large-scale military presence was not politically feasible. However, the Nixon administration had had some success in curbing anti-Vietnam War protests through its “Vietnamization” of the war. That is, by increasing the role of South Vietnamese conscripts fighting on the ground and by escalating the American air war, American troop strength could be reduced, resulting in fewer American casualties and smaller draft rolls, even as violence against the Vietnamese escalated. As a result, in 1971, President Richard Nixon decided to expand this concept through the Nixon Doctrine – also known as the Guam Doctrine (named after the Pacific island where President Nixon first announced the policy) – which institutionalized this “surrogate strategy” of Vietnamization on a global level. According to Nixon, “we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested... but we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.”

The Persian Gulf became the first testing ground for using a regional gendarmerie to promote US interests, essentially an extension of the Vietnamization program of training and arming locals to enforce the US security agenda. The Shah of Iran owed his throne to the United States, had lots of money from the rise in oil prices with which to purchase weapons, and a desire to feed his megalomania – all of which made him a well-suited surrogate. Throughout the 1970s the United States sold over $20 billion in advanced weaponry to the Shah (with an additional $20 billion on order). In addition, there were as many as 3,000 American advisers and trainers – mostly working for private defense contractors – in Iran in order to transform the Iranian armed forces into a sophisticated fighting force capable of counter-insurgency operations. This policy was successfully implemented
when Iranian troops – with American and British support – intervened in support of the Sultan of Oman against a leftist rebellion in the Dhofar province in the mid-1970s. In 1979, however, Iran's Islamic revolution brought this policy crashing down, replacing the compliant Shah with a regime stridently opposed to Western interests.

In response to this shocking recognition of the limits of surrogate strategy, the Carter Doctrine was announced in 1980. The United States would no longer rely on potentially unstable allies and their armed forces, announced President Carter, but would now intervene directly through the Rapid Deployment Force, later integrated into the Central Command. An agreement was reached with the Saudi government whereby, in exchange for the sale of an integrated package of highly sophisticated weaponry, the Saudis would build and pay for an elaborate system of command, naval and air facilities large enough to sustain US forces in intensive regional combat. For example, the controversial 1981 sale of the sophisticated AWACS airborne radar system to Saudi Arabia was to be a linchpin of an elaborate communications system comparable to that of NATO. According to a Washington Post report at that time (then denied by the Pentagon), this was to be part of a grand defense strategy for the Middle Eastern oil fields that included an ambitious plan to build bases in Saudi Arabia, equipped and waiting for American forces to use.23

In the event of war, American forces would be deployed so quickly and with such overwhelming force that the casualty ratio would be highly favorable and the length of the fighting would be short. The result would be that disruptive anti-war protests from the American public would be minimal. This was of particular concern since Congress had recently passed the War Powers Act, whereby the legislative branch could effectively veto a president's decision to send American troops into combat after 60 days. Though the exact scenario in which US forces would be deployed could not have been predicted at the time, the Carter Doctrine made possible the decisive military victories over Iraq in 1991 and 2003.

During the Iran–Iraq War between 1980 and 1988, the United States armed one side and then the other as a means of insuring that neither of the two countries could become dominant in the region. When the Clinton administration came to office in 1993, the policy was shifted to that of “dual containment,” seeking to isolate both countries, which the United States saw as potentially dangerous and destabilizing forces in this strategically important region, labeling them both “rogue states.”
As defined by US national security managers, rogue states are countries that possess substantial military capability, seek the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and violate what are seen as international "norms." President Clinton's first National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake, put the matter clearly:

Our policy must face the reality of recalcitrant and outlaw states that not only choose to remain outside the family [of nations] but also assault its basic values...[and] exhibit a chronic inability to engage constructively with the outside world.

Lake argued further that, just as the United States took the lead in "containing" the Soviet Union, it must now also bear the "special responsibility" to "neutralize" and "contain" these "outlaw states." In addition to Iraq and Iran, Libya and Sudan were also widely considered as rogue states, with Syria sometimes included on the list by certain foreign policy hawks. (The only countries outside the region given such a label were communist North Korea and Cuba.)

Despite concerns voiced by the US government regarding Iran and Iraq's human rights record and violations of international norms, neither country was unique in the region in such transgressions. For example, due to its powerful armed forces, nuclear arsenal, conquests of neighboring countries, and violations of human rights and other international legal standards, a case could be made that Israel – America's chief partner in the region and the world's largest recipient of US economic and military support – would also fit this definition. Yet the label of "rogue state" has a clear function in US foreign policy independent of any objective criteria. Iran and Iraq are the only two countries in the Middle East that combine a large population, adequate water resources and oil wealth to be major independent players with the ability to challenge American hegemony in the region. These two countries have been labeled "rogue states" ultimately because of their failure to accept the post-Cold War order that requires accepting the American strategic and economic agenda. In previous decades these countries engaged in large-scale military procurement with the support or acquiescence of the United States as well as in major human rights abuses without American objections. Once their cooperation with the United States ended and their hostility toward American interests emerged, their long ignored human-rights abuses and militarization became a focal point for their vilification.
The level of repression these two regimes have demonstrated against their own citizens as well as their histories of aggression and subversion against their neighbors makes such rationalizations for US policy easier to accept. However, a careful analysis of American policy in the Gulf reveals that concerns over the security of allied Gulf monarchies from potential hostile actions by both Iran and Iraq appear to be greatly exaggerated. Both Iran and Iraq are also very dependent on the sale of oil for their own prosperity and would seem to have little incentive to threaten the free flow of this crucial export. Furthermore, the strategic balance in the past decade has swung decisively in favor of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the West, placing the pro-Western monarchies in a more comfortable strategic position than was even imaginable a little more than a decade ago.

US POLICY TOWARDS IRAQ THROUGH 1991:
FROM APPEASMENT TO WAR

Modern Iraq is a creation of British colonialists who established control over the territory following the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, essentially creating the country from three Ottoman provinces. A nationalist coup in 1958 overthrew the pro-British monarch, limiting Western influence in the country and shifting the ideological orientation toward a left-wing nationalism. The Ba’ath Party, also nationalist and socialist in orientation, first seized power in 1963. Saddam Hussein rose to prominence between 1979 and 1982, imposing what was essentially a totalitarian state under his rule and shifting Iraq’s pro-Soviet orientation more toward neutrality. France, Great Britain and the United States joined the Soviets in recognizing Iraq’s importance in the regional balance of power. All maintained a largely cooperative relationship with Saddam Hussein’s exceptionally oppressive regime, much to the chagrin of human-rights advocates. While US officials never considered the Iraqi regime an American ally, as some critics have claimed, Iraq was nevertheless seen as a strategic asset with which the United States could cooperate throughout the regime’s dramatic military build-up in the 1980s.

For years, Middle East experts, human-rights supporters, and many others called on the United States to get tough with Saddam Hussein’s regime. Iraq’s invasion of Iran, support for international terrorism, and large-scale human rights violations were all valid grounds for sanctions. Perhaps most significant was Iraq’s use of chemical warfare
against both Iranian troops and the country's civilian Kurdish population during the 1980s - by far the largest such use of these illegal weapons since World War I. The response of the world's nations was a major test as to whether international law would be upheld through the imposition of stringent sanctions or other measures to challenge this dangerous precedent. The United States, along with much of the world community, failed. US agricultural subsidies and other economic aid flowed into Iraq and American officials looked the other way as many of these funds were laundered into purchasing military equipment. The United States sent an untold amount of indirect aid - largely through Kuwait and other Arab countries - which enabled Iraq to receive weapons and technology to increase its war-making capacity.31

When a 1988 Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff report brought to light Saddam Hussein's policy of widespread killings of Kurdish civilians in northern Iraq, Senator Claiborne Pell introduced the Prevention of Genocide Act to put pressure on the Iraqi government. However, the Reagan administration successfully moved to have the measure killed.

This history of appeasement raises serious questions regarding the sincerity of both the strategic and moral concerns subsequently raised by US officials about both the nature of the Iraqi regime and its threat against its neighbors.

In July 1990, with Saddam Hussein making direct threats against Kuwait, the Bush administration again blocked congressional efforts to impose modest sanctions on Iraq. The US ambassador, April Glaspie, a well-respected career diplomat, told the Iraqi dictator that the United States was neutral regarding the dispute. This stated neutrality, combined with years of appeasement, very likely gave Saddam Hussein the impression that he would be able to get away with an invasion of Iraq's southern neighbor.

Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August, taking over the small emirate within hours. The royal family fled and any resistance to the Iraqi takeover was severely repressed. The United Nations Security Council quickly adopted Resolution 660, condemning the invasion and demanding Iraq's immediate withdrawal. No other member of the Arab League supported the invasion and most vehemently opposed it. But most also wanted to keep it as an inter-Arab concern and avoid war if possible. Within days of Iraq's takeover, Arab leaders were apparently very close to convincing Iraq to withdraw. However, the United States decided to send large numbers of American troops into
neighboring Saudi Arabia in response to Iraq's takeover, allegedly as a deterrent against further Iraqi aggression. According to then Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan, the American-Saudi decision to implement what became known as "Operation Desert Shield" scuttled a tentative agreement he had made with Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait. In return for the Arab-sponsored withdrawal, there may have been some compromises—perhaps on the exact location of the disputed desert border separating Iraq and Kuwait or a referendum on the future of Kuwait's monarchy. However, it appears that Iraq could have been convinced to withdraw from Kuwait within weeks of its invasion had the United States allowed Arab diplomacy to run its course. The Gulf War and the resulting humanitarian catastrophe could probably have been avoided.

Instead, then Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney, flew to Saudi Arabia to try to convince Saudi leaders that a major build-up of Iraqi forces in southern Kuwait indicated an imminent invasion of Saudi Arabia. He argued that the kingdom therefore needed to accept large numbers of American forces on its soil as a deterrent. While such an action by the Iraqis cannot be completely ruled out, it appears extremely unlikely: Iraq has never had territorial claims against Saudi Arabia as it did with Kuwait, its troops had dug in to fortified defensive positions immediately upon entering Kuwait, and it chose not move into Saudi Arabia prior to the arrival of sufficient Western forces to produce a credible deterrent. More significantly, the St. Petersburg Times got hold of satellite footage of the area from that critical period soon after the Iraqis seized Kuwait, and, contrary to US government statements, there was no evidence of Iraqi troops massing on the border. The newspaper showed the photos to Peter Zimmerman, formerly of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and an unidentified Defense Intelligence Agency analyst, who noted, "We didn't see anything to indicate an Iraqi force in Kuwait of even 20% the size the administration claimed." The newspaper asked the Pentagon to present evidence that would support its contention that Iraq was preparing to invade Saudi Arabia. It refused. Furthermore, Iraq apparently only had sent enough troops to suppress the Kuwaiti population initially, dramatically increasing the number of its troops only after allied forces arrived in the region. In any case, the decision to bring in American troops enabled Saddam Hussein to project himself not as the aggressor who had just invaded a small neighboring country, but as the defender of the Arab world against an army of Western imperialists.
The US Obsession with Iraq and the Triumph of Militarism

In an interesting historical footnote, Osama bin Laden – then back in Saudi Arabia after fighting against the Soviets in Afghanistan – had been strongly denouncing Saddam Hussein for months and even warned the Saudi government that Iraq could be on the verge of invading Kuwait. The Saudis sought to silence him, but he persisted in his warnings. When Iraq did invade, Bin Laden sent an “I told you so” letter to King Fahd, but promised that he could organize a massive international force of mujahadin to repel the Iraqi invaders. In what Bin Laden would later call “the most shocking moment of his life,” Fahd rejected this offer of pan-Islamic solidarity against the Iraqi invasion and instead accepted the American plan.34

Even after US troops entered the region, there were possibilities for a negotiated settlement. However, there was no American attempt to negotiate. The only direct contact between the two nations prior to the outbreak of the war was one meeting in Geneva at the foreign ministry level a week before hostilities broke out. There, Secretary of State James Baker presented a letter written by President Bush informing Saddam Hussein that his only choice was to capitulate without negotiation or be crushed by force. In the letter, which was rejected by Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz for its undiplomatic language, Bush stated: “There can be no reward for aggression. Nor will there be any negotiation. Principle cannot be compromised.”35 Specialists on the negotiation process were very critical of US conduct prior to the war, primarily noting how the United States never gave the Iraqis any opportunity to save face. Says Harvard Law School professor Roger Fisher, Director of the Harvard Negotiation Project, from the Iraqi perspective:

The choice of staying in Kuwait outweighed the choice of withdrawal because there was no reason to believe that the US would remove its forces from Saudi Arabia after Iraqi left Kuwait, that UN sanctions against Iraq would be lifted after withdrawal, that Palestinian interests would be linked to withdrawal, that Iraqi access to the sea would be ensured, etc. Thus, Hussein’s position on this issue becomes understandable. Knowing this, something could have been done to reduce his uncertainty about the consequences of the decision to withdrawal.36

There were certainly a number of ways the United States may have been able to negotiate an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and other legitimate security concerns short of war, but these were not pursued.37
Iraq

The United Nations Security Council imposed comprehensive military and economic sanctions on Iraq in the aftermath of its invasion of Kuwait, but they were unsuccessful in convincing the Iraqis to withdraw. These pre-war sanctions would have probably worked with time, however. The CIA estimated that UN sanctions blocked 90 percent of Iraqi imports and 97 percent of Iraqi exports; no country so heavily dependent on trade can survive very long under those conditions. This was a much higher rate of compliance than what has existed in the far more controversial post-war sanctions regime. In Iraq during this period, there were long gas lines in a country that had been a major exporter of oil; there were chronic shortages of basic foodstuffs, such as rice, bread, and sugar, which are staples in the Iraqi diet; there were breakdowns from lavatories to automobiles because of a lack of spare parts; in a country with a largely planned economy that had controlled prices, hyper-inflation was ignited.

The sanctions were working materially, in severely limiting imports and exports and thereby causing great economic hardship, but they were not working politically. The reasons were two-fold: first, the United States insisted that sanctions would continue even if Iraq withdrew from Kuwait. Viewed from Iraq's perspective, why withdraw if sanctions were to continue anyway? Second, the Iraqis were faced with a simultaneous military threat. When a country is faced with an external threat to its security — in this case, half a million troops poised to attack across their southern border — people are willing to tolerate more economic deprivation than they might otherwise as they rally around the flag.

Had sanctions been imposed some years ago, in response to Saddam Hussein's earlier crimes — when he invaded Iran in 1980 or when he first used chemical weapons soon thereafter — it is likely he would not have invaded Kuwait, because he would have known there would be severe economic consequences as a result. Or, had the sanctions been applied following his invasion of Kuwait but with an offer to lift them upon withdrawal and without a simultaneous military threat, he likely would have withdrawn prior to the outbreak of hostilities. War was not the only option.

However, the United States systematically rejected a series of peace overtures by the French, the Soviets, and the Yemenis, favoring instead a massive military response. Indeed, in the weeks before the launch of the bombing on 16 January 1991, the talk in Washington of a "nightmare scenario" was in reference to an Iraqi withdrawal from
Kuwait without having to go to war.\textsuperscript{40} The US position was that, without a war, Saddam Hussein’s regime would remain with its military assets intact, free to sell its oil, popular among some segments of the Arab world’s population and still able to threaten its neighbors. This was considered unacceptable. However, Saddam Hussein could only have become the threat he did with the help of the United States and various European countries during the previous years. As a result, the need to destroy Iraq’s potential for future aggression through war was unnecessary, since preventing the regime’s future development as a threat required only that the United States and others in the international community cut off Iraq’s acquisition of weapons.

As a result, just as the United States had downplayed Iraq’s potential threat previously when the regime was seen as a potential asset, it then began to exaggerate Iraq’s potential threat, as exemplified by the senior President Bush’s characterization of Saddam Hussein as “another Hitler.” The Hitler bogeyman has been used repeatedly to justify attacks by Western nations against the Third World. Prior to their invasion of Egypt in 1956, the British and French insisted that Egyptian leader Gamal Abdul Nasser was comparable to Hitler. In the 1960s the United States argued that without a major war in Vietnam, the Communists would then try to take over the rest of Southeast Asia as the Nazis did in Europe, as part of an effort to take over the world.\textsuperscript{41} In the 1980s, Secretary of State George Schultz claimed the Sandinista government of Nicaragua was like the Nazis in that they were going to invade the rest of Central America if they were not overthrown. Such terminology was used again in order to frighten a skeptical American public into supporting a war against Iraq. As an example of the extent of this manipulation, a photograph of Saddam Hussein on the cover of the influential New Republic magazine was airbrushed in such way that his long moustache was significantly shortened so he would look more like Adolf Hitler.\textsuperscript{42}

Similarly, those who opposed an invasion of Iraq were compared with those who supported the appeasement of Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Yet, the use of force to reverse Iraq’s conquest of Kuwait, the subsequent sanctions and inspections regimes could hardly be considered appeasement.

The fact is, however, that Iraq never had the industrial capacity, the self-sustaining economy, the domestic arms industry, the population base, the coherent ideology or political mobilization, the powerful allies, or any of the necessary components for large-scale
military conquest as did the German, Italian, and Japanese fascists of the 1930s and 1940s. Though better off than most of the non-Western world, Iraq was still a Third World country. While the regime certainly could do damage to its own population and territories on its immediate border, it never had the capability of seizing or holding on to large amounts of territory.

