

## Pre-emptive War: The Case of Iraq

Eddie J. Girdner \*

*"We must try something new, out of self-interest...  
as revolutionaries of sorts..."*

*Victor Davis Hanson<sup>1</sup>*

*"The United States has adopted a new policy, a forward  
strategy of freedom in the Middle East."*

*George W. Bush*

*"All Done: Go Home."*

*Graffiti on the base of the statue of Saddam Hussein in Firdas Square*

### Abstract

*The George W. Bush Administration entered office with the neo-Wilsonian agenda of waging "democracy" in the Middle East in order to strengthen US global hegemony. The neoconservatives in the Pentagon exploited the 9/11 attack on New York to unleash US military might on the region. The doctrine of pre-emptive war was "altered" to that of preventive war and promulgated as official US national security doctrine in September 2002. The US "blitzkrieg," overthrew Saddam and occupied Iraq in only 26 days. The occupation and actions of the Coalition Provisional Authority, under Paul Bremer, resulted in the emergence of a strong insurgency in mid 2003. US forces engaged in urban guerrilla warfare, leading to serious doubts about the future of Iraq as a US-sponsored neo-liberal capitalist model for the Arab world. The US invasion and occupation of Iraq was at the same time a pre-emptive strike upon the European Union, South Asia and China, in a bid to control global energy resources vital to US economic competitors. The first pre-emptive war has now essentially been lost by the United*

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<sup>1</sup>Victor Davis Hanson, "Democracy in the Middle East," *The Weekly Standard*, Vol. 8, No. 6 (21 October, 2002). Hanson is Shifrin professor of military history at the United States Naval Academy.

*States, disrupted the Atlantic alliance and given rise to grave doubts about the future of the international order.*

## **Introduction**

The neo-Wilsonian "revolution," launched by the neoconservative unilateralists in the first Bush Administration, claimed as its purpose "ridding Saddam Hussein of weapons of mass destruction" and "bringing regime change" to Iraq. "Democratisation" in the greater Middle East was offered as another rationale for the war in late 2003 when US Administration claims about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq were proven false. The first "pre-emptive war" was hailed as a brilliant success after the US invasion and overthrow of Saddam Hussein in just 26 days with a "cost of 161 dead." An early estimate claimed 3400 Iraqi civilians died in this phase of the war. By October 2004, however, estimates of Iraqi civilians killed ranged from 17,000 to 100,000 or more, with some four times as many wounded. It appears now that up to 80 percent died from the US bombing.<sup>2</sup> "Wilsonianism with boots" had triumphed, it appeared, and victory was proclaimed by George W. Bush from the decks of the USS Abraham Lincoln off the Pacific Coast, on May 1, 2003.

Less than six months into the US-British occupation, however, an insurgency began to emerge and grew stronger. One year into the operation, the roads and cities of Iraq became ever more deadly for American forces as the resistance to American-British occupation matured into a large scale insurrection. US-British forces were forced to fight battles with local militias in the major cities. The United Nations was driven out of Iraq along with a number of humanitarian organisations in the summer of 2003 by massive car bombs. The US failed to consolidate control over significant areas of the country, particularly the Sunni Triangle west and north of Baghdad. The next six months led to increasing doubts about the future of Iraq and the ultimate result of the US-led invasion. The sweeping plans of the neoconservatives in Washington had bogged down beyond their greatest fears, putting the first test-case of pre-emptive war in grave peril. The US military could not be defeated on the ground; but America was failing to win the "hearts and minds" of the people and secure Iraq. Serious questions now cloud the future of Wilsonian millenarianism which the Bush White House has unleashed

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<sup>2</sup> Max Boot, "The New American Way of War," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (July/Aug. 2003), p. 44. Boot compared the US invasion to the German blitzkrieg in 1940, the US and Britain shattering Hitler's "gold standard of operational excellence" and "making fabled generals such as Erwin Rommel and Heinz Guderian seem positively incompetent by comparison." On civilian deaths see "Iraqi Victims of War: Fact Sheet," *Aljazeera.net*, 16 March 16, 2004; Les Roberts, et. al., "Mortality before and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: cluster sample survey," *The Lancet*, Vol. 364 (20 November, 2004), pp. 1857-64.

and pursued with almost religious zeal.<sup>3</sup> With the American presence on the Tigris and Euphrates, the crucial question is how long it will take for the American people to weary of the inordinate costs of the global crusade to wage democracy from the banks of the Potomac.

### **The Bush Doctrine:**

The George W. Bush doctrine of pre-emptive war, or more accurately preventive war, was announced in September 2002.<sup>4</sup> The US invasion and occupation of Iraq in March 2003 was the first test-case for the doctrine.<sup>5</sup> When the US was unable to obtain a UN Security Council resolution specifically authorising a military invasion in March 2003 the US and Great Britain launched the war. The "coalition of the willing" consisted mostly of small nations participating on a largely token basis. The war has been called illegal under the United Nations Charter by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, speaking in September 2004. By

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<sup>3</sup> Herbert P. Bix, "The Faith that Supports U.S. Violence," [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org), (1 September, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> "National Security Document," (September 2002). Useful background to the 2003 US-British invasion and occupation of Iraq can be found in Andrew Cockburn and Patrick Cockburn, *Saddam Hussein: An American Obsession*, London, Verso, 2002; Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq*, New York, Random House, 2002; Geoff Simons, *Targeting Iraq: Sanctions and Bombing in US Policy*, London: Saqi Books, 2002; Milan Rai, *War Plan Iraq: Ten Reasons Against War on Iraq*, London, Verso, 2002; Scott Ritter and William Rivers Pitt, *War On Iraq*, London, Profile Books, 2002; Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror*, New York, Free Press, 2004; Kenneth M. Pollack, "Next Stop Baghdad," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 2 (March/April 2002); Kenneth M. Pollack, "Securing the Gulf," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (July/August 2003) pp. 2-16; Fouad Ajami, "Iraq and the Arabs," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 1 (Jan./Feb. 2003); Kenneth M. Pollack, "A Last Chance to Stop Iraq," *New York Times* (21 Feb., 2003), p. A27. Former CIA analyst Kenneth M. Pollack was one of the strongest advocates of the US invasion, arguing that the US could easily overcome the opposition, "ensure the free and stable flow of oil from the region" and "stabilise the price of oil." The US, he argued, needed to keep everybody else out of the gulf region, gaining the ability to "influence events elsewhere" and keeping Saddam Hussein from developing nuclear weapons. A ground war would be "cheap" and would "make success almost certain." The military operation would be "straightforward." The US would "own" the country and "get to decide the composition and form of a future Iraqi government..." Simons argued that the long regime of UN/US sanctions against Iraq during the 1990s was criminal. Ritter and Pitt argued correctly that Saddam could not have many weapons left, as he had destroyed most of them after the 1991 Gulf War. Milan Rai made a case for the global peace movement to prevent the US-British invasion and occupation and a large number of Iraqi civilian casualties. Clarke stressed the overwhelming goal of the Bush White House to take out Saddam, with the September 11, 2001 attack on New York providing the green light.

<sup>5</sup> There is a legal distinction between "pre-emptive war" and "preventive war." Pre-emptive war is "waged in an attempt to repel or defeat an immanent offensive or invasion, or to gain a strategic advantage in an impending (usually unavoidable) war." In general, to justify a pre-emptive war, a state needs to show that the threat is (a) "clear and imminent," (b) "direct, that is, threatening ... in specific concrete ways," (c) "critical," likely to cause "unacceptable harm and danger" to "vital interests," and (d) "unmanageable," that is it cannot be "deterred or dealt with by other peaceful means." Preventive war is waged against a country that is merely a "potential challenge" and so might attack in future; "and is generally considered to violate international law." (<http://en.wikipedia.org>) The US National Security Document (Sept. 2002) lays out the Bush Doctrine on "pre-emptive war" in Section V. The document argues that deterrence as practiced in the cold war will not work against "terrorist enemies" who do not care if they die. It points out that the concept of pre-emptive war in international law has long held that states may take action when enemy forces "present an imminent danger of attack," such as "a visible mobilization of armies, navies, and air forces preparing to attack." The document then states that "we must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today's adversaries." This means that the US can attack another country "even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy's attack." In other words, the document simply redefines "pre-emptive war." The new definition is that of "preventive war." It then proceeds to refer to de-facto preventive war as "pre-emptive war." It seems clear that from a legal standpoint, Operation Iraqi Freedom" was a "preventive war," as the case cannot be made that an attack upon the United States by Iraq was clear and imminent, direct, critical, and unmanageable. The National Security Document, however, also stresses that other nations should not follow the US example. Other nations should not "use preemption as a pretext for aggression." Thus, the doctrinal concept of "pre-emptive war," in the Bush Doctrine, can be seen as giving the US the exclusive right to engage in de-facto preventive war. See Paul W. Schroeder, "Iraq: The Case of Pre-emptive War," *The American Conservative*, [http://www.amconmag.com/10\\_21/iraq.html](http://www.amconmag.com/10_21/iraq.html).

