

**BUSH DOES IRAQ:
ANATOMY OF A FAILED OPERATION**

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I'm a war president. I make decisions here in the Oval Office in foreign-policy matters with war on my mind.

George Bush
NBC's Meet the Press
February 8, 2004

Bring 'em on.

George Bush
July 2, 2003

In retrospect the Iraq invasion was a remarkable plan, a bold strategy to sustain U.S. hegemonic dominance worldwide for at least the next several decades. By subjugating Iraq as a client state, the Bush administration could prolong America's singular role in world politics into the indefinite future. As Arnold Toynbee's theory of history explains, the present epochal "challenge" posed by our nation's unprecedented national debt as well its loss of industries from outsourcing jobs to China, Mexico, and elsewhere would have been remedied by the simple expedient of capturing and harnessing Iraq's extraordinary resources that have almost begged to be exploited in this fashion. Just as South American gold enriched Spain's economy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and just as India's treasures subsidized the inception of England's industrial revolution during the late eighteenth century, so too could the capture of Iraq help our nation to consolidate its unique destiny at the pinnacle of modern civilization going into the twenty-first century.

For unlike Vietnam, which ultimately possessed little to exploit and few dominos to be kept from toppling, Iraq occupies the heart of the Near East, the very cradle of civilization, and its triangular parcel of territory contains enormous untapped oil reserves, perhaps the largest in the world. Of all underdeveloped nations from Albania to Zanzibar, Iraq is potentially the most lucrative prize for whatever superpower possesses the imperialist chutzpah to capture and take control of its oil and water supply as well as its pivotal location in the region. And who better than the U.S.? Our nation's earlier policies in Israel, Iran, Afghanistan, and Iraq itself might have borne difficult consequences, but the direct invasion of Iraq would seem what might be

described as a slam dunk. Relative to the modest cost and effort required, a cornucopia of untold benefits would accrue to our nation for many years to come. Or so it seemed.

If there were no justification to invade Iraq, an excuse would need to have been found. And this, it seems, is exactly what has happened, for there was too much at stake. The ample benefits to be gained from invading Iraq can be listed here with relative brevity:

1. First and perhaps least, the cumbersome economic embargo on Iraq for the previous decade could finally be brought to a close.
2. The huge oil reserves that had already been promised by Saddam Hussein to sixty foreign oil corporations could be diverted to U.S. oil corporations, whose substantial profits would produce trickle-down benefits to the rest of our economy starting with Texas.
3. The threat posed by Hussein to create a Middle Eastern bourse that would shift the currency for oil transactions from the dollar alone to include the Euro and other currencies could be thwarted, protecting the value of the dollar as well as the health of the U.S. economy dependent on its strength. Moreover, with the elimination of this threat in Iraq, its likelihood elsewhere, for example in Iran or Venezuela, could be discouraged, if not almost completely prevented.
4. The threat of an unregulated world oil market would be eliminated. The U.S. would fully control the world's oil supply and its oil prices into the indefinite future. As a result, the cost of oil could be controlled and therefore maximized, and political upheaval in supposedly rogue oil-producing nations as Venezuela, Nigeria, and Iran would be less dangerous to our economy.
5. Iraq's water resources could also be harnessed. The watershed of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers is the biggest in the Near East, and there would be any number of uses for its ample supply of water, perhaps including Israeli agriculture.
6. International corporations could privatize at a bargain cost Iraq's extensive state-controlled industries for such products as cement, fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, and phosphate and sulfur mines, among many others. Globalization would accordingly be enlarged by the eradication of the Arab world's biggest mixed economy.
7. Sandwiched between Israel and at least four (and perhaps more than a dozen) permanent U.S. bases in Iraq, hostile border states such as Iran and Syria could be more effectively forced to cooperate, thus diminishing the social and political volatility of the Near East.
8. Middle East peace efforts could be "empowered." A good deal less threatened by border states, Israel could at last help implement a "road map" toward a full settlement with Palestinians. Finally the two societies could be established in independent states at peace with each other more or less along the 1967 border, and normal diplomatic ties could at last be established throughout the entire region.