The use of such hyperbole by the first Bush administration was successful not just in getting a reluctant Congress and public to support the decision to go to war. It also served to discredit domestic anti-war critics who incorrectly predicted high American casualties. Historically, armed forces have exaggerated their own strength and minimized their opponents' strengths in order to convince their enemies not to engage in an act of aggression. This has been one of the foundations of the theory of deterrence. However, recent decades have witnessed the reversal of this. The US government has consistently exaggerated the military force of its opponents – be they Soviet, Nicaraguan, or Iraqi – and downplayed the ability of the United States and its allies to resist or overcome it. From the perspective of deterrence, this would be totally foolish, since to exaggerate your enemy's strength while understating your own ability to resist it would be to invite attack. However, if a country's national security is not really at stake and the primary goal of the government is to convince the public that it is worth diverting a large amount of the nation's resources to military production and/or to engage in a war, making such claims then makes sense. In addition, after the Bush administration deliberately exaggerated the strength of the enemy and US forces ended up defeating Iraq soundly with minimal American casualties, it came across as an incredible victory. As a result, the popularity of the US military and President Bush soared. In any case, this one-sided military victory led the American public – who initially had been very skeptical, with only 47 per cent of the public favoring going to war at the end of 1990 – to support it overwhelmingly, with over 80 per cent expressing their approval three months later.

There was impressive unity in the international community in opposing Iraq's aggression against Kuwait and the pre-war sanctions were almost universally respected. However, there was not as much international support for the US-led war effort as claimed at the time. Within the Arab world, only the unpopular Gulf monarchs, Syrian dictator Hafez Assad (a bitter rival of Saddam Hussein despite sharing his Ba'athist roots), and the autocratic rulers of the economically dependent North African regimes of Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco
supported the war. No other Arab leader supported the US-led military campaign against Iraq. The primary support for the American military operation came from Western Europe.

Even the United Nations Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force, passed on 29 November, was not as clear an indication of international support as it was made out to be by the United States. In return for the Chinese not vetoing the resolution, the US dropped trade sanctions imposed following the brutal suppression of the pro-democracy movement in 1989 and approved new loans. In return for the Soviet Union’s support, the United States agreed not to discuss the Soviet repression in the Baltic republics in the upcoming Paris Peace Conference. Colombia and Zaire, non-permanent members, were promised increased aid and extensions of loans. When Yemen, also a non-permanent member, refused to buckle under similar pressure, the US canceled $70 million in aid scheduled to go to that impoverished country. Even among the many Arabs and other Muslims who opposed Iraq’s conquest of Kuwait and wanted it reversed, the US-led war was seen as avoidable, unnecessary, and more of an excuse for a major US-led military operation than a genuine American desire to support international law and stop aggression.

THE 1991 GULF WAR: THE STORM AND ITS RESIDUE

In a military campaign dubbed “Operation Desert Storm,” the United States and its allies began bombing Iraq on 16 January 1991, one day after the United Nations-imposed deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. It was almost exclusively an air war until American ground troops entered the fighting in late February, liberating Kuwait and occupying a large swath of southern Iraq in slightly more than four days.

In mid-February, after four weeks of bombing and prior to the launch of the allied ground assault, Iraq accepted a Soviet peace proposal in full and agreed to withdraw from Kuwait in compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 660. The United States, however, rejected the deal and pledged to continue prosecuting the war. Even as Iraqi forces finally began withdrawing from Kuwait, the United States continued its assault in violation of provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention that outlaw the killing of soldiers who are out of combat. Rather than the one-sided victory in the ground war being exclusively the result of American military prowess, it appears that most of the Iraqis were evacuating or already had evacuated
their positions when the US ground forces arrived. The Washington Post confirmed that tens of thousands of Iraqi troops had withdrawn a full 36 hours before the first allied forces reached Kuwait City. These forces, too, were pursued relentlessly by the American assault. Thousands of retreating soldiers as well as some civilian refugees and hostages were slaughtered as they fled northward on what became known as “the highway of death.” American pilots referred to it as a “turkey shoot.”

Though the United Nations had only authorized member states to do what was necessary to rid Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the United States was determined to inflict a devastating blow to Iraq’s infrastructure through what became, in a period of just six weeks, one of the heaviest bombing campaigns in the history of war. Even Saddam Hussein’s most strident critics in the Gulf were offended at the level of overkill, particularly what was inflicted upon Iraq’s civilian population, unwilling conscripts, and the country’s non-military infrastructure. By attacking roads, bridges, factories, irrigation systems, power stations, waterworks, and government offices, the US-led military offensive against Iraq went well beyond what was necessary to drive Iraqi occupation forces from Kuwait.

According to a Washington Post report soon after the war,

Many of the targets were chosen only secondarily to contribute to the military defeat of Iraq...Military planners hoped the bombing would amplify the economic and psychological impact of international sanctions on Iraqi society.....Because of these goals, damage to civilian structures and interests, invariably described by briefers during the war as “collateral” and unintended, were sometimes neither.....They deliberately did great harm to Iraq’s ability to support itself as an industrial society.

Most of Saddam Hussein’s forces were conscripts. Many were opponents of Saddam Hussein, who may have opposed the invasion of Kuwait and been as unwilling as many American draftees were in Vietnam. In fact, the Iraqi dictator deliberately placed a disproportionate number of Kurds, Assyrian Christians, Shi’ites, and other groups traditionally opposed to his rule on the front lines, hoping that they would bear the brunt of the casualties. The United States obliged, killing tens of thousands of them, even as they retreated. The result is that more opponents of the Iraqi government were killed by six weeks of US attacks than in the previous twenty years of Saddam
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Hussein's repression. There are many stories by American troops of how desperate Iraqi soldiers were to surrender. While many were able to do so, the majority were never given that chance. Large numbers were buried alive by high-speed US army bulldozers.

Most estimates put the Iraqi death toll in the Gulf War in the range of 100,000. Due to the increased accuracy of aerial warfare, the proportion of Iraqi civilians killed was much less than it had been in previous air campaigns. At the same time, because the bombing consisted of tens of thousands of sorties, the absolute numbers were quite high. Most estimates of the civilian death toll are approximately 15,000.46 It should be noted that even the so-called “smart bombs” had at most a 60 percent accuracy rate – Americans did not see any footage of the 40 percent that missed their targets, sometimes by miles. It should also be noted that only 9 percent of the bombs dropped were these laser-guided weapons.50

Meanwhile, the long-suppressed Kurds in the north and Shi'ites in the south launched a rebellion against Saddam Hussein's regime at the end of the war. They initially made major advances, only to be crushed in a counter-attack by Iraqi government forces. Despite President Bush calling on the people of Iraq to rise up against the dictatorship, US forces – which at that time occupied the southern fifth of the country – did nothing to support the post-war rebellion and stood by while thousands of Iraqi Kurds, Shi'ites, and others were slaughtered. In the ceasefire agreement at the end of the war, the United States made a conscious decision to exclude Iraqi helicopter gunships from the ban on Iraqi military air traffic. These were the very weapons that proved so decisive in crushing the rebellions. It appeared to be a repeat of what happened only 15 years earlier. After goading the Kurds into an armed uprising with the promise of military support, the United States abandoned them precipitously as part of an agreement with the Baghdad government for a territorial compromise favorable to Iran regarding the Shatt al-Arab waterway.51 Thousands were slaughtered.

The reason that the United States allowed the Iraqi regime to crush the post-war rebellions was another triumph of political interest over principle. The Bush administration feared that a victory by Iraqi Kurds might encourage the ongoing Kurdish uprising in Turkey, a NATO ally.52 Similarly, the United States feared that a radical Shi'ite Arab entity might emerge in southern Iraq, which could have serious implications for American allies in the Gulf with restive Shi'ite populations.
Saddam Hussein’s regime was always extraordinarily brutal. Yet, despite repeatedly publicizing examples of various human rights violations by the regime, it is extremely unlikely that the US government was ever particularly concerned about such human-rights abuses, given that the US has provided large-scale military support to regimes that have been responsible for even more civilian deaths, such as that of Suharto in Indonesia. Nevertheless, Saddam Hussein was admired throughout the Islamic world for the fact that, despite corruption and the enormous amount of resources diverted to the military, pre-war Iraq ranked among the leading countries in the Third World in terms of health care, nutrition, education and other social and economic statistics. Part of what has always bothered the United States about Saddam Hussein has been his ability to articulate the frustrations of the Arab masses on the Palestinian question, on control of their natural resources, and on resistance to foreign domination. He was certainly opportunistic and manipulative in doing so, but he was effective. Most Arabs strongly opposed Iraq’s takeover of Kuwait and were keenly aware of the nature of Saddam Hussein’s regime and of its brutality. Yet, Kuwait was not the issue to them; it became much more than that. With the launch of the allied attacks, it became a conflict between the West and one of the most forceful spokesmen for Arab nationalism. There was real concern in the region and beyond that the United States used Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait as an excuse to advance its long-desired military, political, and economic hegemony in the region.

Indeed, the US-led military response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait turned Saddam Hussein from aggressor to defender and from bully to hero in the eyes of much of the Arab world. As a result, there were many Arabs, such as the majority of Jordanians and Palestinians, who had never particularly liked Saddam Hussein, but now came to his side. This is a perspective that spread throughout the Islamic world and beyond, based upon a very deep-seated feeling of a people repeatedly subjected to foreign domination who found a symbol of resistance in Saddam Hussein, who came to represent Arab frustrations. Had the war really been the only viable option and its goal merely to deter Iraqi aggression against Kuwait and potential aggression against Saudi Arabia, upholding international law and other important principles, the United States would have had far more support for its actions. However, President Bush Sr., in a moment of candor, acknowledged what he saw as the real lesson of the First
Gulf War for dictators who challenge the United States: "What we say goes." 


Though Iraq was forced out of Kuwait in 1991, the United States continued periodic bombing campaigns against the severely war-damaged nation. In April 1993 the Kuwaiti government revealed that it had evidence that Iraqi operatives had infiltrated Kuwait as part of an effort to assassinate former President Bush during a visit to the emirate, convicting several men in the alleged plot. Though the evidence was never made public and the fairness of the Kuwaiti judicial system has frequently been questioned, President Bill Clinton ordered the bombing of Baghdad in retaliation. The US raids destroyed a number of government buildings and struck a residential neighborhood as well, killing Leila al-Attar, the country’s leading female artist, and several others. In September 1996, when rival Kurdish factions began to fight each other, the United States launched another series of major bombing raids against Iraq. This rush to the defense of one group of Kurds may have been just a pretext, however; while the fighting took place in the north, most of the US air strikes took place in the central and southern part of Iraq.

The United States, Great Britain and France unilaterally initiated “no-fly zones” in northern and southern Iraq in March 1991 in response to widespread international concern over the humanitarian crisis following the aborted uprisings by Kurds and Shi'ites against the government. These no-fly zones had no precedent in international law and no authorization from the United Nations; France subsequently dropped out of the enforcement efforts. Despite their dubious legality, however, the no-fly zones initially received widespread support as a means of curbing the Iraqi government’s savage repression of its Kurdish and Shi'ite communities. The “no-fly zones” initially were designed to protect these areas from Iraqi air strikes by banning Iraqi military flights.

According to two State Department reports in 1994 and 1996, however, the creation and military enforcement of “no-fly zones” in fact did not protect the Iraqi Kurdish and Shi'ite populations from potential assaults by Iraqi forces. The straight latitudinal demarcations of the no-fly zones did not correspond with the areas of predominant Kurdish and Shi'ite populations and the targets of the American and British air strikes had no relation to preventing Iraqi
attacks against these vulnerable minorities. In addition, scores of Kurdish and Shi'ite civilians were killed in the bombing raids themselves. That the United States has allowed the Turkish air force to conduct bombing raids within the northern Iraq “no-fly zone” against Kurdish targets is but one indication of the lack of concern about actually protecting the Kurdish population. What began as an apparent humanitarian effort has turned into another excuse for continuing a low-level war against Iraq.

Hopes that the second Bush administration might reverse the Clinton administration’s policies were shattered when, within weeks of assuming office, the United States bombed a series of targets in suburban Baghdad. Despite Bush administration claims that the United States was simply enforcing the no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq, the targets of the March 2001 attacks were well outside both no-fly zones and had no apparent defensive rationale. Marine Lieutenant-General Gregory Newbold, director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, justified the air strikes as a necessary response to Iraqi “aggression,” namely its locking its radar on American warplanes. While the Iraqi government certainly has engaged in acts of aggression in the recent past, this may be the first time in history that the use of radar to track foreign military aircraft encroaching within a country’s internationally recognized airspace has been declared an act of aggression.

Similarly, in the October 2002 Congressional declaration granting President Bush the power to go to war, the resolution cited Iraq’s “firing on thousands of occasions on United States and Coalition Armed Forces engaged in enforcing the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council” as demonstrative of Iraq’s “willingness to attack the United States.” In reality, these no-fly zones were unilaterally imposed without UN Security Council authorization: Iraq had every legal right to fire on them, as would any country whose airspace had been encroached upon by foreign military aircraft.

Initially, the American use of force was justified to challenge Iraqi encroachments into the proscribed airspace. Next, it was escalated to include assaults on anti-aircraft batteries that fired at allied aircraft enforcing the zone. It escalated still further when anti-aircraft batteries were attacked simply for locking on their radar toward allied aircraft, even without firing. Then the Clinton administration began attacking radar installations and other military targets within the no-fly zone, even when they were unrelated to an alleged Iraqi threat against a US aircraft. With the March 2001 air strikes, the Bush administration
expanded the targeting still further, attacking radar and command-and-control installations well beyond the no-fly zones. Between early 1999 and the US-led invasion four years later, US and British warplanes bombed Iraq an average of once a week.

POST-GULF WAR SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAQ: FUEL TO THE FIRE?

The international sanctions were originally imposed on Iraq in August 1990 in response to its refusal to abide by UN Security Council Resolution 660, requiring its withdrawal from Kuwait. Despite Iraq's forced compliance to the resolution seven months later, the sanctions continued on the grounds that Iraq had not fully complied with the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 687.

While the repressive nature of Ba'athist rule under Saddam Hussein during the 1980s is well documented, the Iraqi regime also maintained a comprehensive and generous welfare state. The nutritional and health care needs of the population were mostly fulfilled and Iraqis enjoyed the highest per capita caloric intake in the Arab Middle East. Most of the population had direct access to safe water and modern sanitation facilities; there was a wide network of well-functioning and well-supplied hospitals and health care centers. The overall economy was strong, with Iraq considered a "middle income" country, importing large numbers of foreign guest workers to fill empty spots in its growing economy. As a result of the 1991 Gulf War and subsequent sanctions, Iraq found itself as one of the most impoverished countries in the world.

The limited media coverage in the United States regarding the hardships inflicted by the sanctions focused primarily upon the once-prosperous Iraqi middle class, featuring professors selling their valuable books, families selling their beloved pets and women selling their family jewelry in order to buy basic necessities. Yet it is Iraq's poor, particularly the children, who suffered most.

United Nations sanctions — most vigorously supported by the United States — have in Iraq's case killed many times more civilians than did the war itself. An August 1999 UNICEF report noted that the mortality rate for children under five more than doubled since sanctions were imposed. Estimates of the total number of Iraqis killed by malnutrition and preventable diseases as a direct consequence of the combination of war damage and sanctions have ranged from a quarter of a million to over 1 million, the majority of whom have been children. Though the sanctions were rationalized as a means
of preventing Iraq from developing weapons of mass destruction, they ended up killing more civilians than all the chemical, biological and nuclear weapons ever used. Perhaps there has been no other time in history when so many people were condemned to death from malnutrition and preventable diseases by political decisions made overseas.

In an interview on the CBS news show 60 Minutes when she was Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright was asked about the devastating impact sanctions were having on the children of Iraq, with host Lesley Stahl quoting the figure of half a million killed. Albright replied that “we think the price...is worth it.”

These deaths were a result of inadequate medical supplies, impure water and nutritional deficiencies. During the Gulf War of 1991, the United States destroyed 18 of 20 electrical power stations, disabling water pumping and sanitation systems, some of which were also hit directly. The result was untreated sewage flowing into rivers used for drinking water. Since the embargo prohibited the importation of many of the spare parts, allegedly because they could also be used as components in military systems, the Iraqis were unable to repair these facilities. As a result, there has been a dramatic increase in typhoid, cholera and other illnesses that largely had been eliminated in Iraq prior to the 1991 Gulf War. Importation of ambulances and other emergency vehicles, and even their spare parts, were also among the items banned under the sanctions. Similarly, hospitals were unable to acquire spare parts for incubators, kidney dialysis machines and other equipment. Even materials such as food and medicines not covered by the ban became difficult to purchase due to the lack of capital. Electricity became irregular and conditions at hospitals became increasingly insanitary. A full quarter of the school-aged population could no longer in school in a country that previously had near-universal primary education. For those who could attend school, books and other educational resources are in extremely short supply. Severe malnutrition led to stunted physical and mental development of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children.

A 1995 report from the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) noted, “Four million people, one-fifth of the population, are currently starving to death in Iraq. Twenty-three percent of all children in Iraq have stunted growth, approximately twice the percentage before the war....Alarming food shortages are causing irreparable damage to an entire generation of children.”