November 2004, after more than eighteen months, the US occupation of Iraq had failed to secure and gain de facto control of some areas, such as the Sunni Triangle. While President George W. Bush announced "mission accomplished" on May 1, 2003, events on the ground were soon to prove him wrong. Sovereignty was formally returned to an "interim Iraqi government" on June 28, 2004, by US Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Administrator Paul Bremer. It could not be seriously doubted, however, that the US continued to rule Iraq and that the US appointed government of Iyad Allawi remained in office only through US fire power. The de facto US occupation is likely to continue for many years. At a minimum the US seems determined to hold on to at least twelve newly established US military bases for the purpose of shoring up American power in the larger Middle East and Central Asian region. This effort grows more problematical as casualties mount, with the number of US soldiers killed well over 1600 by June 2005. Efforts were underway to increase the number of US troops in the country and to "retake" "no-go areas" outside US and Iraqi Government control. A major assault on insurgents in Fallujah was carried out in November 2004 using some 20,000 US and Iraqi troops. All indications are that securing Iraq as a base of US military operations and US corporate profits will prove very costly and may possibly be a greater burden than the American people are willing to sacrifice, reminiscent of the "Vietnam quagmire" in the 1960s. A "decade-long nightmare" has been predicted with the deaths of several thousand American soldiers as the US establishes itself as a permanent Gulf power.<sup>6</sup>

The first pre-emptive war has also had major repercussions for the US in terms of its relations with the rest of the world and significantly with its traditional European allies. In the view of the neocons, after the Cold War, "a global empire was essentially laid at the feet of the United States." The policy of deterrence was scrapped as a Cold War relic, in favour of "compellence" or the systematic use of force. The best "defence" was seen as "offence."<sup>7</sup> The future of pre-emptive war, or more accurately, preventive war, the strategy of the neocons in the Bush White House, is uncertain. The Bush Administration drew up a lengthy list of nations which are potential targets in future. At the top of the list are North Korea and Iran, designated by the Bush Administration as members of the "axis of evil."

This article argues that the United States has already lost the first pre-emptive war while gravely damaging its image around the world, particularly in the Middle East. The US presence in Iraq is likely to continue to destabilise the region. The notion of establishing functioning democracies across the Arab world from the outside need not be taken seriously as it is not only highly problematical,

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<sup>6</sup> Scott Ritter, "The Saddamist/Islamist Resistance Will Win," [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org), (24 July, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Jay Bookman, "The President's Real Goal In Iraq," [www.informationclearinghouse.info](http://www.informationclearinghouse.info), (29 Sept., 2002).

but directly contradictory to US "national security objectives." The invasion of Iraq was not a "war on terrorism." Predictably, "pre-emptive war" has encouraged many more nations to seek weapons of mass destruction, while it has fuelled the ranks of terrorist organizations in Iraq and around the globe. It is unlikely that the United States is willing to cut short its losses in Iraq for several years into the future, although the emerging failure of neocon foreign policy may deter the US from additional ventures in the immediate future. It is not clear if the US will seek to rejoin the global community as a law-abiding state or continue the unilateral pursuit of power through force, further endangering world peace. The pursuit of pre-emptive war has lowered the barriers to the use of force, globally, and set a precedent which gravely threatens the very future of the human species itself.

### **Sweet "Regime Change" on my mind:**

The first George W. Bush Administration was installed in Washington by the US Supreme Court<sup>8</sup> with "regime change" in Iraq at the very top of its agenda.<sup>9</sup> The neoconservatives called for the invasion and overthrow of a sovereign government, under the false pretexts that it possessed chemical and biological weapons, continued to pursue the development of nuclear weapons and had links with al-Qaeda.<sup>10</sup> After emphasising that the administration would not be bound by constraints of international law, the Bush Administration was able to accelerate its predetermined agenda of overthrowing the government of Saddam Hussein after the events of September 11, 2001.<sup>11</sup> A policy of "pre-emptive war" was announced in September 2002 as the official US strategic security doctrine.<sup>12</sup> It was debated at the highest levels in the US Government as to whether the US should first launch an attack on the Taliban government of Afghanistan or proceed at once against Iraq.

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<sup>8</sup>George W. Bush lost the popular vote in November 2000 by some 500,000 votes. The US Supreme Court's decision, 531 U.S. (2000), halted the disputed recount in Florida and allowed Bush to "win" when the Electoral College cast ballots. That is the presidential vote that actually counts. See Greg Palast, *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*, London, Plume, 2003, Chapter 1.

<sup>9</sup>On January 21, 2001, George W. Bush's first full day in office, CNN International aired a documentary, "The Unfinished War." Curiously, the program cleverly built up the case for a US invasion of Iraq, perhaps sending a strong suggestion from corporate America and signaling the media's eagerness to play an accommodating role in conditioning people for the event. Jason Leopold, "Wolfowitz Admits Iraq War Was Planned Two Days After 9/11," [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org), (2 June, 2003); "Former Insider Says Bush Planned Iraq Invasion from Beginning," *The New Standard*, <http://newstandardnews.net>, (2 February, 2004). Paul O'Neill, who was Bush's first treasury secretary, claimed that removing Saddam Hussein was discussed ten days after Bush took office and eight months before 9/11 in a Security Council meeting. President Bush reportedly said: "Go find me a way to do this."

<sup>10</sup>Paul Wolfowitz admitted that the alleged Iraqi WMD was decided upon as the justification for the war simply because it was the only issue the security bureaucracies could agree on.

<sup>11</sup>As early as 1963, the United States claimed the right to launch strikes against Cuba outside of international law, when Secretary of State Dean Acheson argued that no legal issues could arise when the prestige and authority of the United States were at stake. However, the doctrine of pre-emptive war was not raised to the level of official policy at the time.

<sup>12</sup>See "National Security Document," (Sept. 2002); Noam Chomsky and VK Ramachandran, "Iraq is a trial run," *Frontline India*, (2 April, 2003). Chomsky argues that the US is seeking to establish a "new norm" in international relations if Operation Iraqi Freedom is successful. That new norm is the right to launch "preventive war." Indeed, establishing the new norm seems well advanced. Few analysts bother to mention that the US attack on Iraq was clearly illegal.

The primary argument before the war in Iraq was that Saddam Hussein was a threat to his neighbours and the world because he possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD). It was seldom mentioned that the US was the major sponsor and source of Iraq's acquisition of such weapons in the 1980s. The US also attempted to find evidence that Saddam had links with al-Qaeda<sup>13</sup> and the continuous statements of administration officials, particularly Vice-President Dick Cheney, led some sixty-nine percent of the people in the US to believe this was true.<sup>14</sup> The US was the only country where a majority believed that Saddam had something to do with planning the attacks of September 11, 2001. The Bush Administration intentionally confounded the "war on terrorism" with overthrowing the government of Iraq, which was facilitated by the practice of US TV networks, such as Fox TV, of labelling the war in Iraq as a "war on terror."<sup>15</sup> In fact intelligence in both the US and Great Britain failed to discover direct evidence linking Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. Many intelligence officials also doubted the claims about WMD<sup>16</sup> but the Bush Administration argued for the absolute certainty of WMD in Iraq, as seen in the presentation of Secretary of State Colin Powell to the UN Security Council in February 2003, and repeated statements by

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<sup>13</sup> It appears that much of the false reporting about the alleged link between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda came from suspect evidence from the Information Collection Programme, an operation of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), run by Ahmed Chalabi. The INC supplied stories to the major western press and intelligence services. Much of this later turned out to be wrong. The INC reportedly received some 33 million US dollars from the US government between March 2000 and May 2003. See Douglas McCollam, "Ahmed Chalabi's List of Suckers, Columbia Journalism Review, Alternet, (12 July, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> A Washington Post poll showed that 69 percent of Americans thought it was at least likely that Saddam Hussein was involved in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Bush continued to link al-Qaeda to Saddam in almost every speech on Iraq. Vice President Cheney said it was "pretty well confirmed" that Mohamed Atta, who planned the attacks, met with a senior Iraqi intelligence official in Prague in April 2000. Evidence of this was never provided. The neo-conservative newspaper, The Weekly Standard, published an article which the author claimed was based on leaked classified information, a top secret US government memorandum, which the paper had obtained. The paper claimed that the document, which came from Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Douglas J. Feith, showed that "Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein had an operational relationship from the early 1990s to 2003 that involved logistical support for terrorist attacks, al-Qaeda training camps, safe haven in Iraq, and Iraqi financial support for al-Qaeda. Feith is a member of the neoconservative circle. Dick Cheney later cited this article as the "best source of information," on the alleged link between Iraq and al-Qaeda. Increasingly, the war in Iraq was labeled "the war on terror." Stephen F. Hayes, "The U.S. Government's secret memo detailing cooperation between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden," The Weekly Standard, (24 November, 2003); "Hussein Link to 9/11 Lingers in Many Minds," Washington Post, (6 Sept., 2003). The central figure in the link between Saddam and al-Qaeda was considered to be Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

<sup>15</sup> The neoconservatives continued to insist that the Iraq war was a "war on terror." They claimed that the war was necessary to prevent terrorists from getting their hands on WMD and "finding a home" in Iraq. In fact, it appears that the US invasion may have assisted the terrorists far more than Saddam. It was discovered in October 2004 that part of the dual use potentially nuclear related equipment, such as milling machines and electron beam welders, had been stolen from a facility near Baghdad. The terrorists have most certainly found a home in Iraq and have pursued their own efforts to develop crude chemical weapons. One group, the Al Abud network worked with local chemists to try to produce mustard gas, ricin and tabun. Another group, Jaish-e-Muhammad (Army of Muhammed), was reported to be trying to manufacture chemical-filled mortar rounds. Daniel McKivergan, "Was Iraq a diversion from the war on Terror? Bush and McCain remind us that the answer is: No," Weekly Standard, (6 October, 2004); Bob Drogin, "The Other Weapons Threat in Iraq," Los Angeles Times, (10 October, 2004). The links between Washington and al-Qaeda have been manifold since Osama bin-Laden was recruited as an American agent against the Soviets in Afghanistan. See "Michel Chossudovsky, "Links Between the Bush Administration and al-Qaeda," World Affairs, Vol. 8, No. 2 (April-June 2004), pp. 66-86.