9. The U.S. could enhance its unique national status as the world's primary champion of freedom by rescuing Iraq's oppressed population from its totalitarian dictatorship. Once again we could confirm our unique commitment to the pursuit of liberty by the simple and decisive act of liberating the Iraqi people from the shackles of Saddam Hussein's evil regime. Baghdad citizens would be throwing flowers at our soldiers' feet as they march into its streets.
10. The U.S. military could once again confirm its obvious superiority already established in Afghanistan as an unstoppable "shock and awe" juggernaut (in effect a modern *blitzkrieg*). Victory in Iraq would further demonstrate its ability to deal decisively with hostile dictatorships, and, indeed, with all future military confrontations elsewhere in the world.
11. The entire cost of the invasion and occupation would "come free," in the words of Wolfowitz, since it could be charged to Iraq's oil profits. George Bush Sr. had imposed military costs for the Gulf War on allied nations during the Gulf War with the excuse that their financial sacrifice was more than matched by our military sacrifice. Now the even better expedient was possible that the Iraqi people themselves could be billed for services rendered once liberated from their dictator.
12. The modest cost of invading Iraq (roughly \$60 billion according to most estimates acceptable to the White House at the time) would comfortably augment the cost of Afghanistan in order to supplement aggregate demand, providing the needed neo-Keynsian impetus to spur recovery from the 2000-2002 recession. This connection could of course be ignored, but the obvious benefits of military conflict as an antidote to depression have been obvious since the Great Depression of the nineteen thirties.
13. And last of all, Iraq was ripe for the plucking, since the invasion would be far easier than it seemed. Administration insiders at the highest level were fully aware that Iraq was defenseless against a modern army. Its air force and tank corps had never been restored to full capacity after the Gulf War, and its much-publicized possession of WMD was nothing more than a fiction used by Hussein to discourage invasion by Iran, the U.S., or anybody else. That Hussein's stock of WMD had been either depleted or destroyed in the early 90s was fully known as early as 1995, when Hussein Kamel (Saddam Hussein's son-in-law) escaped Iraq and was debriefed, disclosing that he himself had been in charge of dismantling these systems and was confident they were no longer a problem. In other words, Iraq could be attacked on one hand because it supposedly posed an imminent military threat to the rest of the world, but on the other hand because it posed no threat whatsoever and could be toppled without any difficulty. Good excuse--great opportunity. Our troops could be issued gas masks just in case, but chances were excellent they would not be needed.

But it was oil most of all that made Iraq's invasion worthwhile, for whoever controls energy in the next century necessarily dominates world politics. As recounted by Antonia Juhasz (pronounced "you-hahs") in her excellent book, *The Bush Agenda: Invading the World One Economy at a Time* (p. 255), only seventeen of Iraq's eighty known oil fields have been

developed since they were first discovered in the 1920s. All the rest lie untapped with vast untold reserves. Right now Iraq's proven oil supply is second only to Saudi Arabia's, but the addition of its untapped reserves, as many as 22 billion-plus barrels, would put it at the very top of the heap among oil-producing nation in the world.

As a matter of fact, Iraq possesses almost too much oil, necessitating its acquisition by the U.S. oil industry both in order to guarantee long-term profits and in order to control its supply in world markets in the immediate future. This second objective would serve to maximize oil profits for the entire oil industry. Just as de Beers Industries keeps the supply of diamonds under control in order to support their high market value, the controlled production of Iraqi oil would keep gas and oil prices at profitable levels for the world's oil producers into the indefinite future. Such had been the strategy in limiting Iraqi oil production since the late 1920s, and Hussein's adventuristic effort to escape this constraint could be thwarted once and for all [see Greg Palast's explanation in *Armed Madhouse*, pp. 110-24].

This is a formidable list. As with jujitsu, a modest application of force at a crucial pressure point, the relatively painless capture of Iraq, could produce maximum benefits toward the economic and political vitality of our nation. President Bush would elevate his historic role as a "war president" to a level worthy of favorable comparison with such forbears as, Polk, Lincoln, Wilson, the two Roosevelts, and Harry S. Truman. Or so it seemed.