There was little controversy within the international community in 1990 when sanctions were originally imposed by the United Nations
immediately following Iraq's invasion, occupation and annexation of Kuwait. These post-war sanctions had far less international support. Unlike some other countries subjected to heavy air strikes, for example, largely rural societies like Vietnam in the 1960s and Afghanistan in the 1980s, the heavily urbanized Iraqis suffered far greater devastation with the collapse of the civilian infrastructure. In addition to the sudden absence of clean drinking water, there was a breakdown of the normal distribution systems for basic commodities due to damaged roads, railways and bridges. Furthermore, due in part to the fact that Iraq is a largely arid country dependent on irrigation systems that were severely damaged (and apparently deliberately targeted) by the bombing, there were severe food shortages as well.

US officials blamed the suffering on the Iraqi regime for its failure to cooperate more fully with the United Nations and for delaying for six years the implementation of the oil-for-food program. According to former Secretary of State Albright: "Saddam Hussein is the one who has the fate of his country in his hands, and he is the one who is responsible for starving children, not the United States of America." The far better health situation in the Kurdish areas not controlled by the Iraqi government also led to claims that the Iraqi regime could have done a better job. However, these northern areas had less stringent sanctions regarding local cash and procurement that the rest of Iraq and the northern part of the country suffered less damage from the war, as well as enjoying higher rainfall and receiving proportionally more aid.

Another criticism was directed at the Iraqi government's decision to use scarce resources for the construction of opulent mosques and additional palaces for Saddam Hussein, his family and associates. The Iraqis, however, claimed that these functioned as public works projects using indigenous materials and were paid for in Iraqi dinars, currency that is worthless outside Iraq for the purchase of much-needed humanitarian supplies.

Albright insisted that the Iraqi government's response to the sanctions was a test to prove if Saddam Hussein really cared about his people. Most knowledgeable observers of Iraq recognized that no such test was necessary: the Iraqi dictator's primary concern has always been his own power. While Saddam Hussein was indeed ultimately responsible for much of his people's suffering from the sanctions, it quickly became apparent that such suffering was not altering Iraqi policy, which raises the question whether the United States also shares some moral culpability for this humanitarian disaster.
Iraq

Oil exports, Iraq's primary source for foreign exchange, were also subject to the embargo until December 1996, when the United Nations and the Iraqi government agreed to establish an oil-for-food program, where a limited amount of petroleum could be sold for food under strict UN monitoring. Initially, Iraq was allowed to sell only $2 billion in oil for food. A full 25 percent of the oil sales went to Kuwait—once the wealthiest countries per capita in the world—for war damage from the seven-month Iraqi occupation in 1990-91, a reduction from the initial 30 percent. Another 13 percent went to Kurdish areas in the north through a UN-controlled program. An additional 3 percent went to cover UN administration costs, leaving only 59 percent for the rest of Iraq. Although the FAO and the WHO gave Iraq high marks for its distribution of food and medicine, the UN estimated that about $1 billion was the minimum needed to meet basic needs for food and medicines. Over initial US objections, the UN raised that amount to $5.2 billion (or $3.5 billion which actually could go to Iraq) in the spring of 1997 and removed the cap altogether in December 1999. However, Iraq's inability to import spare parts for its oil industry during this period made it difficult for Iraq to pump enough oil to meet the minimum needed.

The oil-for-food program was crippled by allowing any member of the Security Council, through the 661 Committee, to block indefinitely any Iraqi imports apart from food and medicine, resulting in more than $5.3 billion worth of contracts being held up by 2002, largely as a result of US objections. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan accused the United States of "disrupting the Oil-For-Food program upon which millions of people depend for their survival."260

The United States tacitly acknowledged this failure through Secretary of State Powell's advocacy, soon after he came to office in early 2001, for what he termed "smart sanctions." On 14 May 2002 the UN Security Council unanimously endorsed a US-sponsored overhaul of sanctions that makes it somewhat easier for Iraq to import civilian goods. Most Security Council members wanted the economic sanctions lifted altogether, so that it took more than a year of negotiations to come to this compromise. Under this new sanctions regime the 661 Committee was abolished. Humanitarian goods were able to go through unencumbered. Military items were still banned and a new committee was established to review potential dual-use items.

This reform allowed additional food, medical supplies and other humanitarian goods into the country, but it did virtually nothing to rebuild Iraq's badly damaged public infrastructure, including its public
health facilities. The problem was always not so much what Iraq could or could not import, so much as its ability to use the oil money to pay wages, to finance public works projects, run hospitals or provide social services. The lack of cash allowed the regime to monopolize access to essential goods and services. For example, Iraqi children were dying more from bad water resulting from the lack of funds or parts to rebuild the country’s water treatment system as from lack of food. The conservative British magazine The Economist referred to smart sanctions as “stringent and intrusive controls on trade and finance, keeping Iraq a soup kitchen, albeit a more efficient one.” Furthermore, the magazine noted,

Although the country would be able to import more, it would still be denied the free movement of labor and capital that it desperately needs if it is at last to start picking itself up. Iraq needs massive investment to rebuild its industry, its power grids and its schools, and needs cash in hand to pay its engineers, doctors and teachers. None of this looks likely to happen under “smart sanctions.”

In short, while the revised sanctions regime was beginning marginally to ease some of the worst aspects of the humanitarian crisis, there was no way it could have met most of the basic needs of the Iraqi people. Only an end of the economic sanctions could have stimulated the economy to a degree that would have made it possible to rebuild the country’s infrastructure so badly damaged in the war and allow any semblance of civil society to return. As one anonymous US official told the Financial Times, despite all the media attention given to the new sanctions regime: “In reality, this is a change of perceptions.”

The economic sanctions not only led to enormous human suffering, they were clearly counter-productive to the broader US goal of bringing down the Iraqi dictator. As with other Arab countries, the forces capable of successfully challenging Saddam’s regime would likely have arisen out of Iraq’s middle class. Unfortunately, having been reduced to penury and struggling simply to survive, they were no longer able serve as an effective political opposition. Thousands emigrated. This once influential middle class was replaced by a new class of black marketers who had a stake in preserving the status quo. Meanwhile, as more and more families became dependent on government rations for their very survival, they were forced to cooperate even more with the government and the (already high) risks
of challenging Saddam Hussein's rule became too great. Lifting non-military sanctions would have allowed for the country to be deluged with businessmen and other outsiders, creating an environment far more likely to have resulted in a political opening than the sanctions regime which placed this country of 23 million in impoverished isolation and in Saddam Hussein's grip.

Part of the ineffectiveness of the sanctions came from the nature of Saddam Hussein's regime. It was more than simply another authoritarian Middle Eastern government; next to North Korea, it was probably the most totalitarian regime in the world. Given this fact, the ability of the population to organize effectively against the government or its policies, particularly under such dire economic conditions as those created by the sanctions, was severely limited.

The morality of a particular foreign policy is tempered by its results. If human suffering from economic sanctions can advance a policy goal that would lead to less suffering in the long term, one could make the case that it is morally justified. Yet, the apparent failure of the sanctions to move Iraq's level of compliance with the international community forward should have raised serious doubts. Former UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali challenged the international community to confront "the ethical question of whether suffering inflicted on vulnerable groups in the target country is a legitimate means of exerting pressure on political leaders whose behavior is unlikely to be affected by the plight of their subjects." Indeed, there is little indication that Saddam Hussein, his inner circle or key elements of the military leadership ever suffered any shortages of food, drinking water or medical supplies. The suffering of the civilian population became a powerful propaganda tool to stir up anti-American sentiment, but it does not seem to have had any impact towards altering Iraqi policy in ways consistent with US interests. If there is any political impact from the sanctions that could be construed as positive by American officials, it may simply be that it has made Iraq an example for other countries as to what could happen if they dare challenge US prerogatives.

At the time of the US invasion, the policy of economic sanctions had largely lost any credibility. It became widely viewed internationally as reflecting US insistence on maintaining a punitive sanctions-based approach regardless of the humanitarian impact, and as having failed to bring about either democratic changes in Iraq or security for the Gulf region. Numerous countries began challenging, if not directly violating, the sanctions regime and international
support had largely eroded. Several prominent United Nations personnel in Iraq resigned in protest. At the Beirut summit of the Arab League in March 2002, the Arab nations unanimously endorsed a resolution calling for a total lifting of economic sanctions. Foreign Minister Sheik Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah of Kuwait, whose country’s invasion by Iraq initially prompted the sanctions, stated categorically: “Kuwait has no objection to the launching of a call to lift the economic sanctions from Iraq.” Even Richard Butler observed that the sanctions “simply aren’t working other than to harm the ordinary Iraqi people” and that they have been “utterly counterproductive for this disarmament purpose.”

THE US INVASION OF IRAQ

In the decade following the 1991 Gulf War, the coalition built by the Bush Sr. administration had fallen apart. US credibility had been further compromised in the international community in general and in the Arab world in particular by its support for Israel’s increasingly repressive policies in the occupied territories, its growing ties with corrupt and oppressive Arab regimes, and the thousands of civilian casualties inflicted in Afghanistan by American forces. Meanwhile, problems that threatened the stability of the region far more than the Iraqi dictator – the breakdown in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, uneven economic development, the threat from Islamic extremist groups and the militarization of the region – were continuing to grow, in part due to US policies.

Rather than reconsider the failed punitive approach, the Bush administration, with bipartisan support from Congress, decided to launch a full-scale invasion to topple the government of Saddam Hussein.

However, the conflict regarding access for UN inspectors and related issues has always been between the Iraqi government and the United Nations, not between Iraq and the United States. Though UN Security Council Resolution 687 was the most detailed in the world body’s history, no enforcement mechanisms were specified. Enforcement is a matter for the UN Security Council as a whole, as is normally done when governments violate all or parts of such resolutions. According to Articles 41 and 42 of the United Nations Charter, no member state has the right to enforce any resolution militarily unless the UN Security Council determines that there has been a material breach of its resolution, that the violation represents a clear danger to international peace and security, and that all non-military means of
enforcement have been exhausted. Even then the Security Council must specifically authorize the use of military force. This is what the Security Council did in November 1990 with Resolution 678 in response to Iraq's ongoing occupation of Kuwait. Since this resolution dealt only with Iraqi violations of UN Security Council resolutions regarding their invasion and occupation of Kuwait, this resolution became irrelevant as of late February 1991. Despite this, in the Congressional authorization of using military force, the resolution falsely claimed that UN Security Council Resolution 687 authorizes such use of force.

UN Security Council Resolution 1441, while warning Iraq of serious consequences for non-compliance, did not authorize the use of force to enforce the resolution and, in Article 14, reiterates that the Security Council remains "seized of the matter," meaning that the Security Council alone has the authority to determine what, if any, enforcement mechanisms are to be utilized. Article 11 underscored that it was the responsibility of the heads of UNMOVIC and the IAEA, not any individual member states, to report Iraqi non-compliance. At the time of the US invasion, the directors of both agencies – as well as the UN Secretary-General – were reporting that Iraq, despite some concerns about its not being as forthcoming in providing certain information as hoped, was largely cooperating with the inspections process and that some additional months were required to complete their work. The United States dismissed these concerns. Given that China, France and Russia all expressed a willingness to veto a resolution authorizing force and only two of the ten non-permanent members of the Security Council appeared to be ready to vote in favor of a US resolution authorizing force, the United States decided to invade anyway without UN Security Council authorization, placing the United States in direct violation of the UN Charter. Furthermore, according to Article VI of the US Constitution, such international treaties are to be treated as "supreme law," thereby making this invasion a violation of US law as well.

International law is quite clear about when military force is to be allowed. In addition to the aforementioned case of UN Security Council authorization, the only other time any member state is allowed to use armed force is described in Article 51, which states it is permissible for "individual or collective self-defense" against "armed attack...until the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to maintain international peace and security." There is also a widely accepted notion in common law that a country could use military
force to counter an imminent and verifiable threat, such as enemy troops massing along its border. In other words, if any of Iraq’s neighbors or the United States was attacked or there was solid evidence of an imminent attack by Saddam Hussein’s armed forces, any one of these countries could have approached the Security Council and made their case as to why their security was threatened. Iraq’s neighbors have not done so subsequent to 1991, apparently because they have not felt threatened. The United States never did so because such a claim would be seen as ludicrous, and, as a result, would have virtually no support on the Security Council.

Despite this, the United States – along with Great Britain and some token forces from Australia and Poland – launched an invasion of Iraq on 17 March 2003. Not only was the coalition much narrower than that supporting the 1991 Gulf War to liberate Kuwait, every Arab government was on record opposing the invasion. As a result of enormous pressure, the emirs of Kuwait and Qatar – in apparent contravention to the concerns of the vast majority of their populations – agreed to allow the use of their emirates as staging areas for the invasion.

MOTIVATIONS FOR US POLICY IN THE GULF

There are a number of domestic political forces in the United States pushing US policy in the direction of hostility towards Iraq.

There is the time-honored tradition for political leaders to maintain their popularity at home by striking out at a perceived external threat from which the public needs protection. Witness President Clinton ordering a series of air strikes against Iraq just two months prior to his re-election in 1996 and again on the eve of his impeachment hearing in 1998. Given that so very few Americans have much sympathy for Iraq, it is among the few nation states left against which a politician can build a reputation for toughness. The push to invade Iraq in 2002 came as scandals struck major corporations, many of which had close ties to the Bush administration, and both the president and vice president were facing scrutiny over possible illegal business deals prior to their assuming office. A stagnant economy and upcoming midterm elections made the focus on Iraq a convenient distraction. At the same time, the war has proved to be a very divisive decision domestically and not necessarily one which will increase the popularity of the Bush administration over the longer term.
Another factor comes from mainstream-to-conservative Zionist groups and their supporters, long an influential lobbying force in Congress, which have used the alleged threats against Israel from Iraq as a major argument for maintaining large-scale military and economic aid to the Israeli government. There are several problems with this rationalization, however. First of all, Israel is separated from Iraq by a large stretch of desert and by countries that are formally at peace with Israel and openly hostile to Iraq. In addition, the Israeli air force is more than capable of protecting Israel's border against any combination of these opponents and the country has a strong defense system against medium-range missiles. With Egypt and Jordan formally at peace with Israel, the weak Palestinian regime struggling for survival under Israeli sieges, Syria reducing its military and absent a great power sponsor, Lebanon as weak as ever, with the Gulf states focused on Iraq and Iran, Israel is in a far stronger position militarily than it ever has been. Similarly, with the demise of the Soviet Union, Israel is no longer of use as a Cold War asset. As a result, portraying Israel as both a potential victim of, and potential bulwark against, Iraq provides justification for ongoing high levels of US aid to Israel, most of which comes back to the United States to military contractors for their weapons and to banks as interest on previous military loans.

Ultimately, the United States may be motivated by what has motivated other great powers that have tried to exert their influence in the Gulf: the desire to control the world's greatest concentration of oil. Iraq is believed to have the second largest oil reserves in the world, surpassed only by Saudi Arabia. Approximately two-thirds of the world's oil wealth exists along the Persian Gulf, with particularly large reserves in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. About one-quarter of US oil imports come from the Persian Gulf region. The imposition of higher fuel efficiency standards and other conservation measures, along with the increased use of renewable energy resources for which technologies are already available, could eliminate US dependence on Middle Eastern oil in a relatively short period of time. This could be accomplished at far lower cost than maintaining the US military presence in the region. For a number of reasons, however, the United States has chosen its current far more dangerous path. It is perhaps significant that the Gulf supplies European states and Japan with an even higher percentage of those countries' energy needs, leading some to speculate that this forces these countries ultimately to rely on the United States for their energy security. Maintaining such a presence in the Gulf, therefore, does
not mean controlling the source of much of the world’s oil for American consumers or profits for friends of the Bush administration so much as exercising an additional degree of control over other industrialized countries.

In the post-Cold War world the United States has demonstrated little tolerance for any regime that is both antagonistic to US goals and has the potential of establishing a credible deterrent against the United States and its allies by possessing or attempting to possess weapons of mass destruction. The destruction of such regimes—either slowly through sanctions or more quickly through an invasion—serves as a warning that any other state that would even consider challenging American hegemony would suffer serious consequences.

THE ILLUSION OF SECURITY

There is a dangerous tendency in Washington to discount the importance of public opinion in Middle Eastern countries. The invasion of Iraq has bred dissent even among the West’s closest Arab allies. In addition, the ongoing US-led militarization of the region severely retards economic development and political liberalization. Most Arab allies of the United States are more threatened by potential internal instability than they ever were by an attack from Iraq.20 The highly visible military role of the United States in the region and the US-promoted militarization and its deleterious economic impact encourages dissent, often by radical and destabilizing elements. In effect, adherence to an American-defined security doctrine may actually threaten the security of these regimes, which are squandering their nations’ wealth on weapons to the detriment of education, health care, housing and employment for their rapidly growing populations. One need only look at Iran under the Shah to see what could happen.

The irony of US policy in the Persian Gulf is that it has little strategic justification given the costs. And the costs are more than financial. They also come in the form of the increasingly violent reaction to the ongoing American military presence, most evident in the September 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States, but in other ways as well. Indeed, this and other manifestations of current US policy in the Gulf actually endanger the security of both the United States and its Gulf allies.