<sup>16</sup> David Sirota and Christy Harvey, "They Knew Despite the Whitewash, we now know that the Bush administration was warned before the war that its Iraq claims were weak," In These Times, (3 August, 2004); Michael Kinsley, "Ours Not To Reason Why," Washington Post, (27 September, 2002), p. A23. The late British scientist, David Kelly, assessed the probability that Saddam had WMDs as thirty percent. Stephen Gardner, "Goodby 'Hot Preemption,'" Spiked Online, (6 August, 2003).

US Administration officials as well as British Prime Minister Tony Blair.<sup>17</sup> "We know he's got them," became practically the official mantra in the US and Great Britain.

The US had already moved quickly in the summer of 2002 to deploy troops and weapons to the Persian Gulf in preparation for the war, accelerating the build-up at a rapid rate after January 1, 2003.<sup>18</sup> Few could doubt that war was on tap. It was clear that the US and Great Britain were "hell-bent" on overthrowing Saddam and that deterring the neocons in the Pentagon would be extremely difficult, although governments on both sides of the Atlantic insisted that no decision had been taken about going to war. As arms inspectors in Iraq came up empty handed again and again, Washington remained vigilant in the face of threatening peace.

Urged on by Tony Blair, early in 2003, the Bush Administration launched an effort to secure a second UN Security Council resolution which would provide a green light for the war. UN Security Council Resolution 1441, passed on November 8, 2002, was not originally seen as authorising a US attack upon Iraq. Tremendous pressure was put on the other members of the Security Council and heated debates at the UN, particularly with France, attracted unprecedented global attention. These efforts failed, however, as France, Russia and Germany could not be convinced to authorise the US-British invasion of Iraq. The Bush and Blair governments forged ahead, dividing the European community into "old Europe," and "new Europe." Old Europe, countries such as France and Germany, refused to go along with the global superpower. "New Europe" included the former Communist states, such as Hungary and Poland, and right-wing regimes, such as Italy and Spain, which were

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<sup>17</sup>Iraq was required to submit a 12,000 page declaration on the destruction of its stock of weapons of mass destruction in early December 2002. Barton Gellman, "U.S. Suspects Al Qaeda Got Nerve Agent From Iraqis," *Washington Post*, (12 December, 2002), p. A 1. The claims made by Powell on February 5, 2003, many of them outdated, quickly unraveled. Powell claimed that Iraq attempted to buy Uranium yellow cake from Niger, that aluminum tubes found in Iraq were for use in nuclear centrifuges and that Iraq was using mobile bioweapons laboratories mounted on trucks. "Inspections will not work, Powell says," *Boston Globe* online, (22 January, 2003); Robert Fisk, "Powell's Presentation," 6 February, 2003, [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org). At the end of May, 2003, the CIA claimed that the US had discovered "Mobile Biological Warfare Agent Production Plants," one near Mosul and another at the al-Kindi Research, Testing, Development, and Engineering facility in Mosul. "Iraqi Mobile Biological Warfare Agent Production Plants," May 28, 2003, [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov). The US President declared, "We found the weapons of mass destruction." This CIA white paper began to unravel at once and appeared to have been in response to intense pressure to find the missing WMD. It was pointed out by Iraqi officials that the equipment was used to produce hydrogen for artillery weather balloons. The CIA claimed that this was just a "cover story." Doubters among the intelligence community pointed out the technical problems came from suspect evidence from the Information Collection Programme, an operation of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), run by Ahmed Chalabi. The INC supplied stories to the major western press and intelligence services. Much of this later turned out to be wrong. The INC reportedly received some 33 million US dollars from the US government between March 2000 and May 2003. See Douglas McCollam, "Ahmed Chalabi's List of Suckers," *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Alternet*, (12 July, 2004).

<sup>18</sup>Robert Burns, "U.S. Sending Iraq Battle Staff to Gulf," *Yahoo.com*, 7 Jan., 2003; Duncan Campbell and Richard Norton-Taylor, "Allies speed up deployment to Gulf," *The Guardian*, (13 Jan., 2003). <sup>18</sup>Robert Burns, "U.S. Sending Iraq Battle Staff to Gulf," *Yahoo.com*, 7 Jan., 2003; Duncan Campbell and Richard Norton-Taylor, "Allies speed up deployment to Gulf," *The Guardian*, (13 Jan., 2003).

willing to do the bidding of the United States in the face of massive public opposition to war. The Bush Administration, which lost the battle to keep the UN weapons inspectors from returning to Iraq, argued incorrectly that weapons inspections could never work and that time was running out. The massive build-up of war materiel and troops in the Persian Gulf states was pushed forward in preparation for "Operation Iraq Freedom," as the world looked on with grave apprehension.

### **Global Public Opinion and Democracy:**

The neoconservatives in the Pentagon preached the doctrine of "unleashing democracy" in the Middle East through "reconfiguration" of the region, while massive peace protests were organised around the globe. "What happens inside Iraq on the day Saddam Hussein is gone will reveal American intentions, capabilities, and morality," the neoconservatives suggested, not incorrectly. "Today, without the spectre of a global and nuclear Soviet Union to make 'regime change' difficult and distort elections, we are once again free to promote democracy in unlikely places."<sup>19</sup>

Those places did not include France and Germany, presumably, where democracy seemed to be working all too well for American tastes. Dubbed, "old Europe," by Rumsfeld, government policies here closely followed public opposition to a war on Iraq.<sup>20</sup> Nor did the promotion of democracy apply to Turkey, where 90 percent of the people opposed the war and the vote of the Turkish Parliament on March 1, turning down the stationing of US troops in Turkey, met with venomous anger and sharp threats from the banks of the Potomac.<sup>21</sup> "Washington would have been happier had the Turkish Parliament accepted the Ankara government's proposition for hosting US forces," Marc Grossman, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, stated. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld declared that the democratic act of the Turkish Parliament was "disgraceful." US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, told the press that "there is still a level of disappointment in the United States within the administration and within the Congress over the inability to get the vote on March 1... There is a lingering sense of disappointment that we have to make sure that we do nothing more to contribute to in the days and weeks ahead as we push for the supplemental [1 billion dollar funding for Turkey]."

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<sup>19</sup>Hanson, "Democracy in the Middle East

<sup>20</sup>Geir Moulson, "Rumsfeld Comment Sparks Angry Responses," AP Europe, (23 January, 2003). The anti-war stance of France and Germany was called a "problem" by Rumsfeld. "New Europe" included countries in Eastern Europe which supported the US-British war, despite overwhelming public opposition.

<sup>21</sup>The term "democracy," is used here in its generic meaning, as following the will of the people, as opposed to the doctrinal definition generally used by US officials. US officials, in general, consider democracy to mean rule by a class of elites who are expected to follow the current dictate of a neoliberal economic agenda and policies which serve the "national security interests of the United States." The US, of course, does promote democracy around the world, in the doctrinal sense.



Deputy Secretary of Defence, Paul Wolfowitz, viewed the parliamentary vote as "bad news" because the Turkish military was not "forceful" enough in "leading" the Government toward a positive result for the US. Further, he suggested a lack of "Muslim Solidarity" with the people of Iraq was a "general failure of the Turkish public." What "Turkey needs to do is look into its democratic soul," and proceed to "work with the Americans" in bringing "democracy for Muslims and Arabs." He suggested that "the whole economic package could have been something more substantial."<sup>22</sup>

In the wake of finding the Turkish "democratic soul" so wanting in its willingness to come up with aid for the American pre-emptive war against Iraq, Turkish officials were duly warned of the perilous shores of flirting with such democracy and that they would "pay a price" for going against the US war effort. Being oblivious to public opinion in Italy, Spain and Hungary, on the other hand, produced no "disappointment" in Washington; quite the contrary. Support for the war in these countries was accorded high honours by those about to "unleash democracy" on the Arab world. Perhaps democracy in the Middle East would make the neocons happy; democracy in Europe clearly had not.<sup>23</sup> George Orwell would have been amused.