2. Making Plans

The desirability of an Iraq invasion became obvious to neo-conservatives such as Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz, during Clinton's presidency. Clinton was willing to continue an embargo as well as mounting three precision air attacks on possibly remaining WMD sites, but he refused to undertake a full-scale invasion or to impose a new government under U.S. control. As a result the contingency plan for an invasion could only be carried out once George W. Bush was elected and could install at the top levels of his foreign policy apparatus the coterie of neo-conservatives fully dedicated to such a strategy. These included, besides Perle and Wolfowitz, such figures as Douglas Feith, Scooter Libby, Elliot Abrams, John Bolton, Stephen Cambone, David Wurmser, Abram Shulski, and William Luti, all of whom advocated the capture and neutralization of Iraq as a potential threat to U.S. and Israeli interests. As members of the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans in the Pentagon, Shulski and Luti were particularly effective in revising CIA intelligence assessments to suggest the necessity of an immediate invasion. [see Jim Lobe, "How neo-cons influence the Pentagon," in *Asia Time*, Aug. 8, 2003; also Seymour Hersh, *Chain of Command* (pp. 208-9)]

The plan was already on the table in 2000, preceding Bush's inauguration, when Dick Cheney as Vice President organized his Energy Task Force to initiate an entirely new foreign policy with an unprecedented emphasis on the acquisition of foreign oil. The meetings were held in secret with representatives from such corporations as Chevron, Bechtel, Enron, and Halliburton as well as think tank specialists and individuals soon to be brought into the government's new foreign policy establishment. With obviously euphemistic wording, the Task

Force's "first recommendation was "to strengthen global alliances by making "energy security a priority of [U.S.] trade and foreign policy," and its second was to "support initiatives by [Mid East] suppliers to open up areas of their energy sectors to foreign investment." [Juhasz, pp. 179-80] Two enormous charts were featured at its meetings: first a map of Iraq divided among foreign oil companies contracted by Hussein once the embargo was lifted; and second a map divided among U.S. oil corporations once Iraq could be occupied and brought under U.S. control. It is to be noted that none of the later arguments to justify invading Iraq were under discussion at these meetings. The issue, pure and simple, was the task of gaining access to Iraq's oil reserves.

Osama bin Laden's 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center provided a temporary distraction that necessitated the invasion of Afghanistan preceding that of Iraq. Nevertheless, Iraq could be scheduled next in sequence once Afghanistan was defeated and occupied. In fact, the 9/11 attack helped to justify the invasion of Iraq once a connection could be established, however tenuous, between Hussein and al Qaeda, quite aside from the intense dislike Hussein and bin Laden had for each other. To confirm the need to invade Iraq, White House publicists publicized an earlier meeting that supposedly occurred in Prague between the lead 9/11 conspirator, Atta, and a mid-level representative of Hussein's government. Later investigation established that no such meeting had ever taken place, but this didn't really matter. What was important was that popular support was needed in order to stage the invasion. The earlier victory in Afghanistan also turned out to be useful in having encouraged the public expectation that the capture and occupation of Iraq would be relatively easy.

A credible assortment of "good" reasons was needed to justify the invasion in the eyes of the American public, a believable ethical rationale to appease the simplistic morality at the root of public opinion. Iraq had to be viewed as a vicious dictatorship whose imminent threat to international peace justified its invasion. An aggressive public relations campaign was therefore launched in time-honored fashion as explained by Stephen Kinzer in his recent book, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*. As Kinzer documents, most earlier invasions staged by the U.S. government since the end of the nineteenth century--thirteen in all-- depended on the press generating fear and indignation against a nefarious dictator who was supposedly dangerous to the American public as well as innocent victims of his own country. This approach turned out to be no problem with Hussein, whose numerous excesses were plain during his close alliance with the U.S. preceding the 1991 Gulf War.

Central to this public relations strategy was the presumably irrefutable evidence that Hussein was in the final stages of developing the atomic bomb as well as a variety of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), most of which had been provided by the U.S. government a decade earlier, when Hussein was still considered an ally in the struggle against Iran. Ironically, many of Washington's leadership who curried his favor at the time, for example both Rumsfeld and George Shultz (President Reagan's Secretary of State), became hostile late in his career. This was when he was relatively harmless, having isolated himself in one of his imperial palace to write allegorical novels and love songs to be accompanied by a lute. However, this blatant paradox could be ignored while the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans (OSP) led by Douglas Feith and cooperative journalists such as Judith Miller spread alarmist misinformation about Hussein's presumably brand new threat. This almost totally concocted misinformation was

provided by the Iraqi National Congress (INC), led by Chalabi, the expatriate Iraqi leader friendly with the neo-conservatives. Chalabi's sources included al-Haideri, Khodada, "Curve Ball," and other expatriate friends eager to take power in Iraq once Hussein was deposed. [Hersh, pp. 216-19]