The arrogance of power, with which the American regime flaunts its operations throughout the world, provides the fuel for this anti-
American backlash. Quite a number of diplomats in the Gulf have complained about the way US officials have lectured their officials – at times in public – about their policies in the region and have "overstepped the boundaries of diplomacy" and demonstrated an "arrogance and disdain for others." One classic example is when George Bush Sr., when he was vice-president, responded to the international outrage over the destruction of an Iranian airliner by an American missile by saying: "I will never apologize for the United States of America - I don't care what the facts are."  

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the most serious offenses by Saddam Hussein's regime in the eyes of US policy-makers was not in the area of human rights, terrorism, nuclear ambitions, subversion or conquest, but in daring to challenge American power in the Middle East. It is Iraq, along with Iran, that prevents the United States from exercising its political dominance over this crucial region. Having these regimes overthrown or under control, American policy-makers hope, will create the kind of environment that would give the United States unprecedented leverage in shaping the future direction of the Middle East.

Thus, the final irony: serving as an impediment to such American ambitions was what gave Saddam Hussein a credibility and legitimacy he would not otherwise have enjoyed from large numbers of people in the Middle East who were resentful of such foreign domination, and strengthened his regime's rule at home as well as his influence throughout the Middle East and beyond. With Iraq's regime ousted, the lesson to radical nationalists and Islamists in the Arab world and beyond may be that the nation state is no longer capable of resisting American hegemony. The tragic result may be that many will come to the conclusion that the only way to challenge this hegemony is through non-state actors using asymmetrical warfare, thereby dramatically increasing the risks of large-scale acts of terrorism.

NOTES
2. Ibid.
The US Obsession with Iraq and the Triumph of Militarism

6. Ibid.
10. See, for example, House Concurrent Resolution 9, 103rd Congress, 2nd session. Rarely mentioned is the fact that this resolution calls on Israel to place its own nuclear facilities under the stewardship of the International Atomic Energy Association.
17. It is noteworthy that both Syria and Cuba remain on the list of terrorist supporters despite the failure of successive administrations to demonstrate any direct backing of terrorist groups by these countries for more than a decade.
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32. Interview with HRH Hassan, Royal Palace, Amman, Jordan. 8 January 1991.


35. Associate Press (14 January 1990). However, the US essentially had been awarding aggression for years by sending military and economic support for other occupation armies, such as Indonesian forces in East Timor, Moroccan forces in Western Sahara, Turkish forces in northern Cyprus and Israeli forces in its occupied Arab lands.


37. In an interview with *BizLaw Journal*, Roger Fisher noted: “I believe President Bush wanted to defeat the army of Iraq militarily. He thought a war would do that, and I think he wanted a war.” Fisher described how he talked about how he had met with Kuwaiti leaders in exile prior to the war offering suggestions for negotiating strategy and, while they sounded positive to his suggestions, told him: “No, we can’t afford to offend the United States and President Bush wants a military victory.” (Interview with Brian Anderson, “Getting to Yes’ Twentieth Anniversary,” 7 March 2001.) This author has heard similar stories from sources of diplomats, journalists and academics in the Middle East.


39. Based on observations from the author’s visit to Iraq 6-14 January 1991, just prior to the outbreak of the war.


41. The State Department film “Why Vietnam?,” used to justify US military intervention in that country, opens with a scene from the 1938 Munich conference when Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain gave in to Adolf Hitler’s demand for a German takeover of Sudetenland (the German-
speaking part of Czechoslovakia), a summit that has become emblematic of appeasement.

42. *New Republic* (3 September 1990).

43. The US government, which has never been supportive of Arab unity, was probably quite pleased with the divisions that resulted.


47. Based upon interviews of leading academics and government officials in GCC countries by the author in January 1992.


49. There are a wide range of estimates regarding both the civilian and military death toll on the Iraqi side. The figures used in this paragraph were cited in Bob Woodward's *The Commanders* (New York Simon and Schuster, 1991).


51. The Shatt al-Arab is the 100-mile river formed from the convergence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers that demarcates the southern end of the Iran-Iraq border. Iraqi resentment of this agreement, which resulted from pressure by Iran and the United States, is what precipitated Iraq's invasion of Iran four years later.


56. The higher estimates have been extrapolated from a 1995 report from researchers for the Food and Agriculture Organization and various reports from UNICEF. The lower estimates are from reputedly more scientific studies, including the 1999 report "Morbidity and Mortality Among Iraqi Children" by Columbia University's Richard Garfield, and "Sanctions and Childhood Mortality in Iraq," a May 2000 article by Mohamed Ali and Isabal Shah in *The Lancet*, the journal of the British Medical Society.


59. Confirmation hearings for Madeleine Albright for Secretary of State, Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, 105th Congress, 1st session, 8 January 1997.

212. Iraq

64. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Supplement to An Agenda for Peace, United Nations Office of the Secretary-General, January 1995.
67. BBC radio, Talking Point, 4 June 2000.
70. This has been acknowledged in background briefings with the author by Cabinet-level officials of two of these countries, January 1992.
7 Not Quite an Arab Prussia: Revisiting Some Myths on Iraqi Exceptionalism

Isam al Khafaji

Long before Saddam Hussein came to power, Iraq had been labeled by many Arabs as "the Prussia" of the Arab world. Since 1936, when the first modern coup d'état ever to take place in an Arab country succeeded in Iraq, sympathizers were looking for the coup leaders to play the role of Bismarck and unify the Arab nation. Others, usually with democratic leanings, have been in the habit of viewing Iraqis as a violent people with an almost natural inclination to go to extremes. The Iraqi experience since the accession to power of the Arab Ba'ath (Renaissance) Socialist Party in 1968, and especially since the rise of Saddam Hussein to the presidency in 1979, has only reinforced these perceptions. Many opponents characterize the regime as fascist, while its supporters invoke its pan-Arab and anti-American rhetoric as evidence of an independent nationalist stance.

Rhetoric aside, a comparison between Iraq and pre-1945 Germany is tempting. Both were relatively newborn countries; both achieved relatively high growth rates within short spans of time. In both cases a paternalistic state played a prominent role in industrialization and modernization, and, ironically, in both cases rapid growth soon reached a deadly impasse: huge regional disparities in income and wealth generation, an economic expansion chiefly dependent on state purchases and contracts, and therefore a society geared to armament and war. In both states a huge ideological edifice was constructed in order to legitimate this drive to power.

However, it would be too simplistic to treat this ideological edifice as a mere manipulation of the public attitudes by a certain ruling group. Chauvinistic and militaristic ideologies build upon existing disenchantment, but instead of addressing its underlying causes, they whip up aggressiveness against "others" as the source of all evils. With varying intensity, this has been unfortunately the rule rather than the exception in the process of state- and nation-building in early modern Europe. The former Ba'ath regime in Iraq played skillfully on the
perceived or actual insecurity of Iraqis by turning their hatred towards foreigners who have been selected depending on a variety of circumstances: Isreal/Zionism, Western powers, communist countries, Iran, Arab countries, or even non-Arab and/or non-Sunni Iraqis.

Addressing the problem of Iraq's sense of insecurity, as well as Iraq as a source of insecurity to the region, should therefore proceed from the legacy of (at least) two decades of war-making. Much of the literature on political, economic, social, and even cultural problems that the Middle East (and non-industrialized) countries face emphasizes the role of western powers in shaping the fate of these countries. A favored explanation for conflicts among non-industrialized and especially Middle Eastern countries has been the alleged role of colonial powers in creating these countries and/or drawing their borders. While it is undoubtedly the case that supra-national factors like globalization and the “new world order” play a much more pronounced role in shaping local structures everywhere in the world today, this chapter departs from the premise that it is the way that local structures articulate with international influences that determines the outcomes of processes, rather than vice versa. Global processes by themselves do not explain why Korea's path was different from China's, or why Iraq's fate diverged from that of Syria. Hence, I propose to begin by sketching the main sources of Iraq's structural crisis, before dealing with the regional and international context and how it impacts the future of Iraq as a state and society.

The chapter will begin by discussing the more lasting feature, the geopolitical posture of Iraq and how it impacted its regional position as a major oil exporter. This will be followed by an examination of Iraq's prospects as a united country and how its socio-economic and political crises nurtured the nationalist idea of a homogeneous society. The chapter concludes with some observations on US policy towards Iraq.

ROMANTICIZING GEOGRAPHY

The Saddam Hussein regime capitalized on Iraq's geopolitical problem which lies in the fact that it is virtually landlocked; the width of its coast on the Gulf is only about 20 km. But why should this be a problem? After all, there are more than 30 landlocked countries in the world, eight of them in Europe. Also, Iraq is not quite landlocked; neighboring Jordan has a thriving maritime trade through its narrow coast on the Red Sea. However, the Iraqi leadership has always tried to invest the country's geography with metaphysical meaning,
Bordering a non-Arab country, Iran, turned Iraq into "the eastern gate of the Arab nation," and thereby was fought for mundane and pragmatic objectives were turned into vague missions that Iraqis were destined to fulfill, on behalf of all Arabs.2

The only major oil exporter that has no significant independent outlets to international waters, Iraq has had to rely on the territories of neighboring Syria, Turkey and Saudi Arabia to extend export pipelines for its oil. Elementary politics says that a country in this position must invest heavily in cultivating the friendliest possible relations with its neighbors. Sadly, Iraqi politics, especially since the advent of Saddam Hussein, has followed a diametrically opposite strategy; but it would be self-deceptive to blame the whole problem on an ignorant tyrant whose removal from power would bring things back to "normal." It is no coincidence that the first two Gulf wars were preceded by persistent declarations by top Iraqi officials to the effect that the total export capacity would be increased to between 6 and 8 million barrels per day (mbd) from the normal level of 3–3.5. Saddam Hussein was quite aware that such a prospect would strongly destabilize the status quo and radically alter the balance of power within the region, by depriving Saudi Arabia (and potentially Iran) of their privileged positions as the dominant powers in the international oil market and in regional politics.3 The following argument will show that Saddam's fatal adventure in Kuwait was (at least partially) driven by these calculations.

On 6 August 1988, a ceasefire was reached in the eight-year war with Iran. Despite Iraq's portrayal of this as an Iraqi victory, the truth was that both countries ended where they began. Saddam had to forsake his principal declared war objective, namely forcing the Iranians to accept his unilateral abrogation of the March 1975 agreement that gave both countries shared sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab waterway. As the dream of acquiring an independent outlet to the sea by controlling both shores of the Shatt al-Arab faded, Iraq tuned to its only other alternative: the narrow waterway of Khor Abdallah, which belongs to Kuwait. A careful reading of the memoranda exchanged between Iraqi and Kuwaiti officials on the eve of Iraq's invasion reveals that Iraq's tenacious attempts to seize the two strategic Kuwaiti islands of Wirba and Bubian were explicitly framed in pragmatic terms, with no reference to pan-Arabist sloganeering, or claims to any rights of sovereignty over Kuwait.4 Iraq's persistence in pursuing such a contradictory policy was a recipe for committing suicide. The Ba'athist leadership's crime does not lie in attempting
to maximize oil exports, but in trying to do so by pursuing hegemonic authority over its neighbors.

For better or worse, a post-sanctions Iraq is not likely to (and cannot) go back to its 1970s levels of oil exports, given its control of the second largest proven oil reserves in the world after Saudi Arabia, its population of 24 million, and especially its desperate and accumulating need for foreign currency resulting from the damage of both wars, the postponed and unsatisfied demands of long years of devastation and deprivation, and its huge outstanding debt and claims for reparations. Attempts at changing Iraq's geography as a means of forcing a fait accompli on the region's oil exporters is an illusion that can only bring devastation to the entire region. In the meantime Iraq's oil-exporting neighbors will most likely use all available means to forestall such a nightmare; an increase in one country's exports by some 3 mbd, Iraq's only option to counter such pressures would lie in its going back to its pre-1970 regional setting, by turning again west towards Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, and north towards Turkey as its main trade partners, while trying to preserve friendly relations with its southern neighbors. Economically and culturally Iraq belongs more to what the French call the Proche Orient (Near East) than to the Moyen Orient (Middle East). Iraq's western and northern neighbors need its oil. Iraq, in turn, needs the long and closer Syrian and Turkish coasts on the Mediterranean. Iraq, Syria and Turkey share their vital water resources and all three countries, especially Turkey and Iraq, will sooner or later have to find solutions to the nationalist aspirations of more than 12 million Kurdish citizens. Such a significant shift in strategy, however, will not hinge upon a decision taken by Iraq itself, for it entails the rise of an almost new regional politico-economic system. This requires the West and the US especially to develop a radically new perception of the region, its role in world politics and economics, and the role of the component parts of this system in bringing about stability and prosperity. Before dealing with US policy towards Iraq, however, we have to address the much talked about issue concerning Iraq's security: namely, will Iraq as a sheer physical entity, exist in the first place?

IRAQ'S ARTIFICIALITY: REVISITING A MYTH

Following the first Gulf War and the popular uprising of 1991, much of the discussion over the future of Iraq revolved around the possibility of its dismemberment. For more than a decade it became fashionable
for many political analysts (but very few, if any, scholars) on Iraq to remind their readers of the "artificiality" of that country as a political entity. In a typical statement, Reeva Simon begins her article on Iraq with the following:

An obvious example of an artificially created state, Iraq came into existence at the end of World War I at the behest of the British. New borders had to be created in the Middle East after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. As the victors, the British directed territorial design according to their own strategic concerns that now required a shift in policy....They drew the new lines at the conference in Cairo in 1921 that created the country of Iraq out of the former Ottoman provinces of Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul.2

The arguments underlying these conclusions overlap, but one can discern three: 1) that it was an external power that created the state; 2) that the country had no previous existence as a distinct unity; and 3) that its ethnic and religious composition lacks the necessary conditions for the rise of a nation.

Assuming that these arguments are empirically true, they do not by themselves make Iraq an exceptional case. Moreover, they are less convincing when they are presented as explanations for the present problems that Iraqis face in forging some kind of a national/social consensus. In fact, it seems that these arguments and their wide acceptance today are less related to facts and research than to the shifting sands on which Arab societies, especially Iraq, have been sliding throughout the past decade. Although the facts related to the formation of the state of Iraq have always been widely acknowledged, practically none of the major authors on Iraq have labeled that state as "artificial."34 The concept of artificiality was in fact the monopoly of the pan-Arabist school who used it in a different, almost opposite way to that of contemporary commentators; namely to show that the Arab Nation – which according to Arab nationalists is a natural political, cultural and economic unity – had been dismembered by colonial empires in order to weaken the nation and facilitate its subjugation. The difference here lies in the fact that, while the first approach implies the need for additional divisions in order to achieve the ideal "nation state" outcome, the second sees that outcome in regaining an imagined bygone unity of the Arab Nation.
The thesis on artificial Mashreq states is based on arguments that are even less convincing than the ones forwarded by pan-Arabist thought, for the following reasons:

- Historically speaking, no state emerged spontaneously, or through a smooth consensus among its internal components alone. Internal and external wars were, and unfortunately are, part and parcel of what we call state and nation formation. Very few scholars would dispute this fact, but a proponent of the artificiality-thesis may object to this argument on the grounds that it is not the war between more or less equals that s/he has in mind, but the interests of a colonial power. But, then how did Belgium, Switzerland and most of the states of east and central Europe come into being? They all emerged after external wars where the victors forced their demands and sanctioned them through treaties. No serious observer would label any of these countries, including the ones that face serious structural problems today, as artificial.

- With the exception of very few states that have preserved their structures over relatively long periods of time (Egypt, China, Morocco and France), the vast majority of contemporary states are recent creations. The example of Latin America is quite telling in this respect. After a romantic period of Latin American nationalism, similar to that which the Arab world had seen after World War II, came a period of border wars. Today no one disputes the authenticity of these states that had never existed before the wars of independence of 1820. Just like the Arab wilayas of the Ottoman Empire, most of these were vice-counties of Spain until the latter was defeated in the Napoleonic wars. The present borders of Latin American states correspond, more or less, to those of the Spanish vice-counties of the eighteenth century.

- What about the ethnic/religious diversity? Well, Iraq is no less heterogeneous than say Syria, India, Iran, Switzerland, let alone the US. Yet, these latter states are generally considered viable states, and, in the case of the US and even the trilingual Switzerland, they are even considered as nations. In this regard, one should note the following:

  1. Ethnic homogeneity has not (and is not) a guarantee of a country's survival and/or viability. Ethnographers have long established that Somalia is one of the most ethnically and
Religiously homogeneous societies in the world, yet we all know the fate of that state.

2. Conversely, ethnic and/or religious pluralism is not necessarily a cause for a country's imminent disintegration. Beside the above-cited examples of Switzerland, Syria, or even India, let us remember that a religiously homogeneous Pakistan split into two countries in 1970, while its ethnically and religiously "heterogeneous" neighbor, India, faces no such serious threat (aside from the Kashmir question).