Protests against the imminent war around the globe set a historical precedent. On February 15, 2003, some eight million marched. There were even 300,000 in the streets in Yemen and large demonstrations in Cairo and Amman.<sup>24</sup> A million marched against the war in London. Massive protests swelled the streets

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<sup>22</sup>Grossman Discusses Turkish Vote on U.S. Troops with Turkish TV," <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives>, (4 March, 2003); Noam Chomsky, "Turkey and the US War on Iraq," [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org), (3 April 2003). In the words of Chomsky, "Turkey taught the US a lesson in Democracy. That is regarded as criminal... I do not recall ever having seen such a demonstration of intense hatred for democracy on the part of elite opinion in the US (and to some extent Britain)."; "Powell Briefs Press on Iraq, Turkey En Route to Ankara," <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives>, (1 April, 2003); "Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz Interview with Cengiz Candar and Mehmet Ali Birand of CNN Turk," DOD News Briefing, <http://istanbul.usconsulate.gov/pressoff/1p0508.html>, (5 May, 2003). Neoconservative activists and groups include: American Enterprise Institute (AEI), Project for a New American Century (PNAC), Center for Security Policy (CSP), Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA), Defense Policy Board (DPB), and Freedom House (a neoconservative think tank). Sympathetic publications include The Weekly Standard, the Wall Street Journal, and Fox News. The neocons have been associated with the right-wing Likud Party in Israel. Prominent figures include John Bolton, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security; Richard Perle, Donald Rumsfeld, Lynne Cheney, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz. Many, such as former CIA officer Marc Reuel Gerech, want to cut US ties with Saudi Arabia totally. Founding members of the Project for a New American Century include: Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Jeb Bush, Zalmay Khalilzad, Elliot Abrams, Dan Quayle, Francis Fukuyama, Midge Decter, I. Lewis Libby, Donald Kagan, and Norman Podhoretz. Neocons in the Bush Administration include Wolfowitz; John Bolton, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security; Eliot Cohen, a member of Rumsfeld's Defense Policy Board; I. Lewis Libby, Chief of Staff of Vice President, Dick Cheney; Dov Zakheim, Undersecretary of Defense and Chief Financial Officer for the Pentagon; and Stephen Cambone, head of the Office of Programmeme, Analysis and Evaluation at the Defense Department.

<sup>23</sup>The neo-Wilsonian campaign launched pro-Israeli neocons on a campaign to "democratize" the Middle East. "Bush shares dream of Middle East Democracy," *Asia Times Online*, (28 Feb., 2003); Jay Bookman, "The President's real Goal In Iraq," [www.informationclearinghouse.info](http://www.informationclearinghouse.info), (29 September, 2002); Gabriel Kolko, "The Age of Unilateral War: Iraq, the United States and the End of the European Coalition," *Counterpunch*, (2 May, 2003).

<sup>24</sup>Calvin Woodward, "Protesters Massing Against the War on Iraq," *Associated Press*, 17 Jan., 2003; Tariq Ali, "Recolonizing Iraq," *New Left Review*, No. 21 (May-June 2003); Robert Fisk, "Arab Response to War," *The Independent*, (19 Feb., 2003).

of cities across the US. Public opinion polls found that most people in Europe believed that the major threat to peace came, not from Saddam, but from the US. The US President, "standing on principle," "shrugged off" reports that some 600 million around the world marched against the war. Democracy was again brushed aside in this case. "Evidently some in the world don't view Saddam as a risk to peace. I respectfully disagree," President Bush was quoted as saying; being incorrect, as future reports on the lack of WMD in Iraq were to prove.<sup>25</sup> Saddam Hussein and other Iraqi officials had, in fact, told the truth about not having weapons of mass destruction. But for Bush and Blair, there were no two ways about it. He had them and all who doubted were shouted down with righteous wrath from their lofty seats of power. Statements from Washington and London became increasingly belligerent as the run-up to the war continued. Saddam Hussein had "messed with Texas" and could not "outrun the long arm of the law" being laid down by the neocons.

### **Baghdad Bound:**

Unable to obtain a second resolution on Iraq from the UN Security Council, the neocons sent US tanks across the Kuwaiti border on the morning of March 20, 2003. The massive bombing of Baghdad, the so called "shock and awe" tactics, designed to produce panic and a quick surrender early in Operation Iraqi Freedom, continued night after night. The same B-52 bombers used to bomb Hanoi thirty-five years before took off from England with bombs bound for Baghdad. It was the most powerful nation on earth up against an embargo-ruined country with no navy, no air force, a rag-tag army, and no WMD since 1991. In fact, the US had invaded, not because Saddam was a threat, but precisely because he was not. Some CIA analysts had predicted it would be a quick and easy victory. Saddam Hussein had destroyed his chemical and biological weapons after the first gulf war, and lacked the capability to continue a nuclear weapons programme. Hundreds of cruise missiles were fired at Baghdad from US ships and planes<sup>26</sup> as US forces pushed through the desert arriving within the vicinity of Baghdad with little resistance. Supply lines were stretched so thin that some US soldiers were attacked and taken hostage. But the weakened Iraqi regime was quickly toppled. The feared Republican Guard put up stiff resistance at points, but Baghdad was easily taken on April 9, 2003. Most Iraqi troops simply melted away without a fight.

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<sup>25</sup>Steve Holland, "Bush Shrugs Off Global Antiwar Protests," Reuters, (18 Feb., 2003).

<sup>26</sup>Eddie J. Girdner, "Operation Iraqi Freedom: The Bush Doctrine and the Projection of US Power into the Middle East," Mainstream Weekly, Vol. 41, No. 35 (16 August, 2003), pp. 23-30.

The US President announced that major combat operations had ended on May 1, 2003 in a staged for TV appearance on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln.<sup>27</sup> In the midst of fervent triumphalism, no one seemed to suspect that perhaps the US forces had been pulled into a trap. US military officers settled down to celebrate their victory on plush divans and jovially sported big cigars in Saddam's largest palace on the banks of the Tigris. US boots were firmly planted in Baghdad.

Keeping with the spirit of "Honest Abe," presumably, the US military stage-managed the memorable scenes filmed for American TV of the statue of Saddam in Firdas Square in central Baghdad being toppled on April 9. The event was, in fact, faked for newsmen staying in the Palestine Hotel across the street, the statue being actually pulled down by American Marines with some 150 Iraqis gathered in the park. Members of Ahmed Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress (INC) militia were shown whacking the face of the statue with plastic sandals. The US Marines actually secured the square to protect the INC from other Iraqis, while presenting the demonstration as spontaneous. US Marines climbed onto the statue and wrapped the same American flag which had been flying at the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 around the face of Saddam.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed it appeared that the major fighting was indeed over in Iraq by May 1. "Coalition forces" had toppled the regime with surprisingly little resistance and the urban guerrilla warfare predicted by many critics had not materialised. Most of the regular Iraqi Army soldiers simply were captured or left the lines and went home. US forces encountered not a single whiff of poison gas, at least not from the Iraqis. The real war, which Saddam had prepared in case of US occupation, was to emerge one year later.

### **Post-War Spin: "Stuff Happens."**

The US occupation, initially dubbed the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), was established under retired army General Jay Garner. When Garner was fired a couple of months later, the title was quickly changed to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and transferred to a new administrator, Paul Bremer.<sup>29</sup> The US CPA Headquarters was set up in Saddam's Republican Palace in Baghdad, which was seized for the US embassy in the country, now the largest US embassy in the world. Baghdad suffered massive

<sup>27</sup>David Gun, "Bush's Top Gun Photo-Op," *The Nation*, (2 May, 2003). Only 128 Americans died in combat in the initial phase of the war. Once again, US officials pointed out that they would not do body counts of Iraqis who died.

<sup>28</sup>The World War II image of the US Marines raising the flag over Iwo Jima was also faked. Ted Rall, "War on Iraq: How We Lost the Victory," *Alternet*, (16 April, 2003).

<sup>29</sup>Daren DeYoung, "U.S. Sped Bremer to Iraq Post," *Washington Post*, (24 May, 2003), p. A1.

structural damage and coalition authorities tolerated and even encouraged looting. Claims about WMD being everywhere quickly began to evaporate. The US and international press, which had mostly been "embedded" during the war, remained largely on board, nevertheless, positive to the results of the operation and anticipating a new "free Iraq" with a flourishing Iraqi press and oil revenues and profits in the hands of US companies. The beginning of a new era of growth and prosperity was seen, first under US occupation and then under a sovereign and democratic Iraq. While analysts laid out plans detailing how to make Iraq "democratic," others, more cautiously, waited for the emergence of an "anti-colonial war."<sup>30</sup>

It appears that little post-war planning was done by the Bush Administration, anticipating a "cake walk." There was no "exit strategy,"<sup>31</sup> perhaps because there was to be no exit, at least not in the foreseeable future. The US had no intention of leaving after setting up extensive military bases. Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, had scaled back the number troops asked for by the US military, particularly General Eric Shinseki, who reportedly called for 400,000 or more troops. Rumsfeld called Shinseki's estimate "wildly off the mark" and cut the number of troops deployed to some one-half of this. Shinseki was later forced into retirement. Former Army Secretary Thomas White concurred with Shinseki, coming into conflict with Rumsfeld.<sup>32</sup> The neocons anticipated that the occupying forces could be scaled back to some 50,000 shortly after the war. Others, more prudently, predicted it would be necessary to keep a large US occupation force in place for years.

Once Baghdad fell, there was massive looting of historical libraries, museums, and even ammunition dumps. Some 380 tons of explosives disappeared from the al-Qaqaa military compound, near Baghdad, apparently after the Americans had arrived and viewed the stockpiles. Every government ministry except the Ministry of Oil was sacked and burned. Anarchy prevailed as American troops were sent into the streets to take over police and security duties, resulting in a large number of civilian casualties. Entire families were shot in their cars by edgy American soldiers at check points. When asked about the looting, the US Defence Secretary said that people were simply enjoying their new found freedom and "stuff happens." Paul Bremer was later to admit in October 2004, however, that the US

<sup>30</sup> Adeed Dawisha and Karen Dawisha, "How to Build a Democratic Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 3 (May/June, 2003); Robert Fisk, "Anti-Colonial War," [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org), (17 April, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> Ruth Rosen, "What's the Exit Strategy?" *San Francisco Chronicle*, (10 July, 2003). Colin Powell clashed with the neocons on many fronts. A criterion for military intervention for Powell was a clear exit strategy.

<sup>32</sup> Dave Moniz, "Ex-Army boss: Pentagon won't admit reality in Iraq," *USA Today*, (3 June, 2003). Meanwhile, not all the "coalition of the willing" was willing to pay the bill. The US agreed to pick up the tab for "peacekeeping troops" from Poland, Ukraine, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic. The cost of the war appears to have exceeded \$8 billion per month for the first 18 months. Paul Richter, "U.S. Enlists More Countries in Iraq at Taxpayer Expense," *Los Angeles Times*, (22 June, 2003).

paid a heavy price for not sending an adequate number of troops to control the looting and secure the country.

Early on, the neocons in the Pentagon, led by Rumsfeld, quarrelled with Secretary of State, Colin Powell, battling for unilateral control of the post-war occupation, against the US State Department, the United Nations and British Prime Minister, Tony Blair. Reports suggested that the neocons considered the State Department officials, who had long experience in the Arab world, as "too pro-Arab" and wished to place members of Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress in key positions. A pro-Israeli Likud Party bias was seen in these Pentagon tactics. Rumsfeld insisted that relief and aid work come under Jay Garner, the coordinator of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), reporting to the Chief of US Central Command, General Tommy Franks. Powell asked that the US relief work be put under the US Agency for International Development (USAID), attached to the State Department. Aid groups, on the other hand, called for the relief operations to be directed by the UN. All this reflected the Pentagon's anti-UN position, which was also challenged by Tony Blair and the European Union. France rejected having the UN subordinated under the US occupation authority. But the neocons in the Pentagon insisted upon complete control of the operation.<sup>33</sup>

After Paul Bremer arrived to head the CPA, he immediately disbanded the Iraqi Army, adding some 400,000 to the ranks of the unemployed, and placed a ban on anyone who had been associated with the Baathist party serving in the new Administration and the security forces.<sup>34</sup> These actions immediately brought large crowds of angry Iraqis into the streets to demonstrate against the US occupation.<sup>35</sup> Unemployment was to continue at some 60 to 70 percent into February 2005. With former Baathists banned, it was not clear where the needed expertise to administer the country would be found. It also meant that the only security force to fall back upon was that of American troops, who had been told they would be going home quickly, once Saddam was overthrown. Instead, inexperienced American troops were sent onto the streets and roads around the capital on daily patrols which made them easy targets, sitting ducks, for rocket propelled grenade (RPG), improvised explosive device (IED), vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), or car

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<sup>33</sup> Jim Lobe, "Who Will Rule Iraq," *Alternet*, (7 April, 2003); Erik Gustafson, "Congress to Pentagon: Iraq Is All Yours," *Alternet*, (16 April, 2003).

<sup>34</sup> Jim Krane, "Many Baathists Banned From Iraq Gov't," *Associated Press*, (16 May, 2003). This included up to 30,000 Baath Party officials who had been "able administrators." The US Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance claimed to be "putting a stake in the heart of Saddam Hussein." In fact, de-Baathification was later seen as a serious mistake which prevented establishing a functioning administration in a reasonable time.

<sup>35</sup> "US abolishes former Iraq army, assurances given on postwar contracts," *Agence France Presse*, (24 May, 2003); Kareem Fahim, "The New Man in Baghdad," *The Village Voice*, (18 June, 2003). "US abolishes former Iraq army, assurances given on postwar contracts," *Agence France Presse*, (24 May, 2003); Kareem.

bomb), and mortar attacks. Saddam had ensured that the country was awash with arms and explosives. The American soldiers' tours of duty, some forty percent of them reservists, were extended by several months, creating a "back-door military draft." Casualties mounted, both American and Iraqi civilians dying in increasing numbers. The Iraqi resistance quickly perfected the method of using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) planted along the roads to blow up American convoys, killing and wounding soldiers almost daily, in trucks and Humvees. Casualty figures were swelling. In addition large car and truck bombs (VBIEDS) continued to be exploded in the centres of cities, even near the Green Zone in Baghdad, creating chaos and disrupting life for Iraqi citizens. Those with the means, simply left the country hoping normalcy would soon return.

The oil pipelines were continuously blown up, the line to Ceyhan in Turkey being exploded some thirty-seven times in twelve months. Oil terminals in the south were attacked at least ten times. The oil industry that once had "55,000 well-trained and highly disciplined technocrats" fell into a state of catastrophe. Two million barrels of oil a day was being lost to the world oil market<sup>36</sup> with at least 110 attacks on oil pipelines in the first 18 months of the US presence.

### **Occupation and "Appointocracy"**

Bremer moved forward to appoint a 25 member Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) on July 13, 2003 with a "nine-member presidency" which was intended to stay in office until national elections could be held.<sup>37</sup> Meant to be representative, the IGC included 13 Shias, 6 Sunnis, 4 Kurds, 1 Turkman and 1 Assyrian. Several members, however, were former exiles, lacking a popular political base in the country. UN Security Council Resolution 1483 was passed on July 17, 2003, calling for a UN presence in Iraq, a clear timetable for the restoration of sovereignty, and specific steps for ending the US military occupation. The US needed the resolution to legitimize the US-British occupation, establish legal control of oil sales, and put into place sweeping measures to privatize the Iraqi

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<sup>36</sup> Fahim, "The New Man in Baghdad," *The Village Voice*, (18 June, 2003). Youssef Ibrahim, "Iraq's Oil," [www.znet.org](http://www.znet.org), (6 October, 2004).

<sup>37</sup> The nine members were: Ahmad Chalabi, Founder and head of the Iraqi National Congress; Jalal Talabani, Secretary General of the Union of Kurdistan; Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq; Masood Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party; Ebrahim Jafari Al Eshaiker, the main spokesman of the Islamic Da'wah Party; Seyyid Muhammad Bahr ul-Uloom, a Shiite clergyman; Adnan Pachachi, President of the Iraqi Independent Grouping; Ayad Allawi, Secretary General of the Iraqi National Accord; and Mohsen Abdul Hameed, Secretary General of the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP). Originally the interim government was to have been chosen by a national conference of 300 Iraqis from a range of groups. The Iraqi National Council would in turn nominate Iraqis to serve in senior positions in ministries. A convention was planned which would work out guidelines for a national constitution to be approved in a national referendum. John Daniszewski, et. al., "U.S. Increases Role in Picking Iraqi Leaders," *Los Angeles Times*, (2 June, 2003)

economy.

But the lack of security continued to increase throughout the summer of 2003, as American companies began "reconstruction" operations on profit-guaranteed "no-bid" contracts.<sup>38</sup> US companies even received contracts to prepare the blueprint for a future "free-market Iraq" which would serve as a neoliberal model for the entire Middle East. There was stiff resistance to the occupation forces even at this time, but the problem was portrayed by coalition authorities as merely a mopping up operation to rid the country of "Saddam loyalists," "former Baathist dead-enders," and "foreign terrorists." These holdouts had not yet gained the status of "insurgents." As freedom increased, and the coalition succeeded, the American party line ran, attacks would increase up until the time sovereignty was returned to Iraq... and maybe after that too. The media banter that the better things got, the worse they were going to be (because it would make the Saddam loyalists unhappy), but, never mind, resistance would be quelled in a relatively short period of time, was somehow not quite convincing.

The press largely went along with this image of "staying the course." CPA functionaries conducted up-beat press briefings to ensure journalists of the progress being made. The picture on the ground told a considerably different story. By mid-2004, Bush administration officials could no longer pretend that the "good life" the occupation had promised was what they were actually "living today."

### **The "Untidy Freedom":**

By the spring of 2003, the coalition, primarily the US and Great Britain, began to experience the beginnings of a more widespread insurgency in Baghdad and major cities around the country, such as Najaf and Fallujah. Bush's response to the threat of a wider insurgency on July 2, 2003, was "Bring them on." "Freedom's untidy," Rumsfeld added. A poll in Iraq showed that only 36 percent of Iraqis thought that the US would help the country, only 23 percent said they would like to model their new government on the US, some 66 percent wanted the US to leave in a year or less, and 55 percent gave a negative rating to the US military in dealing with Iraqi citizens. The poll showed that Iraqis wanted the help of their neighbours, not that of the US.<sup>39</sup> The British, presumably forgetting their history, attempted to distance themselves from the growing brutality of the American occupation. They

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<sup>38</sup> Kenny Bruno and Jim Valette, "Cheney and Halliburton: Go Where the Oil Is," *Multinational Monitor*, (May 2001); Jason Leopold, "Defense Dept. Secretly Tapped Halliburton Unit to Operate Iraq's Oil Industry in November," [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org), (13 May, 2003); Josua Kurlantzick, "Iraq Reconstruction Spells Opportunity," *Entrepreneur.com*, (14 April, 2003).

<sup>39</sup> Carol Brightman, "It Wasn't Supposed to be Like This," *Alternet*, (14 July, 2003); James Zogby, "What Iraqis Think About the Occupation," *Alternet*, (27 October, 2003).

attempted to give the appearance of occupying a lofty plateau and claimed more friendly terms with Iraqis in the street in their Basra sphere of occupation.