Applying these conclusions to Iraq, we can easily see how pseudo-readings of history can lead to ridiculous conclusions that are colored by short-term (or perhaps short-sighted) political considerations. At no point in Iraq's post-Islamic history has the country been ruled from more than one single political center. Historical facts show that the integrating processes of the components of modern Iraq have been at play since at least 1830. The British did try to carve their colonial spoils out of the defunct Ottoman Empire by dividing the region into spheres of influence between themselves and France, but this is far from saying that they created artificial entities that would have otherwise been united. An argument that Arab nationalists have endlessly repeated claims that "small" entities could better serve the interests of colonialism. But this argument is no more tenable because:

- the area of modern Iraq is larger than that of most European countries;
- besides Iraq, some of the largest Arab states were in fact created or supported by colonial powers: Saudi Arabia came out of the forced union of five principalities; the British aided in the fusion of the three wilayats that formed modern Libya, as they did with the "Kingdom of the Nile Valley" under King Farouk of Egypt. As far as the French, the sheer size of their ex-colonies of Algeria and Morocco testifies to the superficiality of the idea that Arab countries were artificial creatures drawn on the maps of colonial powers;
- the Arab countries have never been united under one rule in their history. They were only united when they formed part of empires that also controlled large non-Arab territory and populations such as those of India, Persia, Kurdistan, Nubia, Assyria, Turkey, etc.;
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- even if the whole Arab world were united, this would not be a guarantee for strength and prosperity. The total population of the Arab world is about 30 percent that of India, itself a Third World country.

Finally, to say that Iraq is a modern creation that has not had the time to forge a sense of national unity is to overlook the fact that, out of the 190 nations that are present-day members of the United Nations, Iraq was among the first 50 signatories of the organization’s founding charter in 1945 and a full member of the League of Nations 15 years before that. Even if we accept the “creation” argument, modern Iraq is as old as Hungary, Austria and Finland, only a decade younger than Norway and three decades younger than modern Italy.

The risks of Iraq’s dismemberment have been raised by many commentators and on a number of occasions, but they have rarely been assessed in their concrete context. A particularly important issue, which most authors gloss over, is that dispensing with central state authority, or the falling of parts of a country under the jurisdiction of more than one political center is not directly related to the intensity of socio-political conflict within a given society, or to the degree of popular opposition to the ruling regime. The region extending from Afghanistan to Morocco has witnessed severe social tensions and conflicts since the early 1970s. Yet, even in war-torn Afghanistan and Lebanon, militias who controlled portions of these countries at one time or another never thought of declaring their zones independent, or even bases for interim or alternative governments.

In the case of Iraq, three governorates of Iraqi Kurdistan (plus parts of the governorates of Nineveh [Mosul] and al-T’amin [Kirkuk]) have been outside the central authority’s control for more than a decade now, yet no leader has even contemplated the idea of declaring the region independent, despite the legitimacy of the national Kurdish aspiration for self-determination. The reason behind this is not simply the regional and international pressures or threats that would oppose the formation of a Kurdish state. In 1992 the Kurds were handed a golden opportunity for independence when Saddam Hussein withdrew not only the armed forces from the region, but also civil servants, imposing economic blockade on the region over and above the international sanctions that Kurdistan shared with the rest of Iraq. Nevertheless, the Kurdish leaders did not go beyond declaring the region a federal autonomous region of Iraq.
What many observers who raise the risks of dismemberment underestimate in the case of Iraq is the degree to which interests among various sections of the Iraqi population, especially the more affluent and influential, are interlocked. This interconnectivity makes it very unlikely, though not impossible, to think of separate states within historical Iraq. Further, in spite of all the evils brought by the advent of the petrostate, dependence on one source of revenue not directly associated with the productive capacity of the society, the high level of dependence of the population on the state for employment, procurement of their services and products, and now the ration card, the rise of autonomous politics is highly unlikely. With the neglect of agriculture, the influx of migrants to cities, and the consequent rise in the degree of urbanization, the Iraqi state has become more centralized than ever before.

Moreover, the sweeping statements that we often read about a Kurdish north, a Sunni Arab center, and a Shi'ite Arab south give a false impression of a country that can be smoothly divided among its component sections. Not only is the existence of significant Sunni towns in the extreme south of Iraq (e.g. Zubair and Abul Khaseeb), and of Shi'ite towns in north central Iraq (e.g. Khanaqeen and Mandafl) glossed over, but the composition and relative size of Baghdad as well. Baghdad comprises between 25 and 27 percent of Iraq’s population. Alongside significant Kurdish and Christian (Arab, Assyrian, Chaldean and Armenian) minorities living in the capital, no less than 1 million Shi'ites live in the northern sections of the city (Kadhumayn, al-Hurriyya and al-Shura), in addition to some 1 to 1.5 million Shi'ites in the eastern part (al-Thawra, renamed Saddam City). The heart of Baghdad is composed of a mixture of old Shi'ite, Sunni, Kurdish and Christian Baghdad families. To a lesser extent, Iraq's second largest city until the war with Iran, Basra, reflected a similar mixed composition, as did Mosul with its Sunni-Arab and Kurdish composition. In short, ethno/sectarian cleansing scenarios are simply not feasible when the capital city is a microcosm of a rich diversity.

REFORMULATING THE PROBLEM

On the other hand, are we to accept the simplistic version (propagated by some factions in the Iraqi opposition) of a harmonious society whose only evil is Saddam Hussein? Rejecting the artificiality thesis is not a call for the adoption of a naïve vision. Indeed, the present
atmosphere in Iraq is highly charged with tribal, regional and sectarian overtones. However, this phenomenon should not be hastily ascribed to the “non-integration” of Iraq thesis, or (even worse) to its being an essentialist factor in Middle Eastern culture. Rather, it is directly related to the pattern of the *anticlerical* state.

I have argued elsewhere that kinship relationships and ethno-sectarian solidarity should be viewed in the context of contemporary Iraq as relationships of interest and common world views first and foremost. Before the huge jump in oil revenues and the shift towards the *anticlerical* state in 1952, Shi'ite and Kurdish underrepresentation in the state apparatus and decision-making bodies was resented by members of both communities, but was not fiercely resisted. The reason was that underrepresented communities could still occupy the highest positions in the social hierarchy thanks to their domination of private landed and commercial activity, which was still autonomous of the state. A Sunni Arab-dominated state apparatus only began to show its social and economic heavy-handedness after the spectacular rises in oil revenues in 1952. Even then, compliance with, or resistance to the state was never motivated purely or even mainly by sectarian/ethnic prejudices. The first Ba‘athist regime in Iraq (February–November 1963) was fiercely and violently resisted by the vast majority of Shi‘ites despite the fact that its most influential leaders were Shi‘ites. Unarmed Shi‘ites went down to the streets and were massacred en masse while showing support for the deposed Sunni Prime Minister, Abdul Karim Qassim (1958–1963), whose sectarian affiliation most Iraqis were unaware of, not caring to know because he followed a non-discriminatory policy in this respect.

Even under the Ba‘ath, and especially under Saddam Hussein when clannish politics took a sharp turn upwards, discrimination did not run along purely sectarian lines, but rather against Iraqis from urban backgrounds, including Sunni Arabs, who could not share the worldviews and social norms of the ruling revolutionaries who originated from impoverished provincial towns. Thus, while the Shi‘ites and Kurds were grossly underrepresented in the main decision-making bodies of the Ba‘athist regime, not a single urban Sunni from Mosul, Baghdad or Basra was represented either. By contrast, individual Shi‘ites, Kurds and Christians who proved their loyalty to the regime were generously rewarded materially or by being appointed to positions of trust.

Clannish solidarity and shared worldviews (and therefore sharing approaches to the problems facing Iraq and the solutions sought)
took precedence over sectarian views per se. The world has witnessed the horrible punishment of the closest relatives once kinship relation-ship diverged from that of interest. Long before the brutal butchering of Saddam’s own two sons-in-law in 1996, many prominent Tikritis had been ousted from power, assassinated or sent into oblivion simply because they did not fit the regime’s policies. The predominantly Sunni Muslim Brothers, Nasserites, and certainly pro-Syria Ba’athists were no less brutally treated than predominantly Shi’ite movements. Seven years before the horrific gassing of the Kurdish town Halabja, al-Dujail, a predominantly Sunni town north of Baghdad, was turned to dust when some of its sons attempted to assassinate Saddam Hussein.

What all the above points to is that perceptions of identity and solidarity have never been purely exclusive in modern Iraq, nor are they eternally constructed. This is not to deny that gross discrimination against Shi’ites and Kurds as communities did not occur, or that members of these communities are not aware or are indifferent to it. Nevertheless, the fact is that during the phase of the regime’s ascendancy, roughly until the second half of the 1980s, an active process of co-option coupled with an expanding pie of national wealth allowed for the rise of an embryonic social hierarchy based on membership of particular sects, regions, and towns, whereby many people, while resenting the regime’s brutality and discrimination, acquiesced with the status quo, because even at relatively lower levels of this hierarchy, people could reap some benefits.

However, by the mid-1980s a crisis was looming in the air, and regional/sectarian cleavage took an acute upward turn on both sides: amidst the regime as well as the Iraqi population. The paternalistic state was beginning to break down. As a sweeping privatization plan was launched in 1987 and the state was drained of its resources, those communities that had been further away from the system’s core began to feel the burdens of unemployment, inflation, insecurity, and vulnerability more than others. The regime itself made no secret of whom it would favor while at the same time the level of national resources was swiftly shrinking. Deprived of the means to silence even non-hostile sections of the population, the consolidation of a minority group with blind loyalty to the regime took precedence over active co-option. The humiliating defeat in the 1991 Gulf War was the spark that unleashed the mountains of hatred that had accumulated over decades. But it was the state that gave it a sharp sectarian turn; when for the first time in the history of modern Iraq,
a ruling regime raised explicitly anti-Shi'ite slogans in order to suppress the intifada. The Republican Guards and their tanks that swept Karbala and Najaf, the two Shi'ite holy cities, did not only bomb shrines of the revered Imams, but added graffiti to them: “No Shi'ites from now on!” The official organ of the ruling Ba'ath Party came out for the first time with the following denunciation of some 60 percent of the Iraqi people: “a certain sect [the Shi'ites] has been historically under the influence of the Persians...They have been taught to hate the Arab Nation.” As for the Marsh villagers, whose natural habitat would be dried up a year later in what has been described as the greatest ecological crime of modern history, the same daily editorials dismissed them as “marsh people” so accustomed to breeding buffalo that they have become “indistinguishable from them.” Racism reaches its zenith when they (and the Indian people) are doomed in the following statement: “These are not Arabs. They were brought with their buffalo from India by Muhammad al-Qasim” [the Abbasid leader who conquered India in the ninth century] (al-Thawra, 1–3 April 1991).

In the other trench, the polarized atmosphere took shape when some but not all or even the majority of rebellions were raising slogans like “We want a Shi'ite leader.” But how did the entire state produce this social structure that is so highly charged with tribal, regional and sectarian overtones, a phenomenon that was unthinkable in the 1950s or 1960s?

Iraq's successive revolutions and coups d'état have brought about a necessary, but certainly not a sufficient, change towards the rise of a civil society in the long term. The republican regimes dismantled the pre-bourgeois, socio-economic structures through adopting sweeping land reforms, centralizing education and imposing uniform curricula in schools, opening up paths for upward mobility for the then marginalized middle and lower strata originating from provincial towns, fighting illiteracy and expanding and extending basic services to wider sections of the population. Tribal and religious social institutions loosened their grip on their followers and began losing their political, economic and social functions. The older civil groupings in the big cities, especially in Baghdad, had already been flooded by internal migrants since the end of World War II.

While the republican regimes achieved their “destructive” functions more or less efficiently, their “constructive” role of laying the groundwork for a superior mechanism for social and economic development, and therefore new forms of social groupings and strat-
ification, proved to be disastrous. Iraq's dependence on its relatively huge oil revenues spared it the typical problems that other Third World countries had faced: the search for hard currency and means for financing its investment expenditure. Policy-makers were therefore not faced with the need to raise the competitiveness of Iraq's industry and agriculture, or to find export outlets for Iraqi products (as was the case with the cash-strapped newly industrialized countries of East Asia, for example), but to find jobs for the unemployed and to raising the standards of living in the short run.

Through these policies the ruling Ba'ath gained the support, or at least the acquiescence, of wide sections of the population. From 1958 to 1977, the number of personnel employed by the state jumped from 20,000 to more than 880,000, not including the estimated 230,000 in the armed services at that time or some 200,000 pensioners directly dependent on the state for their livelihood. The most recent figures, from the period just after the 1991 Gulf War are: 822,000 on the state civilian payroll, including some 200,000 working for the various state and party security services, approximately 400,000 in active duty with the armed forces and some 880,000 pensioners. In proportional terms, this means that the civilian state apparatuses employ around 21 percent of the active workforce, and that around 40 percent of Iraqi households are directly dependent on government payments.14

As the population was linked individually to the state apparatus, forms of collective identities replacing the old pre-capitalist ones could not emerge. The influx of Arab and Asian migrant workers, encouraged by the state, ensured the presence of a reserve army of labor that could suppress any demands by Iraqi workers for better living and work conditions. The relative economic prosperity made such demands less pressing and any collective action a risky business that could bring the wrath of the state agencies. To further the atomization of the population, individual petitions requesting (but not demanding) wage increases or special favors were sympathetically looked upon, while unions and autonomous associations were hardly suppressed. Improvements in the living conditions were seen as maktrama (laxness) from the leadership, not rights acquired by the population.

Under such circumstance, the state's sudden withdrawal from economic and social life following the 1987 privatization schemes, coupled with the regime's flagrant bias towards certain clans and regions in handing over privileges, left the vulnerable sections of the population with their backs to the wall under the rule of the
Egyptian jiftah type of savage profiteering capitalism and lawless mafias directly related to Saddam Hussein. It was only natural that individuals so atomized, would attach themselves to whoever would look out for their losses and defend their rights. Deprived of the rights, experience and material basis to associate in secular associations, vulnerable members of society found shelter in their revived sectarian, tribal or regional loyalties. An impoverished political culture that has dominated Iraq for decades contributed to the adoption of oppositional strategies that are sometimes mirror images of the regime’s politics.

However, Kurdish nationalist feelings should not be put on a par with sectarian or even regional solidarities/loyalties. The former has a long history of struggle for self-determination in a world that is formed and shaped along national lines, which gives it legitimacy and validity. Whether the Kurds will end up as a federal part of Iraq, or as an independent state, their distinct feelings of belonging to a nation cannot be overlooked. Yet, Kurdishness, just like any other identity, is not exclusive. It may devolve into sub-national solidarity, as the sad present divisions between Bahdini (western) and Surani (eastern) Kurds have shown. It can also be accommodated with the pan-Iraqi solidarity that many Kurds still feel, even after decades of bloody repression at the hands of Arab-dominated regimes.

Sectarian divisions, on the other hand, are much less acute in Iraq than they are normally portrayed. No significant Sunni or Shi’ite community has ever voiced non-Iraqi loyalty. The ferocious battles fought by the Iraqi army, the bulk of whose rank and file is Shi’ite, in the war against Iran has demonstrated that nationalism (whether in a just national war or one whipped up by propaganda) takes precedence over sectarian identity. The regime’s deep legitimacy crisis has opened the door not for secessionist tendencies, but for redefining (or rectifying) the concepts of majority rule in Iraq. In a country whose single largest community is Shi’ite, which has never had a leading role in power and policy-making, it is only natural that the call for democracy should be intermingled with sectarian slogans. If Iraq is ever able to resume its development schemes, and the wheels of the economy to start rolling again, the struggle over privileges and access to means of living would lessen the tensions that have sharpened over the past 15 years. Additional factors are likely to play a positive role in this respect; most important of all is that the role of the state will have to be redefined. It is here, in the socio-economic
sphere where is to be found the second source of Iraq's insecurity that has been masked by the clamor about its economic "miracle."

REVISITING THE "MIRACLE"

The precarious balance among the components of Iraqi society, and thus the autonomy of the state, was maintained through a bribing mechanism made possible by the exceptional oil boom of the 1970s. However, rifts began to appear in the 1980s, as Iraq's economic performance lagged behind its neighbors. The sanctions of the 1990s exacerbated social tensions and deprived Iraqis of the means to unite against the regime. Even if in some remote future, Iraq can achieve its goals of doubling its oil exports and oil prices do not drop, per capita oil revenues will not exceed one half of their 1970s level. Without putting Iraq's record in due perspective, we cannot understand how the sanctions have further atomized the population and deformed its social structure.

The Gulf War of 1991 and a decade of sanctions masked the fact that Iraq had been heading towards a socio-economic crisis even prior to invading Kuwait. In fact, the invasion itself was a failed attempt at stemming that crisis. Like many other aspects concerning Iraq's plight, the crisis has gone unseen because critics of the sanctions have given the impression (gained from hasty visits to Baghdad) that Iraq was a social Utopia. For years Iraqis were bombarded with statements presented as obvious facts (not infrequently in superlatives) about their country. They had to live with and consent to these statements, which they knew were not true, because the "experts" were fighting for the same cause: namely, lifting the crippling sanctions on the Iraqi people.