Then a series of catastrophic car and truck bombings during the summer of 2003 gave the lie to CPA and US Administration assurances that they were gaining ground in improving security. The Jordanian Embassy was bombed on August 7, followed by the United Nations headquarters, which was destroyed on August 19, killing UN Representative Sergio Vieira de Mello and 23 UN staff. This was a major blow to the US, as the UN was to establish its presence in the country as a symbol of international presence and help provide a fig leaf of international legitimacy to the US-British occupation. The Red Cross building in Baghdad was car-bombed on October 27 and the insurgents succeeded in driving all major aid agencies out of the country by the end of 2003.<sup>40</sup> On October 26, an American colonel was killed in an attack on the Al-Rashid Hotel, where Paul Wolfowitz was also staying. The attack wounded 18, including several US military personnel, coming from an artillery rocket launcher in the park across the street from the hotel. The Al-Rashid, Iraqi state property, was seized by the Americans during the war and used to house CPA and US military personnel. A Black Hawk helicopter had just been shot down with an RPG north of Baghdad. The Iraqi occupation was quickly turning into the larger insurgency that many had warned about and would only grow stronger through 2004. Local Shia and Sunni militias were about to begin major battles with US forces in deadly urban guerrilla warfare.

### **The Insurgency**

US CPA authorities also encountered difficulties in controlling the "perception" getting out to the world. In particular, the US had a problem with Arab stations like al-Jazeera, al-Arabia, and Abu Dhabi TV. Tension mounted to the point of attacks on journalists in Iraq who were not putting the proper spin on the news desired by Bremer.<sup>41</sup>

The US spent \$62 million to set up its own TV station, "al-Hurra" (the free one), by all accounts a predictably dismal affair.

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<sup>40</sup>Slobodan Lekic, "U.N. and Aid Groups Pull Out of Baghdad," AP, (30 October, 2003). US Administration officials stated that the security situation in Iraq was steadily improving. Medecins Sans Frontiers announced they were pulling out the same day.

<sup>41</sup>Michael Wolff of the New York Magazine was attacked by a civilian employee of the Pentagon for questioning the usefulness of the military and CPA briefings. Fox TV attacked Wolff for "lack of patriotism" and right-wing radio host Rush Limbaugh organized a campaign of hate mail against the reporter. The question asked was: "Why are we here? Why should we stay? What's the value of what we're learning at this million dollar press center?" Press freedom took hits in the war from the beginning. Peter



In the summer of 2003 the US was warned by the Israelis of their failure to secure the country and that they were in danger of losing the war unless they took drastic action and closed the border with Iran; the situation could become catastrophic. The infiltration of "foreign elements" would destabilise the country and the Americans would lose control.

Israel reacted by sending its own intelligence operatives into Iraq, particularly into the Kurdish areas of the north to protect what they perceived as a threat to their own interests. The Israelis reportedly began training Kurdish commando units to carry out secret operations, including assassinations in Iraq and surrounding countries.<sup>42</sup> American soldiers, facing the prospect of urban guerrilla warfare in Iraqi cities, were sent to Israel to be trained by the Israelis. They brought back the Israeli "rules of engagement," reportedly turned over to the Americans on the orders of Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon.<sup>43</sup> The US, however, failed to heed the advice of the Israelis to close the borders with Iran.

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Arnett, who had been a CNN star reporter in the first Gulf War, was fired from NBC at the beginning of the war for granting an interview with Iraqi TV. Early in the war, the Pentagon asked Al-Jazeera to remove its reporters from Baghdad. There was pressure on reporters to become "embeds" (600 reporters including 150 foreign did). The independents or "unilaterals" were at risk of being shot. By June 15, fifteen media people had died and two were missing. Some claimed that members of the press had been targeted by the US military. On April 8, 2003, three war correspondents were killed at the Palestine Hotel. An American tank fired a shell into the 15th floor and a cameraman for Al-Jazeera was killed by the US bombing of the channel's office in Baghdad. French TV channel, France 3, filmed the tank turret swiveling, aiming and firing. American soldiers fired on the offices of Abu Dhabi TV in Baghdad. In the US, Clear Channel radio group organized pro-war rallies through their stations. Philip Knightley, "Turning The Tanks On The Reporters," *The Observer*, (15 June, 2003). In Sept. 2003, the interim Iraqi National Council threatened the press, aiming at al-Jazeera and al-Arabia, warning that Iraqi or foreign press and TV news organizations could be shut down for advocating the return of the Baath Party or issuing any statements that represented the Baath directly or indirectly. The restrictions were meant to prevent Iraqis from hearing Saddam's voice (as stations had broadcast Saddam's tapes). Some 106 newspapers emerged in Baghdad after the war. The restrictions were approved by Bremer's legal advisors who drew up the censorship rules. Fisk pointed out that even reporting deaths from an American missile could be interpreted as "incitement to violence." Robert Fisk, "Against the Press," *New Zealand Herald*, (24 Sept., 2003). Al-Jazeera TV was forced to answer a series of questions in 24 hours as demanded from Bremer's office. Meanwhile, the television and radio stations in Baghdad were operated by a private American company, SAIC. The 357 journalists working for the American stations complained of censorship and went on strike twice for more pay. The stations gave news that was a "miserable affair." Robert Fisk, "Iraq's Press," [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org), 23 November, 2003. Al Hawza, a radical Shiite weekly, which spoke for Muqtada al-Sadr, was closed down for 60 days in March 2004. American soldiers tightened chains around the office door. Iraqis gathered to protest this action and shouted "No, no, America" and "Where is Democracy now?" Bremer signed the order to close down the paper, among others. Jeffrey Gettleman, "G.I.'s padlock Baghdad newspaper," *New York Times*, (29 March, 2004). In August 2004, the editor of al-Basaer, Dr. Muthana Harith al-Dhari, was arrested as he was coming from an interview with the Lebanese Broadcasting Company. He was media officer for the Association of Muslim Scholars, a Sunni group. "US Forces arrest leading Iraqi editor," *Aljazeera.Net*, 2 August, 2004. Generally, American journalism was caught up in the ideology of "American exceptionalism" and relied upon official sources of information. Embedding reporters, except in rare cases, served the needs of the US Administration and the US military. Robert Jensen, "The Failure of US Journalism," *Aljazeera.Net*, March 15, 2004. Dima Taareq Tahboub, "The War on Al-Jazeera," *The Guardian*, 6 Oct., 2003. Dima's husband was killed when the US bombed Al-Jazeera's office in Baghdad. The station was bombed because it reported the suffering of the common people in Iraq, according to the article.

<sup>42</sup>Seymour M. Hersh, "Plan B," *The New Yorker*, (28 June, 2004).

<sup>43</sup>"Submit or Die: The Siege of Fallujah and Beyond," [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org), (14 April, 2004).

The US clearly had a huge security problem. Private security firms, such as Blackwater Security Systems, used mercenaries to expand their services.<sup>44</sup> The US was struggling to secure the country sufficiently to allow construction efforts to get underway, restore adequate water and electrical power services, and simply get government employees to work and back home safely.<sup>45</sup> This meant that in urban areas even those who were amenable to tolerating the US occupation began to chafe under the problems of living without basic utilities, as well as the treacherous lack of security. With attacks picking up during the holy month of Ramadan in November 2003, a US Chinook helicopter was shot down killing 15 US soldiers and wounding 21.<sup>46</sup> Life was intolerable, except perhaps for those in Saddam's former palaces.

### **Democratisation:**

With things quickly breaking down on the ground, and the search for WMD virtually abandoned, the Bush Administration shifted gear to focus upon the "democratisation of Iraq" and the greater Middle East, in early November, 2003. This marked the beginning of efforts to convince American voters in the coming 2004 presidential election of the success and broad vision of American foreign policy in the Middle East.<sup>47</sup> On November 6, President Bush spoke about a new US policy to initiate democracy in the Middle East, claiming that depriving the region of the "global wave of democracy" would be "cultural condescension," that Islam was fully consistent with democratic rule, and that "sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe, because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense

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<sup>44</sup>Brendon O'Neill, "Outsourcing the Occupation," Spiked on Line, Posted on Alternet on 20 April, 2004. At least 20,000 soldiers for hire were operating in Iraq. The International Institute for Strategic Studies in London estimated that 500,000 troops were needed to stabilise Iraq. Ray McGovern, "More Troops Later," TomPaine.com, Posted on Alternet, (29 Sept., 2004).

<sup>45</sup>T. Christian Miller, "Iraq Power Grid Shows U.S. Flaws," Los Angeles Times, (12 Sept., 2004). Instead of using Iraqi personnel to restore the existing system, the emphasis was on upgrading with new equipment from Bechtel, Siemens and General Electric. This was much slower than under Saddam.

<sup>46</sup>Tini Tran, "Chopper Shot down in Iraq, killing 15 GIs," AP, (2 Nov., 2003). By February 2005, US forces had lost at least 33 helicopters in Iraq, some 20 of them shot down.

<sup>47</sup>The speech was delivered at the US Chamber of Commerce on the twentieth Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy. The NED was set up in the early 1980s after negative revelations about the US CIA in the 1970s.