The debate around the sanctions regime has been locked in a partisan discourse (whose victims have been ordinary Iraqis) on the one hand, and one about human and social and economic rights on the other. However, as the pressures on the US justifiably mounted to lift the sanctions imposed on Iraq, one can turn to the other side of the argument that is no less corrupting to the human rights discourse than that of the official US media. A good example is provided by the use of the resignations of a series of respectable and credible figures from international bodies in charge of sanctions-related missions in Iraq. In October 1998, Denis J. Halliday, Assistant Secretary-General of the UN, resigned in protest over a program that
he labeled an “all-out effort to starve to death as many Iraqis as possible.” This was followed by the resignation of two other officials. ¹⁶

Such courageous moves by three prominent international officials contributed crucially to raising public awareness not only of the tragic situation in Iraq, but also of the world’s, especially the United States, responsibility in inflicting so much damage on the health and well-being of a small Third World country. Yet the humanitarian tragedy in Iraq was not an abstract notion. It can be measured using indicators pertaining to education, health, services and, most of all, life. Unfortunately these indicators are not taken into account as “defending the Iraqi people’s social rights” takes the form of paternalistic statements that ridicule a people’s untold suffering under their own ruling regime. Mr. Halliday is quoted as saying that: “Under Saddam Hussein, Iraq had had the best civilization in the Middle East, with universal medical care, the finest hospitals, free university education for all qualified and overseas grants for graduate students.”¹⁷ Halliday went on to add: “a once-proud civilization had been reduced to third world status.”

Other propagandists, now “UN experts” echoed these statements: “Iraq was a country with a high standard of living, a terrific educational system, and the best public health in the region.”¹⁸ Ironically, such aggrandizing statements were launched by the US a decade ago for exactly the opposite reason: to show how menacing Iraq had become and therefore to help cement an international alliance to face Saddam Hussein. It was at that time that the world began to know of the nuclear capabilities and the “fifth largest army on earth.” Now it is these same critics of the US that are grieving over the “reduction of Iraq into a third world country.” Such statements, though apparently very neutral, convey the false image that Iraq belonged to another group of countries: the industrialized ones.

Did Iraq have the best civilization in the Middle East? The best educational standards and health services? The former Iraqi regime thrived on such propaganda, not only to show its achievements, but also to give the impression that the deteriorating situation was the fault of others. In order to verify these claims, I have chosen to take Iraq’s record over three periods of time: the 1970s, when Iraq’s financial resources were at their highest and social and economic tensions had been at their nadir; the 1980s when Iraq was plunged into war with Iran; and the disastrous 1990s. However, Iraq’s real record cannot only be judged diachronically; it is more important to look at its performance in a regional perspective. Therefore, I chose two sets of
countries: the first set comprises Syria and Jordan, who had enjoyed smaller resources than their eastern neighbor, while the other consists of the oil rentier economies in the south: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.

The findings from this comparative approach are very interesting. Despite the fact that Iraqis had indeed made great strides in their socio-economic conditions throughout the 1970s and more modest ones in the 1980s, the evidence shows that Iraq was not an exceptional case in the region. Actually, putting that experience in regional and temporal context, Iraq shows a disappointing record even in comparison to its much poorer neighbors, if one bears in mind the huge revenues of the post-1973 oil boom. Tables 7.1–7.6 tell Iraq’s story prior to the imposition of the sanctions regime. The latest figures recorded in some of these tables relate to 1992. At that time the effects of the sanctions, most of which are medium to long-term, had not yet been felt significantly.

Table 7.1 gives a picture of the distorted effects that relying on oil has had on Iraq. Around $80 billion in oil revenues accrued to the country within a period of six years, compared to $6.5 billion to Syria and none to Jordan during the same period. Thanks to this windfall gain, Iraq’s per capita GDP jumped from a little over 80 percent of that of Syria to almost four times that of its neighbor in the 1990s. Yet, while one can take fluctuations in per capita GDP as indicators of the actual performance of most other economies, this is not the case in the rentier economies of the region. This is because oil price fluctuations in the world market can produce corresponding changes in the fortunes of a national rentier economy, although no significant changes may have taken place in the levels of production, productivity or investments in the country.

In addition, the impressive per capita GDP figure of 1990 hid alarming trends that had been at work during the 1980s. During the war with Iran, Iraq was kept afloat by generous grants and loans from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, who pumped an average 310,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil on its behalf. In actual terms, however, Iraq’s growth rates in constant prices went down by 1.7 percent between 1980 and 1990. The per capita GDP went down by 4.7 percent, and an individual’s consumption of food rose from 46.3 percent of the income in 1979 to 50.2 percent in 1988, an indicator of declining incomes.12

More alarming still is the fact that Iraq was actually de-investing throughout the 1980s, which would have shown in a further decrease
in the country's production capacity and income. Against a spectacular rise of 21.7 percent in gross domestic capital formation (GDCF in constant prices) in the 1970s, the rate was minus 7.5 percent in the 1980s. In other words, whatever production occurred was actually thanks to the assets added in the 1970s. This 7.5 decrease in capital formation for the economy as a whole was unevenly distributed among the sectors of the economy, with GDCF decreasing by 11.2 percent in agriculture, 20.0 percent in construction, 23.7 percent in transport, 9.6 percent in manufacturing, and 8.2 percent in social and personal services. An additional indicator is that, while machinery represented around 27 percent of GDCF in the 1970s, this went down to 16 percent in the 1980s. With such a prolonged decrease in investment in productive sectors and productive assets (machinery), Iraq's prospects for regaining its 1970s growth rates in the near future were impossible.

Iraq's high dependence on oil (which is not inevitable, but the result of economic policy-making) contributed to its vulnerability to externally imposed shocks, such as the 1990s sanctions. The three last columns in Table 7.1 provide the relevant indicators. Iraq and Syria are the only two countries in this table that have a significant agricultural potential and, although Syria does not generally run an efficient economy or agriculture sector, Iraq lagged behind in all indicators. When Iraq's resources were strained under the impact of the war with Iran, it exploited less than half of its cultivable land as compared with more than 90 percent in the case of Syria. In terms of the efficiency of its agriculture, Iraq also lagged behind, as can be gauged from the number of tractors and harvesters per 1,000 agricultural population. This, it should be noted, was a direct outcome of the rentier nature of the economy, which encouraged massive rural-urban migration, raised urban incomes and depressed rural ones, without in the meantime raising productivity in agriculture.

The availability of foreign exchange made it easy to import food and agricultural products. The dire consequences of all this were to be seen after the imposition of sanctions in 1990.

Table 7.2 outlines Iraq's performance in human development further. Here the pace of urbanization is only surpassed by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Whereas many have taken this rate as an indicator of how modern Iraq has become, the cancerous growth of large unproductive cities, coupled with the deteriorating agricultural sector, was caused by the rentier pattern that the state has followed, and contributed to aggravate the rentier structure
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Pop. (million)</th>
<th>GDP (US $ million)</th>
<th>Per capita GDP (US $)</th>
<th>Total oil exports (US $ million)</th>
<th>Cultivated/cultivable land %</th>
<th>Tractors*</th>
<th>Harvesters*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>15.70</td>
<td>53,586.6</td>
<td>25,469.6</td>
<td>1,622</td>
<td>4,145</td>
<td>79,970</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>10.27</td>
<td>13,063.6</td>
<td>20,269.1</td>
<td>1,974</td>
<td>1,147</td>
<td>6,419</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>3,301.6</td>
<td>3,992.9</td>
<td>1,131</td>
<td>1,140</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA**</td>
<td>12.85</td>
<td>115,973.6</td>
<td>93,658.6</td>
<td>7,289</td>
<td>7,039</td>
<td>394,801</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>28,691.8</td>
<td>19,766.3</td>
<td>10,295</td>
<td>8,575</td>
<td>72,448</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>29,622.0</td>
<td>26,048.2</td>
<td>19,735</td>
<td>21,165</td>
<td>88,566</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Per 1000 agricultural population.
** Saudi Arabia.
in its turn. More and more people came to depend on the state as employees and pensioners without making any commensurate contribution to the production of wealth. Thus, in a span of three decades, Iraq's urban population went from roughly the same level as Syria, to a level more than 20 percent higher, matching that of Saudi Arabia. Was this a sign of modernization? A look at the percentages of female participation in the workforce reveals an appalling record. Iraq was slightly ahead only of Saudi Arabia in the period 1982-85, less than 40 percent of Syria and around 70 percent of Jordan and Kuwait. By the period 1990-92, female participation was no less appalling: Iraq was on the same level with the UAE, 60 percent of Jordan, 40 percent of Syria, one percentage point behind Saudi Arabia, and one-quarter the level of Kuwait.

What about the "terrible" health standards? The influx of huge windfall oil revenues on the region for an uninterrupted period of almost two decades undoubtedly gave governments ample opportunity to raise health standards. The Middle East has indeed made positive strides in this respect despite wide corruption, inefficiency, and the squandering of much wealth on armament and luxuries. Here again, Iraq's record is far from impressive in relative terms. In 1960, life expectancy was higher than Saudi Arabia and slightly higher than Jordan's. By 1982-85, Iraq was lagging behind all the countries under comparison including the poorer Jordan and Syria. Whereas it was 1.3 years ahead of Jordan and 1.3 years behind Syria, the gap widened to become 4-5 years two decades later. In fact, Syria and Jordan both surpassed Saudi Arabia, and only Kuwait and the UAE were approaching European life-expectancy levels.

By 1992 the gap between the countries in the table was narrowing, but Iraq was still lagging behind them all. The last three columns of Table 7.2 tell basically the same story: a positive record for the region over the three-decade period. In 1960 only Kuwait had an infant mortality rate of less than 100, while all the rest had their rates above 130 per thousand, with Iraq ahead of Saudi Arabia and the UAE and slightly behind Jordan and Syria. The following quarter-century witnessed a drastic reduction in infant mortality in the whole region: Kuwait to one-fourth, Iraq to less than one-half, but with Iraq maintaining the highest infant mortality rate in the region, with the gap between it and its neighbors no longer a matter of a few percentage points, as was the case in 1960; it was more than double the rate in the Emirates, three and a half times Kuwait, one and a half the rate
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% Urban</th>
<th>% Females to workforce</th>
<th>Life expectancy (years at birth)</th>
<th>Infant mortality (per 1000 live births)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of Jordan and Syria, and with 10 dead infants per 1000 more than Saudi Arabia. In 1992, the whole region further improved its record, with Saudi Arabia having the fastest decrease. In fact, the gap did not narrow between Iraq and its neighbors: it grew wider with Saudi Arabia (double), almost three times that of the Emirates and four times Kuwait’s, almost double the rate of Jordan and one and a half that of Syria.

Iraq’s poor performance relative to its resources until 1990 and to the performance of its neighbors can be examined in more detail with the aid of Tables 7.3 and 7.4. In absolute terms, all the countries under consideration achieved great progress during the period under discussion, as noted; but, whereas Iraq witnessed a steady decrease of its food production per capita, bringing it down by 30 percent in less than a decade, Syria witnessed a fantastic rise which more than doubled the per capita food production, despite the fact that both countries have roughly the same rate of population growth. The Iran–Iraq war contributed only partially to the decline of Iraq’s agriculture, by draining human resources to the war and damaging agricultural land, especially in the two fertile governorates of Basra and Diyala. But the real factors have remained structurally based.

Table 7.3 shows clearly that in 1973, seven years before the beginning of the war, per capita food production was higher than that of 1974–76, indicating that the decline began long before, and was related to the neglect of agriculture due to the oil price hikes of the 1970s. Despite that, and relying on a spiraling food import bill, Iraqis were only second to Saudis in their daily calorie intake on the eve of the invasion of Kuwait, while the daily protein intake in the mid-1980s was only ahead of Jordan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Daily Calories as a Percentage of Requirements</th>
<th>Per Capita Food Production 1974–76/100</th>
<th>Per Capita Protein Intake (gms/day)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>117.8</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>127.3</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>117.2</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>134.1</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.4 gives a more accurate picture of the efforts made by governments of the region, since unlike agricultural production or migratory patterns, the indicators listed below depend directly on public investment and spending aimed at improving the quality of life. As can be seen from column 6, in all countries between 97 and 100 percent of the population had access to health services by the second half of the 1980s (although the quality of this service is questionable). Iraq was the lowest (or second lowest) in the percentage of population who had access to safe water in 1980 and in 1988–91, but in absolute terms it made significant improvement (from 70 percent to 91 percent), while Syria made a miniscule improvement, from 71 percent to 73 percent. In this period, Iraq surpassed only Jordan in the percentage of population with access to sewage system.25

Table 7.4 Iraq’s health indicators in a regional context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Access to safe water</th>
<th>Population per doctor</th>
<th>Access to health services</th>
<th>Access to sewage system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>1,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>1,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1,400**</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>...***</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>1,020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage of population.
** Doctors in public service only.
*** 51 percent in 1973.

However, Iraq’s worst performance was in the number of available doctors.26 In the mid-1980s Iraq had the second worst record in the number of per capita physicians after Syria. The indicator was double that of Jordan and almost three times that of Kuwait and the Emirates. By 1990 Iraq had made only slight progress, while the other countries, with the exception of the UAE, were forging much faster ahead and overtaking Iraq. Jordan reached the same level as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. In Syria the number of individuals per doctor decreased by more than one half and only the Emirates had a worse record.27

Table 7.5 tells a similar story about Iraq’s achievement in the educational field. Its literacy rates were lower than all the countries examined except Saudi Arabia, which lagged far behind all others in
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Literacy among adults</th>
<th>Enrollment in primary schools</th>
<th>Registered in primary schools</th>
<th>Registered in secondary schools</th>
<th>Registered in higher education</th>
<th>Females in primary schools*</th>
<th>Females in secondary schools*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>34  62</td>
<td>69  106</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>40  67</td>
<td>78  105</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>47  82</td>
<td>...  100</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>9  64</td>
<td>65  69</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>54  74</td>
<td>89  95</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>...  ...</td>
<td>93  95</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentage of total students in the respective stage in public schools only.
### Table 7.6  Iraq and Iran in a world context*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country /region</th>
<th>% Urban</th>
<th>Life expectancy</th>
<th>Infant mortality</th>
<th>Access to safe water</th>
<th>Illiteracy</th>
<th>Gross primary school enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>106 Male 113 Female 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>109 Male 114 Female 104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENA**</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>97 Male 103 Female 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMC***</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>104 Male 103 Female 96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Middle East and North Africa.
*** Lower-middle income group to which Iraq and Iran belong.
1970. By 1992, the whole region made a considerable advance, most
sensationally in Saudi Arabia (from 9 to 64 percent). Iraq had the
lowest literacy rate in 1992. Yet, relying on the data in columns 3 and
4, one can assume that the situation was improving as enrollment
in primary schools was at its highest in Iraq. A figure of more than
100 percent is an indicator of a campaign against illiteracy that targets
people outside the school age bracket. Nevertheless, the 1990 figures
do not support (indeed, they actually refute) the notion that Iraq
was making great strides ahead of its regional neighbors. In primary
and secondary stages of education, Iraq lagged behind all its Arab
neighbors with the exception of Saudi Arabia. In higher education,
it was only ahead of Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In higher and
secondary education, Iraq was far behind its poor neighbor, Jordan.

By way of a conclusion, I have tried to put the Iraqi "miracle" into
a wider perspective by comparing Iraq’s performance with Iran, and
the world regions in general (Tables 7.6 and 7.7). Iraq’s data is relative
to the zenith of its progress (i.e. the last stage before the invasion of
Kuwait), while those for other regions are from the early 1990s. As
can be seen, Iraq had a higher urbanization rate than Iran, the Middle
East and North Africa regions (MENA), and the lower-middle-income
group of countries (LMG). Life expectancy was lower than in Iran,
and slightly lower than in the wider region to which it belongs, yet
it had the highest infant mortality rate, the difference with Iran and
the LMG being quite considerable. Iraq showed a relatively impressive
record only in access to safe water, where it was slightly higher than

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Adult literacy rate percentage</th>
<th>Life expectancy (years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>65.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>60.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia (exc. China)</td>
<td>95.9</td>
<td>71.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East Asia &amp; Pacific</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>63.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America &amp; the Caribbean</td>
<td>85.9</td>
<td>68.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Countries</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>74.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Iran, but much higher than the LMG. In the field of illiteracy, the percentage of illiterate Iraqis was double that of the LMG, but lower than MENA and Iran. The variations in primary school enrollment were not significant, but were impressive for all categories.

Finally, Table 7.7 serves as a conclusion to this section. Iraq’s higher life expectancy than the world average, Southeast and South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa, and its higher literacy rate than only Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, are indicators of the positive improvements in the Middle East in general, rather than of Iraq’s exceptional performance. We have seen that, when compared to its regional neighbors, Iraq had the worst record even in comparison with countries that relied on external aid, such as Jordan.

GRADING DICTATORS

The partisan debate about Iraq’s record is not confined to that age-old controversy about prioritizing social and economic rights over political rights or vice versa. The legacy of the Cold War corruption of the human-rights discourse is being pursued today in “smoothing” Iraq’s indefensible record of political and individual rights. Out of naiveté or cynicism, Iraq is labeled as a dictatorship among many similar ones in the Third World or the Middle East. So why does the US and its allies care more about overthrowing Saddam Hussein? Iraq’s highly unrepresentative regime cannot be dissociated from its structural crisis. In fact, the nature of the regime encapsulates its societal crisis.