Some previous activities of the CIA were shifted to the NED through which US government funds are secretly given to organizations such as the Center for International Private Enterprise, which distribute them around the world to support centrist and rightist labor and political organizations, especially during elections. They shore up the needs of US business and the government while claiming to encourage "pluralism." In short, the organization manipulates elections to get right-wing groups elected. Bush stated: "I appreciate the bipartisan, the nonpartisan spirit of the National Endowment for Democracy." Nonpartisan, however, it is not. See William Blum, *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*, London, Zed, 2002, Chapter 19.

of liberty. "Bush used the occasion to warn Iran, even though its President Mohamad Khatami had been democratically elected. He also warned Syria, where, he said, lack of freedom had "left a legacy of torture, oppression, misery, and ruin." A "free Iraq" was to be the model for the region. Others, more accurately, pointed out that the West had never actually "excused and accommodated" lack of freedom in the Middle East. Rather, it was the West that had created it and supported it for sixty years. When freedom threatened to break out, such in Iran in the early 1950s, the West restored the Shah to power.<sup>48</sup> In fact, military rule, under the auspices of the US was soon to be clamped on Iraq under the government of interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi in the summer of 2004. The US, however, was just about to be embarrassed by another problem.

### **Gitmoisation:**

With the increase in insurgent activity in mid-2003, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld reportedly ordered a "special access programmeme" to be put into place in which large numbers of ordinary Iraqis were arrested and incarcerated. The model for the operation was the war in Afghanistan, in which suspected members of al-Qaeda were captured by US forces and flown to the secretive US prison, Camp X-Ray, in Guantanamo (Gitmo) Bay, Cuba. The prison at Gitmo was a legal black hole where prisoners were classified as "illegal combatants" and held in legal limbo without access to lawyers and the right of habeas corpus. Major General Geoffrey Miller, the officer in charge of the operation at Guantanamo, was transferred to Iraq to set up the programmes at Abu Ghraib, Umm Qasr and other prison facilities. "Operation Copper Green" was put into play, which led to the physical coercion and sexual humiliation of Iraqi prisoners in order to gain intelligence about the growing insurgency. These secret operations were concealed from the American public, but the Iraqis knew them well.

The story broke in April of 2004, with pictures of Iraqi prisoners being tortured by American soldiers appearing in the press around the world. Private firms, such as CACI International and Titan Corp, were involved in the questioning of the prisoners in addition to Army intelligence and counter intelligence operations personnel.<sup>49</sup> The quality of intelligence obtained by the US military from torture was not of high quality, but the intimidation was meant to also send messages to potential insurgents outside the prisons of the dire fate of those captured. US forces were operating other secret prisons in Iraq, where torture was reportedly authorised

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<sup>48</sup>"Bush Demands Mid-East democracy," news.bbc.co.uk, 6 November 2003; "Middle East Democracy," Online Newshour, (7 November, 2003); Robert Fisk, "How We Denied Democracy to the Middle East," The Independent, (8 November, 2003).

<sup>49</sup> See the series of articles in The New Yorker by Seymour M. Hersh: "The Battle between Donald Rumsfeld and the Pentagon," (17 April, 2003); "Chain of Command," (May 17, 2004); "The Gray Zone: How a Secret Pentagon Programmeme Came to Abu Ghraib," (24 May, 2004); and "Plan B," (28 June, 2004).

by top Pentagon officials. These practices, particularly the alleged sexual abuse of women, led to an investigation in the US Congress, the results of which were quickly hushed up and the issue essentially disappeared from the mainstream press. The US military instituted heavy handed damage control, carrying out a few token courts-martial, while expediting administrative measures, such as discharges and transfers of personnel to dispense with most cases.<sup>50</sup>

Seymour Hersh has shown that this damaging scandal resulted from a CIA system that was put into place at the highest level in the Pentagon. The exposure of the abuses led to the release of thousands of Iraqi prisoners, over the next few months. Most, it seems, were completely innocent. Most of the evidence which US officials feared would emerge seems to have been buried and quickly disappeared from the media. Nevertheless, the security situation on the ground in Iraq only grew worse.<sup>51</sup> A similar scandal of British abuse of prisoners in Iraq was revealed in January 2005.

### **The New Iraq: Handover and "no-go areas"**

On March 1, 2004, four American civilians working for Blackwater Security, a US firm, were killed and hanged from a bridge near Fallujah in the Sunni Triangle. The US military promised to find those guilty and bring them to justice, along with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian terrorist thought to be a mastermind of the resistance and said to be hiding within the city. Indiscriminate artillery attacks were launched by the US Marines, along with air strikes. House to house searches were carried out resulting in mass arrests, with plastic restraints being used to bind prisoners' hands. US Marine snipers reportedly took up positions in the minarets of a local mosque and shot a number of innocent residents. These actions became a further rallying cry for the insurgency. US forces were first ordered to attack the city, then after a few days were ordered to pull back, turning the city over to the Fallujah Brigade, reportedly to avoid a blood-bath.

The Fallujah Brigade was made up of 1600 former members of Saddam's

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<sup>50</sup>It has been reported that while some in the lower ranks of the US military were made scapegoats, at least two generals were in line for promotion for their work in the Abu Ghraib prison where torture was used and the same private corporations involved have been awarded huge new contracts from the US Government. "Pentagon Rewards Generals, Corporations Tied to Abu Ghraib Scandal," *The New Standard*, (19 October, 2004).

<sup>51</sup>Stan Goff and Derek Seldman, "Bring the Troops Home Now," *Left Hook*, [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org), (11 Nov., 2003). The morale of the soldiers in many cases seems to have hit rock bottom.

special security forces and former members of Saddam's Republican Guard. Some 800 residents were killed in the spring assault, the majority reportedly women and children, but a US military spokesman claimed that 95 percent were military-aged males. The attempt to reach a political solution by installing the Fallujah Brigade seemed to work for about a month. The force was equipped and paid by the US Marines but it became clear that many of those on the payroll were actually working for the insurgents, while the manufacture of car bombs continued inside the city. In September 2004, the brigade was disbanded, the US admitting that its establishment had been a fiasco. The US military was unable to recoup the weapons, vehicles, uniforms, and other supplies given to the brigade. It was clear that most likely the disbanded brigade members, out of work, would rejoin the Sunni insurgency.<sup>52</sup>

The official handover of sovereignty to Iraq was conducted on June 28, 2004, two members of the IGC chosen as interim Prime Minister and President. Iyad Allawi, a Shiite, was chosen as the new interim Prime Minister and Ghazi al-Yawar, a Sunni, as the President. The handover took place clandestinely two days early. Paul Bremer was on a plane and out of Iraq by the time news of the fait accompli was announced and footage of the event appeared on TV. The IGC had previously approved a new temporary constitution on March 8, 2004, the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), which made Islam the official religion of the state, but tended to exacerbate Sunni unrest by politically marginalising Sunni Iraqis. The document also gave the Kurds a veto over a permanent constitution to be approved by an elected parliament. The Kurds feared they might not be guaranteed semi-autonomy and special minority rights. In fact, the problem of political accommodation of major groups remains a thorny problem for the future.

Interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi is the leader of the Iraqi National Accord (INA), a group of former Baathist officials who broke with Saddam, and provided misleading information to the Bush Administration. He was criticised for having been on the payroll of a number of foreign intelligence agencies, including the CIA and the British MI5. He reportedly carried out terrorist activities against Saddam's regime as a US CIA employee. He had at one time been a spy for Saddam Hussein before defecting. A report emerged in July 2004 that he shot six prisoners in cold blood at a police station in Baghdad a few days before the handover. The murky past of the new leader was largely left unexplored in the mainstream Western press.

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<sup>52</sup>Alissa J. Ruben, "Ineffective Iraqi Force in Fallouja disbands," Los Angeles Times, (11 Sept., 2004).

The weakness of the US sponsored Iraqi government is suggested by a public opinion poll taken in May 2004 indicating that 67 percent of Iraqis supported the radical Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and 70 percent supported the Shia Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, while only 23 percent supported Iyad Allawi for office. The poll showed that 78 percent had "no confidence" in the CPA, while only 11 percent expressed some confidence and two percent expressed strong confidence. Only 28 percent had confidence in the IGC at the time.<sup>53</sup>

In the summer of 2004, US forces battled the Mehdi Army of radical Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr in the holy city of Najaf and Sadr City in Baghdad, a slum with one-million inhabitants. A "peace plan" negotiated by Ayatollah al-Sistani on August 26 ended the siege of Najaf and helped to contain the influence of the younger Muqtada al-Sadr. The US programme of buying up weapons provided some needed cash for residents but it is not certain if it will permanently quell the insurgency. The Iraqi resistance controlled hundreds of square miles of territory around Baghdad with government authority largely confined to the capital city. Fallujah, and even parts of Baghdad, continued to be "no-go areas" for American forces and al-Sadr's militia was in control of Najaf. According to an agreement with al-Sadr, the US army could drive only on roads agreed to by the Mehdi Army and had agreed to remain on a US base.<sup>54</sup> American forces were being attacked up to 80 times a day by mid-2004.

In the run up to the November 2004 Presidential elections, a major assault was prepared to retake the Sunni Triangle and allow for Iraqi elections scheduled for January 30, 1995 as nightly bombings were being carried out by US aircraft. Planes from the USS Kennedy in the Gulf were reportedly bombing Iraq some 20 times a day. The Major assault to clear Fallujah of insurgents was delayed until after the US elections while some 850 British troops from First Battalion Black Watch were transferred from Basra to near Baghdad to free up American soldiers for this major battle. A US military spokesman expressed the military's view that the only choice the insurgents had was to "submit or die."<sup>55</sup> In the event, the US has been charged with war crimes by critics, given the massive use of force and unknown number of civilians who died in the assault on Fallujah in November 2004. Most residents of the city of some 300,000 became refugees as some 70 percent of the buildings in the city were destroyed. While the US claims to have killed some 1200 insurgents, it is also acknowledged that many fighters fled to other cities to carry on the insurgency.

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<sup>53</sup> Stephen Soldz, "Iraq: What Went Wrong?" [www.znet.org](http://www.znet.org), (26 July, 2004).

<sup>54</sup> Robert Fisk, "The Government Rules Only in the Capital," *The Independent*, (22 July, 2004).

<sup>55</sup> "Submit or Die: The Siege of Fallujah and Beyond," [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org), (14 April, 2004).<sup>57</sup> Steven Rosenfeld, "Vinnell's

Kidnappings of foreigners had become endemic with al-Zarqawi's Tawhid and Jihad movements becoming increasingly active in 2004. By October some 150 foreigners had been kidnapped with many beheadings shown on Internet websites. At least 30 foreigners had been killed, including the beheadings of three Americans. Security became the overriding immediate problem. The country lacked an Iraqi army and a national guard. The private company, Vinnell Corp, which had trained Saudi security forces, had been awarded a contract to train 9000 men but more than half of the first 900 deserted in December 2003, after which the US turned the training over to the Jordanians.<sup>56</sup>

At the same time, the US found itself increasingly isolated internationally. As the insurgency and kidnappings began to take a higher toll, there were more frequent attacks, not just on US forces, but on Iraqi police stations and national guards as new Iraqi personnel came on duty, including the massacre of some 50 police trainees from the Kurkush Military Camp on October 24, 2004. Assassinations of Iraqi officials also increased and officials were even abducted from offices in Baghdad.

The coalition charade, largely symbolic from the start, continued to unravel. After Jose Marie Aznar lost the election in Spain in early 2004, the Spanish pulled out their 1300 troops. Next to bolt were Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua, with small numbers of troops. The Philippines pulled out under populist pressure to prevent the killing of a worker taken hostage. Then Norway pulled out 140 of its 155 troops. Next New Zealand and Thailand announced they were leaving. The Netherlands and Poland were considering getting out by mid-2005. Estonia announced pullout plans, while Singapore pulled out all except 33 of its personnel. Moldova recalled all but 12 of its contingent.<sup>57</sup>

### **The Sunni Question:**

While the insurgency is broadly a response to the occupation, embracing both Sunnis and Shias, the political marginalisation of the Sunnis is at the root of the insurgency in the Sunni triangle and a crucial question is how the Sunnis can be accommodated in the new constitution and state. It has been pointed out that the Sunnis enjoyed prominence in Basra and Baghdad, historically, under the Ottomans. Sunni hegemony was maintained in the monarchy of King Faisal set up by the British in the early twentieth century. While there was considerable support

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<sup>56</sup> Steven Rosenfeld, "Vinnell's Army on the Defensive," TomPaine.com., (21 Jan., 2004).

<sup>57</sup> Phyllis Bennis, "The Coalition Unravels," [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org), (20 July, 2004). Australia had only 920 troops. By this time the so-called "coalition" was, for all practical purposes, a coalition of two: the US and UK

for the removal of Saddam Hussein among the Sunnis, the de-Baathification carried out by the CPA targeted the Sunni community. Consequently, Sunnis see themselves being disempowered by the new institutions set up by the occupation forces. The Sunnis were given only four of twenty-five seats on the IGC, and no Sunni member enjoyed popular grass-roots support. The community was marginalised in the writing of the interim constitution, so Sunnis realise that in the new state they will be dominated by Shias. This has fed the Sunni insurgency and is likely to grow stronger; it threatens the break up of Iraq in future, as well as regional instability as regional powers fear the strengthening of the Shia and Kurdish communities in Iraq, especially after the elections of January 2005.<sup>58</sup> Political accommodation of all ethnic and religious groups remains a major challenge in the writing of a new constitution in 2005.

### **Staying the Course:**

The US is now and will be a major Gulf power for at least the next half century. Iraq promises a significant power base, "stupendous prize" of oil, and continued profits for US and British corporations.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand the costs are likely to be great. The continuing insurgency indicates that establishing a legitimate and stable government is extremely problematic. Going against history and tradition in marginalising the most coherent force for rule in the country, the Sunni tribes, appears to be a serious miscalculation. In launching the war, the neocons disregarded the warnings of most experts. The US has resorted to force to repress the traditional secular Sunni ruling class, while promoting the interests of shiites who threaten the rise of a theocracy. Ultimately, the US may be driven out of the country by popular resistance to the occupation.

The real reasons for going to war in Iraq had nothing to do with weapons of mass destruction, a link between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda, the threat that Iraq might develop nuclear weapons, nor the fact that Saddam was a dictator. The US went to war in Iraq because of the "stupendous prize" that Iraq was deemed to be, leading not only to the control of oil, but power and a basis for the control of the larger region. Saddam was effectively skirting the UN-US sanctions and would have soon begun to market large quantities of oil in Euros, militating against the US dollar. Many of the oil contracts were in the hands of France and Russia, which

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<sup>58</sup> Gareth Stansfield, "The reshaping of Sunni Politics in Iraq," Aljazeera.net., (18 March, 2004).

<sup>59</sup> Estimated US-British profits from Iraqi oil over the next fifty years range between \$600 billion and \$9 trillion.



militated against US companies.<sup>60</sup> The US would have lost the chance to establish huge military bases in Iraq for the purpose of controlling the massive oil and natural gas reserves of the Middle East and Central Asia. US firms would have lost out on lucrative contracts for the "reconstruction of Iraq" worth many billions of dollars. Controlling Iraqi oil would also give the US leverage over its growing rivals, The European Union, China and India, with rapidly growing economies. The US also saw Iraq as a basis for projecting power over Iran, Syria and Lebanon. Eventually, with large oil revenues, an autonomous Saddam could have rearmed, militating against the interests of Israel. The overthrow of Saddam was seen as a golden opportunity to extend the American Empire, an opportunity which was unlikely to ever come again.

Saddam Hussein was overthrown, not because he was strong, but because he was weak. Overthrowing Iraq was seen as a way of significantly increasing US hegemony, and an action, albeit illegal, that the US could get away with as a result of the terrorist attacks of September 11. The Bush "fossil-fuel" Administration, after all, was top heavy with Texas oil men. That the American people would swallow the bait and that the operation would be relatively trouble-free was a gamble the neocons took.

### **American Hubris and the Failure of Pre-emptive War:**

The first pre-emptive war, "a war of choice," has now become a catastrophe of world historical proportions, the magnitude of which is yet to be determined by history. The US has been pulled into a trap in Iraq of its own making, faced with a growing, mostly indigenous, insurgency. The US had spent some 300 billion dollars by May 2005 on the war and lost more than 1600 US soldiers, with over 12500 combat related wounded. Total American casualties were in the vicinity of 32,000 by November 2004, according to accounts of those at US medical facilities in Germany. Up to a hundred thousand Iraqi civilians have lost their lives. The neo-Wilsonian ideology of the neoconservatives, allied with tough-talking religious fundamentalists, about the war on terrorism, making the world safer for Americans, and strong belief in Biblical prophecy, has provided an ideological cover for the US drive to increase its hegemonic power over the world and challenge any country that poses a potential threat to this goal. The neoconservatives have alienated and frightened much of the world, while their Iraq policy has collapsed in

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<sup>60</sup> Florence C. Fee, "Russia and Iraq: The Question of the Russian Oil Contracts," *Middle East Economic Survey*, Vol. 46, No. 14 (7 April 2003); Carrie Satterlee, "Facts on Who Benefits From Keeping Saddam Hussein in Power," WebMemo #217, <http://www.heritage.org>; "Iraq awards oil contracts to Russia," *POE News*, <http://www.poe-news.com>, (21 January, 2003).

disarray. They have been unable to successfully contain other members of the "axis of evil" such as North Korea and Iran. US credibility has been badly damaged after the false rationales for launching an illegal war in Iraq. The root problem of political instability in the Middle East, the Israeli occupation of Palestine, has largely been left to the self-defeating policies of Ariel Sharon. Afghanistan remains a hot bed of Taliban activity and Pakistan is a tinder box of anti-Americanism and sentiment for Osama bin Laden. The US has weakened international law and resentment toward US unilateralism may well threaten the IMF, World Bank and WTO regimes constructed over the last half century. On the positive side, this could open opportunities for developing countries to challenge the encroaching neoliberal order and demand greater autonomy over their own development and a degree of equality and social security for their people.

The reckless hubris of the neocon "revolutionaries" has threatened the entire global community. Other nations, such as Russia, have logically adopted similar policies of pre-emptive war, and this trend is likely to accelerate. The neocons have ended the elite consensus within the United States, bitterly dividing ruling elites. The American people have been stampeded by trumped-up fear into giving up significant constitutional civil liberties, while pre-emptive war has endangered them as never before. The gains of pre-emptive war are likely to fall far short of those anticipated by the neocons, while the costs are certain to be far greater. The magnitude of the unfolding tragedy of the ill-conceived and illegal pre-emptive war in Iraq has yet to be realised or understood by the majority of the American people. Indeed, it is not yet over, and no one knows how long it will go on. This is true, in spite of the relatively successful exercise of "demonstration elections," staged on January 30, 2005. As in the Vietnam War, Americans must ultimately come to grips with what their nation has wrought and its implications for the decay of the global order.