Undoubtedly, those outsiders who advance the view that Saddam’s regime is but one among other dictatorships, are rightly questioning the credibility of the US and other superpowers, which have defended and supported dictators (including Saddam) whenever doing so suited their interests, while selectively denouncing others who stood against them. Ironically, many journalists have reported the same view from Baghdad. Many Iraqis feel that Saddam Hussein remained in power thanks to some hidden US agenda to keep him in place and because of the double standards applied here and elsewhere. Many people have lost their sensitivity towards what is happening around them, because of their inability to verify the real record of each dictatorship, or of ascertaining whether a certain regime is a dictatorship in the first place.

However, the critics of the US are no less complicit in corrupting human rights when they portray the Iraqi dictatorship as just one among many. Apart from the fact that Saddam Hussein was the only
post-World War II ruler who occupied and annexed a sovereign
country, which makes his regime punishable according to inter-
national law, the level of atrocities the regime committed against its
own people may only be compared to that of Pol Pot of Cambodia.
To denounce this regime as a mere dictatorship is tantamount to
complicity to genocide.

Even at the risk of repetition, let me state some of the most horrific
facts:

- Between 1987 and 1988, a ten-legged genocide operation, al-
  Anfal, cost the lives of between 120,000 and 180,000 Kurdish
  children, women and elderly (i.e. 1 percent of Iraq’s population
  at the time). The use of chemical weapons in this operation
  has been confirmed. In addition, more than 4,000 Kurdish
  villages were wiped out with the aim of putting an end to the
  partisan movement against the regime. This operation has been
documented by Human Rights Watch.28
- In March 1988, the Kurdish town of Halabja was destroyed by
  air raids using chemical weapons. Around 5,000 are estimated
to have perished in this operation.
- Between March and April 1991, an estimated 40,000-60,000
  Arab and Kurdish Iraqis were brutally killed during the
  suppression of the anti-regime intifada. Eyewitnesses and
  videotapes tell of burning or burying people alive.
- The number of Iraqis living in exile is estimated at 3–4 million
  (i.e. one out 7–8 Iraqis). The Iranian Ministry of Interior gives
  the number of Iraqi refugees residing there at 580,000. Among
  those are 200,000 Iraqi Shi’ites who were collectively deported
  between 1980 and 1981. Those between the ages of 16 and 45
  were separated from their families and “disappeared” in Iraqi
  prisons.29
- Fleeing the Iraqi Republican Guard, 33,000 Iraqis took refuge
  in Saudi Arabia after the suppression of the 1991 intifada. The
  United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has
  found shelters for 24,000 of these in Europe, the US and
  Australia.30
- The above figures do not include an estimated 60–70,000 Faili
  Kurds collectively deported to Iran in 1970–71.
- According to the UN Secretary-General, there are more than
  half a million internally displaced Iraqis living in the three
  Kurdish governorates of Arbil, Duhok and Sulaimaniyya. Half
of those had been displaced before 1991, 150,000 between 1991 and 1995, and 100,000 in 1996. The latter groups have been the victims of the ethnic cleansing of the Kurdish regions that are still under the regime's control.\textsuperscript{31}

Despite the appalling record of human right abuses and dictatorship in much of the Arab world (and Third World), no other dictatorship, perhaps with the exception of Cambodia's Khmer Rouge, rivals that of Iraq. Flattening out that record through the hollow term of “dictatorship” shows no sensitivity towards human lives, which should be the main asset of the critics of the sanctions regime.

\textbf{STARVATION AS LIBERATION}\textsuperscript{32}

Saddam Hussein himself showed little sign that he was moved by his people's plight. To him, as to those who were enforcing the sanctions, they were hostages, bargaining chips, whose very suffering was an asset. Thus he would arrange displays of dead children to shame his enemies...But the dead children were real. The tragedy was that in aiming at the hostage taker, the United States and its remaining allies were killing the hostages.\textsuperscript{33}

In the post-Cold War era, "sanctions" turned into a panacea for the world's ills. In the first 45 years since the establishment of the UN, sanctions were only imposed on two countries: South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). From 1990 onwards, the number of countries targeted by sanctions has more than quadrupled. This could have been welcome news, a sign of a shift to a world where a set of more humane measures that do not target civilians would replace devastating wars as a means of enforcing compliance with international law.

Sanctions have become such a favorite means of punishment that we tend to forget that they involve a very wide range of measures. Because of the precedent that Iraq had set by being the first country that occupied the full territory of another sovereign member of the United Nations, the sanctions were the harshest ever imposed on any country in modern history. The harshness of the measures was legitimated by the fact that Iraq had “breached” international security, whereas in all the other cases, the punishment was for “posing a threat” to world peace.
Nonetheless, in order to judge the effectiveness of the sanctions, we have to weigh them against their objectives on the one hand, and the costs incurred while implementing them on the other. As is well known, the sanctions were imposed on Iraq with the following initial aims:

- To force Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait.
- To ensure a clean bill of health on Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction, including means of medium and long-range delivery.
- To prevent the Iraqi regime from threatening its neighbors.

While the objectives were more or less well defined, the mechanisms through which sanctions would achieve them were never made clear; they were merely assumed. Because Iraq was only the third country targeted by UN sanctions, and because these sanctions have indeed contributed to the fall of the white minority rule in Rhodesia, and have had positive effects on the disintegration of South Africa’s apartheid regime, a vague optimistic analogy may have been at work here. Yet, the same powers that imposed the sanctions on Iraq implicitly admitted their insufficiency within less than six months of their imposition. The launching of Operation Desert Storm in January 1991 and the recourse to a devastating air campaign against Iraq was a plain recognition that the sanctions would not force Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait. The 1991 Gulf War came to a halt when the allies succeeded in liberating Kuwait (i.e. in achieving the first objective of the sanctions); yet rather than revising the whole rationale for continuing the sanctions, the major powers continued them as a means of tightening the noose around the Iraqi regime. The question that should be asked here is: did the sanctions contribute to forcing Iraq to dispense with its WMD and to weakening Saddam’s regime? If yes, then at what cost?

One way of approaching this admittedly complex question is the simple “yes”, which is what we have been continuously hearing from the US administration; Saddam Hussein was weaker than ever, UNSCOM was able to disclose and destroy large amounts of Iraqi WMD, therefore the sanctions should stay in place. As for the cost, the former Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, was more than frank during that chilling interview with CBS News correspondent Lesley Stahl:
We have heard that half a million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima... is the price worth it?

Alright: I think this is a very hard choice, but the price—we think the price worth it.34

Unfortunately, such an answer avoids the main issues that lie at the heart of the sanctions regime, and eludes the search for sound means of ensuring a secure Iraq and safe and secure Middle East, which should be the real objectives behind the search and destruction of Iraq's WMD. Without addressing these issues, the approach that has been applied until now will only lead to counter-effects, as I will try to show.

First, why didn't the sanctions lead to similar effects to those imposed on the two racist systems of Africa? The simple answer is that, although the latter were forms of dictatorships, they had been accountable to a constituency, albeit a narrow one, namely, the white minority. The legal channels for expressing dissent and objection and for voting out a government had already been put in place. In the case of Iraq, the problem was not how to foment dissent. It was already there. But the tyrannical structure of the regime was far from responsive or sensitive to the people's views and aspirations. Thus, pinning one's hopes on the application of popular pressure to bring about the regime's compliance with UN resolutions is only self-deceptive, unless one is thinking of mass protests in the form of revolution or rebellion. But did the sanctions contribute to making such a prospect closer? In other words, did a decade of sanctions alter the functioning of the Iraqi state and society? Has it led to the weakening of the state's grip on society and improved the chances for a democratic transition in Iraq, as much of the US rhetoric implies? Or did it cement the unity between the leadership and the people, as the regime's propaganda claims? Such claims call for a re-examination of the meaning of "strength" and "weakness", because casting statements about the weakened Iraqi regime are quite misleading, unless the weakness of the regime is weighed against that of society.

As can be seen from the last two columns of Table 7.8, sanctions against Iraq, unlike other countries, hit ordinary people the hardest. The comprehensiveness of the sanctions was aggravated by the fact that the country depended almost totally on imports for the survival of its population. Without claiming to present a survey, the following three tables give an ample idea of the comparative fortunes of Iraqis after a decade of sanctions.
Table 7.8  A decade of sanctions – Iraq and the region: population* (thousands or per thousand)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Population under 5</th>
<th>Population under 18</th>
<th>Annual no. of births</th>
<th>Infant mortality rate</th>
<th>Under-5 mortality rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>22,900</td>
<td>3,960</td>
<td>11,100</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>16,200</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>7,900</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>4,913</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>70,300</td>
<td>7,650</td>
<td>31,500</td>
<td>1,586</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>20,400</td>
<td>3,157</td>
<td>10,038</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>815</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data updated for 2000.
Source Tables 7.8-7.10 www.amule.org.

Table 7.9  A decade of sanctions: health and living standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GNI per capita US $</th>
<th>Percentage of population with access to safe water Total Urban Rural</th>
<th>Percentage of population with access to adequate sanitation Total Urban Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>2,170</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>1,680</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>1,630</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>6,900</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>19,020</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>18,060</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.10  A decade of sanctions: educational record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Adult literacy rate Male</th>
<th>Primary school enrollment ratio (net) Male</th>
<th>Secondary school enrollment ratio (gross) Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Primary school enrollment ratio (net) Female</th>
<th>Secondary school enrollment ratio (gross) Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The main defendants of the sanctions, the US and the UK, repeated time and again that the problem was created by Saddam himself, who was wickedly exploiting the plight of his people. This is partly true; Iraq was allowed to import as much for humanitarian needs as it could afford. This argument seemed to gain more credibility with the adoption of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions 698 (Oil-for-Food) and later 1284, allowing Iraq to export as much oil as it could in order to satisfy civilian needs, as well as implementing the partial easing of restrictions on imports; but the human tragedy is still there. Impartial observers agree that even Resolution 1284 could not solve the problem, and blaming Saddam, rightly, for squandering Iraq’s wealth and exploiting his people to gain political advantage does not absolve the US from being the chief party responsible for perpetuating a policy that was clearly damaging Iraqi society.

The simple reason for the failure of these resolutions to address the real problem is that Iraq’s ability to import, and not to export, has been crippled by an objective reality in today’s world: namely that an infinitely wide variety of material can be used to produce weapons of mass destruction. Scrutinizing and banning such imports is not only futile, but is tantamount to cancelling out any positive step taken on the export front.

What was the overall impact of this situation on Iraqi society and politics? The above tables and a host of many reliable surveys have clearly demonstrated the impact of sanctions in terms of rising poverty, malnutrition, infant mortality, begging, prostitution and crime. The tight restrictions on legal imports were manipulated by influential sectors within Iraq’s power structure to cushion themselves against any adverse effects, while weakening the rest of Iraqi society. Any traveler to Baghdad can easily verify the availability of practically every type of item and good. A flourishing smuggling activity served to foster a network of powerful interests running from the sons of influential figures (headed by Saddam’s son Uday) to merchants, sanctions profiteers and intermediaries. The lesser beneficiaries included sections of intelligence officers, special Republican Guards members, ordinary truck drivers, retail traders, and money exchangers. The main mechanism through which these powerful strata were profiting is inflation, which is the logical consequence in an atmosphere of general scarcity of goods and services. That is why we can state that, while sanctions were a societal and economic shock that had to produce inflation, the astronomical rates of inflation
were not inevitable. They were created, intentionally or not, by the former regime and its powerful figures, through recourse to printing money, spreading organized rumors to withdraw hard currency from the hands of people, and creating market shortages.35

Table 7.11  The shrinking dinar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Dinars per US $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>0.312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1989</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1992</td>
<td>13.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1992</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1994</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1995</td>
<td>1200.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1996</td>
<td>2950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1998</td>
<td>1850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1999</td>
<td>1790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End 1999</td>
<td>1550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End 2001</td>
<td>1850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled by the author from various press reports and first-hand sources.

A glance at the sequence of the deterioration of the exchange value of the Iraqi dinar shows first that the drop was aggravated—but not caused—by the sanctions, that the deterioration began in the 1980s, when the dinar lost some 65 percent of its value; second, that the deterioration spiraled after 1993, and third, that the escalation between 1996 and end of 2001 was driven largely by US plans to overthrow Saddam's regime.

Therefore, given the regime's social structure, the sanctions' main impact was to empower those who were already powerful and to impoverish the victims and potential or actual opponents of the regime. Iraqi semi-official sources today admit the widening gap between rich and poor due to the sanctions, naturally without reference to the politically powerful as the main benefactors. The suffering of the people due to American policy, we are told, is being exploited by a handful of profiteers. Even as the data is censored and manipulated, serious attempts at measuring the widening gap have shown alarming indicators. The Iraqi Society of Economists estimates that in 1993, the top 20 percent of the population possessed 47 percent of Iraq's national income, while the bottom
40 percent only 14 percent.\textsuperscript{36} Al Muhajir (1997: 40) showed that the bottom 5 percent had to make due with 0.8 of total income, while the top 5 percent encroached upon 21.2 percent of incomes.\textsuperscript{37}

However, poverty and huge income differentials alone do not account for the disintegration of Iraq's social fabric. Many Third World societies suffer from levels of poverty and income differentials that are worse than today's Iraq, yet we cannot designate them as disintegrating. We have to link these phenomena with the atomization and rentierism that had been dealt with earlier in this chapter. It is these factors together with a high level of dependence on the state that paralyzed Iraqi society under the sanctions and gave the central state more power vis-à-vis members of society. The sweeping 1987 privatization program and the pressures of the war with Iran had already introduced new trends in Iraq. Poverty, begging, crimes, the expansion of the informal sector, were all making their way back in a starkly obvious way. The sanctions exponentially reinforced these trends, but they did not create them and, rather than blaming the state for their worsening conditions, people are encouraged to blame the US and the west in general.

Also most important is that a weakened state used the rationing card as a means of forcing silence or acquiescence on the populace. An efficient program for the distribution of basic needs at nominal prices has been in force since 1990. Run through centrally computerized data, which distributes basics to households via local trading agents, this program has been an additional powerful means for controlling people's geographic mobility on the one hand, and enforcing the government relocation programs - targeting especially the Kurds and those who migrate to Baghdad in search of employment opportunities. In exchange for food and a minimum of security, people kept a façade of silence, or at least did not venture into collective oppositional actions. Although symbolic acts of protest and signs of hatred towards the regime were rampant, they tended to take cynical forms and were not explicitly political.

As an atomized and sanctions-exhausted population spent the bulk of its time chiseling bread, an inefficient administrative apparatus was functioning under lower costs thanks to the sanctions, a sign of the flexibility and adaptability of the Iraqi state to the changing times and circumstances.

This flexibility, it must be stressed, has not been the product of any deliberate state policy. Administrations, just like individuals and
groups, develop survival strategies under pressure and in the case of the Iraqi state these strategies took different forms. For one thing, the drastic decline in civil servants' incomes led to widespread absenteeism and desertion by government employees. The result was a less costly administration, characterized by a high level of "feminization" of the state civil service. The second aspect is that bribery and corruption, a tolerated practice despite all the rhetorical threats and denunciation by Saddam Hussein and his aides, turned into a means of subsidizing state activity. Thus, public service was a good that was sold to citizens via negotiated prices. Furthermore, under the pretext of facing sanctions, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) introduced the practice of self-finance even to such institutions as state hospitals and clinics, secondary schools, and institutions providing basic services to the population.

Thus, rather than showing symptoms of "Somalia syndrome" (a highly centralized state apparatus with the majority of the population dependent on it), Iraq did indeed show signs of weakness, but could also adapt to the new circumstances. Where it was impossible for the central coercive, judicial or other agencies to perform their activities, "state-appointed" shaikhs were revived, awarded material privileges, and assigned the role of intermediaries or arbiters in running the affairs of their "subjects". Reviving the institution of shaikhdom, however, was a double-edged weapon; urban societies, in Baghdad especially, did not harbor any genuine loyalty to these shaikhs, but used them as a means of circumventing the hardships of life under the sanctions and to provide a measure of protection against the arbitrariness of state agencies, although they were seen as paid agents of the state. In the meantime, these shaikhs are cynically playing the old balancing game between what is supposed to be their constituencies and the state. They can be an additional coercive agency against the populace whenever the state requires it. However, from the point of view of the political center, reviving this institution can be a risky venture, because the former Ba'athist regime required a monolithic society that glorified the state and its sole leader.

Analysts and observers have rightly shown that Iraqi society was traumatized by the sanctions while the power bloc was still able to reap tremendous wealth through various channels. But even in political, cultural and moral terms, the sanctions shock has hit Iraqi society much harder than the regime. Despite (or perhaps, because of) almost two decades of wars, rebellion, numerous coup attempts, large-scale waves of violent opposition acts and desertion, and drastic
breakdown in the country's infrastructure and virtual collapse of the population's standards of living, the Iraqi regime showed a surprising capability for survival and stability. Indeed, very few would have imagined in 1991 that more than a decade later, the opposition in exile would still be discussing overthrowing a regime that has been in power for 35 years despite all the misery and pain that it had inflicted, and is still inflicting, on the people and the region. Given that the contemporary Iraqi state is only eight decades old, 30 years of rule by any one regime should look as an outstanding record, and may offer an opportunity to rethink the efficacy of sanctions as a means of punishing it.

The legacy of the sanctions is only showing now and it would not be over-optimistic to talk of an embargo generation that will never be able to recover from the effects of material deprivation, isolation from the outside world, and a sense of being not only neglected and forgotten by the international community, but also targeted by that community as an enemy. The tragedy lies in the fact that, even with the end of the embargo, many unsatisfied needs and much of the damage will never be compensated by a higher flow of incomes and goods. One needs only to think of the distorted age structure of the population caused by the present high infant mortality rate, rising illiteracy, school dropouts, and severely malnourished children, as few examples of non-recoverable losses. Even where losses can be recovered, it will cost far more resources than if the recovery took place earlier. Examples of this include the cannibalization of industrial equipment and degradation of oil installations.

NOW WHAT? US POLICY AND THE FUTURE OF IRAQ

While the United States regularly denounces various countries as "rogue states", in the eyes of many countries it is becoming a rogue superpower. Even when the Ba'athist system was enjoying the friendship of both camps in the Cold War and the support of most Arab countries, it tried to build an image of itself as standing in the face of all, sacrificing blood in order to defend some exalted idea of the nation. This type of aggressive ideology was well suited to facing isolation. The humiliating defeat in the 1991 Gulf War has been portrayed as a victory in official Iraqi propaganda on the grounds that facing the combined might of more than 30 countries, led by the US, is in itself
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a victory; facing sanctions was similarly portrayed as another battle that Iraq had to wage in defense of Ba'athist principles. The inescapable message that the US and UN were sending via the sanctions was that the Iraqi people were being punished for the regime’s violations of international law. This misperception, which equates Saddam with Iraq, was of course more than welcomed by the Ba'athist regime; in point of fact, it replicated the internal mythology propagated by the regime.

An embargo generation that has been through the untold suffering of wars, tyranny and sanctions, has developed in conjunction with a corrupt and impoverished political culture following three decades of monolithic rule. The combination of all these volatile elements is likely to produce a selves in the absence of Saddam’s regime; an attitude of “We’ll come back, and the world will see!” If the comparison with Germany still holds, then one might use the “Versailles complex” as a good precedent, when a post-World War I Germany saw others squeezing it for compensation, repatriation and territory, while the people were left to enjoy their poverty and hunger under a Weimar Republic, which the world thought was a peaceful democratic system that would last forever.

Isolating Saddam’s regime was necessary, but isolating and punishing the Iraqi people by sanctions can have far-reaching and dangerous consequences. A persistent question is: what other options did the international community have to put pressure on the regime? The impasse in US policy lies in the fact that until recently it has put total faith in containment through sanctions. The recent change in US policy towards Iraq after 11 September has only exposed the limits of the superpower’s options in dealing with a Third World tyranny. Having decided that the sanctions were not going to force Saddam Hussein to abandon his intransigent position towards allowing UN inspectors back into Iraq, and that even if they were allowed in they would not be able to guarantee Iraq’s compliance with the relevant UN resolutions, US plans turned into war preparations against that country. The reason behind this pitiful lack of available options for the only superpower in the contemporary world lies in the fact that many nations have lost confidence in the US as an impartial broker in international conflicts. No one objects to the US administration’s pursuit of national goals, but US politicians continually give the impression that US national interests run contrary to other nations’ interests, hence their objection to and/or vetoing of an increasing number of international agreements, treaties and arrangements. Objecting to the establish-
ment of an international war crimes tribunal, a powerful means to
punish Saddam Hussein and his aides, only reinforced the perception
that America applies hypocritical double standards towards justice.
Similarly, insisting on Iraq's unequivocal compliance with UNSC
resolutions while defending Israel's violation of these same resolu-
tions deligitimizes many US stances in the Middle East.

The short-term alternative to sanctions could have included a
strategy of deterrence. An internationally approved set of principles
could have drawn red lines for Iraq, clearly defining actions that
would be considered threatening to its neighbors or to its own people.
But such a strategy must in the meantime also address Iraq's valid
security concerns. While crossing the red lines would be deterred, the
world must commit itself to defending Iraq's sovereignty and integrity.
As for the punishment of the regime's main figures who have
committed genocide or war crimes, this should have been left to the
Iraqi people and to those parties who have suffered from these crimes
– to be presented before the recently established international court
for war crimes.

However, as has been stated above, these measures are only short
term and cannot address the "Iraq question" adequately unless they
are integrated within a wider and more constructive vision of the
future of this country. It is at this point that the curse of Iraq's
geography comes back again. For almost its entire post-World War II
history, Iraq's achievements or setbacks have been perceived by the
major powers, its weaker neighbors, and certainly Israel, only in terms
of their implications for regional or international politics. Until the
1958 revolution, decisions on the level of Iraq's oil production were
taken with an eye to balancing, punishing, or checking any nationalist
tide in Iran. In addition, Iraq was a component of the Western Cold
War strategy of containment symbolized by the Baghdad Pact.
Following that and until the victory of Iran's Islamic revolution, the
major powers were interested in Iraq's development only as far as it
affected the balance of power between the Arab states and Israel. In
the 1980s, Iraq was needed by the states of the Gulf Cooperation
Council and the US to threaten the Iranian revolution. However, in
adopting these strategies, no one posed the simple question: "How
do we want Iraq to 'check the threat' of Iran, which is three times
larger in population and area, while in the meantime, posing no
threat to tiny Kuwait?"

Raising this question is important, because it shows that perceptions
of Iraq's place in the region should not focus merely on its balancing
role, but in terms of what brings stability and prosperity to its people.
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These need not be contradictory objectives if we genuinely believe that a prosperous and democratic society is less tempted to go to war. This is not to say that Iraqi regimes were innocent victims or pawns, but the way the world helped, or withheld help, has greatly contributed to inflating the megalomania of leaders who fancied a grandiose regional role for themselves, or to pushing them to take a defensive position. In all this, the concerns of the Iraqi people were never an issue to be reckoned with. As long as Iraq is treated only as a regional player, not as a society of human beings with dreams and aspirations, any path that Iraqis will choose for their future development will be viewed with suspicion or fear by this or that power. Reorienting Iraq's choices towards the "Fertile Crescent" (i.e., Syria, Lebanon and Jordan), which this chapter strongly supports as an economically and culturally sound project that can bring prosperity and stability, will only be seen by "strategists" as "destabilizing" the regional balance of power.

The direct bearing of international politics on the fate of Iraqis also lies in the way the sanctions are viewed, for it is no longer at issue whether it was the regime or the people that was weakened by the sanctions. The message of the West is that Iraq (as a polity, infrastructure and society) has been weakened and that is seen as fair, since Iraq will not now threaten Israel or its southern neighbors. "The price is worth it," we are told by former Secretary of State Albright.

However, this chapter has tried to show that the major threat is not the weapons of mass destruction. The potential for manufacturing them will always be there. Rather, it lies in the will to manufacture them and the temptation to use them. A embargo generation deprived of all other means to compensate for its lost opportunities may well fancy such ideas, and ordinary Iraqis, like many Third World citizens, have developed a counter-cynicism towards big slogans by "brethren Arabs", or the major powers. After all, the American "religion of democracy", as the French foreign minister once called it, has been used quite selectively. However, the French counter-religion of non-interference has also been instrumental in shielding brutal dictators!

NOTES

1. Much has been written on war, political and economic nationalism and delineating others as essential components of state and nation formation in Europe. For a classical study, see Karl W. Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1953). For a concise,
Revisiting Some Myths on Iraqi Exceptionalism


2. The ideological ramifications of Ba'athist politics go beyond the scope of this chapter. However, it is interesting to note that the romantic portrayal of the nation as destined to fight all others alone is a precondition for almost every racist and fascist ideology. In distinguishing delineating the correct us from the evil others, the stage is set for the claim to be leading others, by force if necessary, towards the correct path. Note, for example, the following passage in the speech of the founder and secretary general of the Ba'ath Party, Michel 'Aflaq, a few months after the Iraq attack on Iran: "The true and profound character of the battle fought by Ba'athist Iraq is revealed [as it faces] this alliance of the Christian West, Jewish Zionism, atheist communism, and Persian racism under the disguise of Islam" (Al-Thawra, 7 April 1981). Four months after the ceasefire in the 1991 Gulf War, Deputy Prime Minister Taha Yassin Ramadhan responded to a journalist's question about Iraq's relations with the USSR and China: "The Arab nation has no friends. And I mean exactly what I am saying... The mere fact that thirty countries with great powers among them have agreed to fight Iraq is a victory that the Arabs have achieved for the first time in their history" (Taha Yassin Ramadhan, *Al-Hadaif*, No. 1055, 2 June 1991).

3. The fact that Iraq's total sea territory is 924 sq. km, and the length of its coasts is only 15 km, while Iran's is 2,300 km has been emphasized in no less than ten speeches or letters by Saddam during the early days of the Iran–Iraq War (e.g. speech of 28.9.1980, press conference 10 November 1980, speech in the cabinet meeting of 24.12.1980, and interview with Der Spiegel, 1 June 1981). In her semi-official narrative of Saddam's politics, Christine Moss Helms makes a detailed reference to these speeches. See Christine Moss Helms, *Iraq: Eastern Flank of the Arab World* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1984), pp. 54–5. The author cites a particularly important letter sent by Saddam to the Kuwaiti daily al-Watan (17 September 1980) that summarizes the benefits of unity with Syria: "contiguous territory, complementary economies, internal strength in the face of external threats, and the need for sea outlets, especially in this oil era."

4. Three months before the invasion, an official Iraqi memorandum to the Kuwaiti government stated that: "The de facto situation, since the formation of our two states in this century, is that of two neighboring countries... that have not reached an agreement yet on the demarcation of their land and sea borders." The memorandum proceeds to lay the principles upon which Iraq aspires to demarcate the borders: "[in] respect of the sovereignty of each of us on our respective territory, and a firm and authentic mutual respect between us as states and brothers" (Iraq memorandum dated 30 April 1990, italics added). Iraq's memorandum to the Arab League (21 July 1990; i.e., ten days before the invasion) accepts demarcating the borders, but on the condition that Iraq is "in the position that it historically and factually deserves, and that enables it to defend national security in this region." This entails that "Iraq be given facilities of the kind that it had during the war with Iran." Iraq's self-styled triumph over
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Iran was seen as a sufficient reason for the former to acquire additional territorial concessions from other states, especially Kuwait. (The texts of both memoranda were published in Al-Thawra, 25 July 1990. All texts from Iraqi papers are the author's translation.)

5. A cynical scenario could be that of Saudi Arabia using Saddam Hussein's same argument in waging his war against Kuwait: cutting throats is a lesser evil than cutting revenues. Thus, Iraq's doubling of its exports can be viewed as such: ISFA 1 and 2, the two Iraqi pipelines passing through Saudi territory to the Red Sea would be shut down! We should remember that it was Saddam Hussein and the Saudis who initiated the practice of oil warfare, when they flooded the oil market in 1979 in order to bring revolutionary Iran to its knees.

Another scenario would simply involve Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and especially Iran insisting on the payment of Iraq's debts and war reparations, thus crippling Iraq's recovery for a long time.

6. A substantial increase in Iraq's oil production/export capacity will not only be worrying to its neighbors. Dr. Fadhil al-Chalabi, a leading authority on the political economy of oil, notes that: "Iraq's low cost oil threatens the huge US investments in high cost places inside the US, the Caspian Sea, West Africa, and the Gulf of Mexico. In 1998, when oil prices dropped below $10, US high cost production went down by 600,000 bd." See Iraqi File, January 2000/No.97, pp. 22-3.

That includes Syria, which exports limited quantities of oil, but the quality of its domestically produced oil has made her reliant on imports from other countries including Iran.

8. It should be asserted that this is not to suggest that Iraq should turn its back on its historic ties to its southern neighbors, but rather attempt to be a bridge between the Middle Orient and the Proche Orient. In order that the genuine and justifiable suspicions of Iraq's ambitions among Kuwaitis and other Gulf Arabs are appeased, Iraq should be very cautious in expounding any "integrating" schemes with its southern neighbors.


11. And in these cases, language is a political tool, the pejorative "heterogeneous" label reserved for countries like Iraq is replaced by such favorable terms as "melting pot."

12. On the other hand, the above analysis should not be treated as yet another version of historical determinism. Nor should it be confused with what
one might consider politically optimal or feasible. In other words, the fact that Iraqi Kurdistan has been politically and economically linked to Baghdad since the nineteenth century is no evidence of the non-viability of a Kurdish state. Alternatively, the fact that the willows of Mosul, or Basra had been bound within one country does not mean that history could not have taken another course. What we are trying to show is that domestic social interests and structures have intertwined to produce today's Iraq, whatever the British interests had been.


15. It should be stressed here that this statement in no way means that Iraq would have collapsed if it had not invaded Kuwait, nor that the Iraqi leadership had viewed Iraq's prospects as totally dim. A (mis)calculation that Iraq had gained a privileged regional position following the war with Iran, and an attempt at establishing Iraq as a secondary international player had in all probability motivated the Iraqi leadership to solve problems through means that it had thought would further enhance the country's position.


18. Phyllis Bennis, interview with Z magazine (July/August 1999).


22. A study carried out by the economic committee of the Iraqi Communist Party in 1976 found that the monthly income of a petty clerk in a state agency surpassed that of an average owner of 30 dunums of agricultural land (one dunum = 2,500 square meters).
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23. The comparison in this respect should be confined to Iraq, Jordan and Syria as most of the female workforce in the oil-rich Gulf countries is non-indigenous and includes women working in such jobs as domestic service.

24. In the late 1980s the regime's brutality coupled with the generous US wheat supplies to Iraq had a direct bearing on Iraqi agriculture. Taped cassettes captured by the rebellions of 1991 record the following threats by Kudistan's unchallenged governor and cousin of Saddam Hussein:

> By next summer there will be no more villages remaining that are spread out here and there throughout the region, but only camps...from now on I won't give the villagers flour, sugar, khorasan, water, or electricity as long as they continue living there....Why should I let them live like donkeys?... For the wheat? I don't want their wheat. We've been importing wheat for the past twenty years. Let's increase it to another five years....I don't want their agriculture. I don't want tomatoes; I don't want okra or cucumbers. (Human Rights Watch 1995: 285)

During this same period, Iraq was the major importer of US wheat, accounting for around 25 percent of its total exports.

25. Other indicators pertaining to the severe social crises of Iraq in the 1980s exist but comparable data from other countries are not available to the author. A semi-official report dealing with the housing problem is worth quoting here:

> According to the 1977 census, total housing units in Iraq numbered 1,471,000, inhabited by 1,835,000 families. 660,000 of these houses (45 percent) were built of mud, or were tents. The deficiency in houses was 1,024,000 units. By 1987, the housing deficit rose from 1,024,000 to 1,137,000. Thus, while the average persons per house in 1957 was 5.2, it rose against the trend all over the world, to 7.4 in 1987, compared to the 1990 average of 5.5 worldwide and 5.6 in the ESCWA region to which Iraq belongs. See Jumblati: Taqem, pp. 24, 140. The report admits that the reason behind this surprising rise is the acute housing crisis. See ECWA (UN Economic Commission for West Asia) Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region (Baghdad, October 1989).

26. Although it may be impossible to quantify this aspect, Iraq's haemorrhage of physicians, and highly qualified professionals began long before the sanctions. In 1980, Saddam Hussein ordered the expulsion of some 40 of the highest qualified specialists from the elite medical faculty at the University of Baghdad. This was followed by a wave of panic among many other physicians, who began fleeing or resigning from public services. An indicator of this was the ad published in Baghdad dailies on vacancies in the faculties of medicine. The requirements for a faculty member were the unthinkable B.S., Degree. In the US in California and Michigan there are entire communities of Iraqi physicians. In the UK, Iraqi physicians managed to place an Iraqi in the 60-member Council of Physicians. A member requires at least 300 votes to be elected to this body (personal information).
27. Assuming the accuracy of data pertaining to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE, one must bear in mind that many of the available services that are mentioned in the tables above (women participation in the workforce, doctors, etc.) relate to the non-indigenous population, which is very vulnerable depending on the political and economic atmosphere within the country.


35. Until 1996, it was widely known among Iraqis that, away from the Central Bank, Hussein Kamal and Uday Saddam Hussein had their own printing machines that produced their own Iraqi dinars. A peculiar consequence of this is that there are today two exchange rates for the Iraqi dinar: one for what Iraqis call the “Swiss dinar” (the old pre-1990 dinar), and the other for the new much cheaper dinar. The first dinar is only used in Iraqi Kurdistan and is worth around 900 times the other.


37. The significance of these figures lies in the fact that they are admissions by state-controlled agencies, and not in the actual income gap existing in Iraqi society. Given the high level of secrecy, corruption and parallel activities, one can safely assume that the actual ratios are several multiples of the stated ones. See Muhammed Kadhim al-Muhajir, *Al Fagr til ‘Iraq qaba wabt#: Haabil Khitaab* [Poverty in Iraq before and after the Gulf War] (New York: UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA, 1977).

38. By stability, I mean that its main structures and personalities have not witnessed a great deal of reshuffling to accommodate the above-mentioned changes.


40. The irony is that it was the US who tried to restrain France from pushing too hard on Germany. Today the two powers, it seems, have exchanged roles!
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