England's Prime Minister Tony Blair fully understood the issues involved and became Bush's enthusiastic collaborator, as demonstrated by the Downing Street Memo of July, 2002, recently leaked to the press, which showed Blair was quite supportive of plans to conquer Iraq once the Afghan challenge could be laid to rest. However, Blair insisted on first obtaining the permission of the United Nations Security Council as required by the UN Charter. The operation would be better legitimized in Blair's opinion if it was supported by the U.N. Unfortunately, this depended on meeting the requirements of Articles 41 and 42 of the Charter before launching an outright invasion. Article 41 obliged a preliminary effort to resolve differences short of warfare, so the Security Council was approached, and it appropriately framed Resolution 1441 to compel the investigation of all suspected WMD sites in Iraq by UN inspectors over the next couple of months. In turn, Article 42 obliged a second vote by the Security Council once the existence of these sites was confirmed.

The sequential linkage between these two articles was of crucial importance, since each reinforced the necessity to pursue a genuine diplomatic effort before going to war. The problem, however, was that, exactly as first intended, their strict application in sequence as obliged by the UN Charter would have thwarted the Bush administration's plan to invade Iraq. For despite the most thorough search of a sovereign nation's territory in modern history, no evidence whatsoever could be found of WMD inside the boundary of Iraq, not even in the many bogus sites listed by the OSP. It seems, as already indicated by Hussein Kamal, that Saddam Hussein had indeed destroyed all these weapons a decade earlier and was reduced to hinting their possession in order to bluff Iran and other nations such as the United States from invading Iraq.

Once UN inspectors had established the absence of WMD, there was no longer any chance, despite aggressive lobbying by US agents and delegates, to obtain a majority vote in the Security Council supportive of an invasion. This became plain to U.S. delegates, since all the telephones of other Security Council delegations were tapped to anticipate their collective choice before it was publicized. As a result, U.S. and UK delegates suddenly withdrew their motion without submitting it to a vote and declared that Resolution 1441 in and of itself permitted an invasion without a second vote. This was a blatant misconstruction, but the American media effectively clouded the issue, so the public came away from its news coverage with the sense that the Security Council, led by France, Germany, and Russia, had turned cowardly, but without having directly rejected invasion plans.

To the American public, Bush and Blair seemed entirely in their rights to take the problem into our own hands by invading Iraq with the tacit support of the UN as well as the full support of the "Coalition of the Willing" ("thirty-eight nations, four with armies") as justified by Article 1441. Again, this was simply not true, but nobody at the UN challenged this egregious misinterpretation of its Charter, and public support was more important at the time than legal niceties.

The alternative press and internet blog sites were flooded with stories that effectively challenged one distortion or another, and a huge international demonstration on February 15 brought millions of demonstrators to NYC and many other cities across the world [the author included along with nine of his family]. However, the American public at large was fully satisfied with the false evidence that called for the necessity of an immediate invasion. Bush's popularity rating in presidential polls skyrocketed into the mid-eighties pushing the nineties, and cars everywhere carried American flags flapping in the breeze. Raw patriotism was once again in vogue throughout the nation.

Bush actually boasted later that he was a "war president," and he argued that it did not matter what level of WMD development had been achieved in Iraq or when it might have become dangerous to the world. For, he argued, the very possibility of a threat was sufficient cause to justify a "preemptive" invasion. Within just a couple of months after the invasion, however, when the existence of Iraqi WMD went unproven despite continuous effort to find them, Bush no longer insisted he was pursuing a "war of necessity" compelled by any immediate danger posed by Hussein's regime. Instead, he explained, he had initiated a "war of choice" that would ultimately benefit the whole world, most of all the Iraqi victims of Saddam Hussein's totalitarian regime. It was to bring democracy to the Iraqi people that he liberated this unfortunate nation from its evil dictator.

3. Mission Accomplished

On March 19, 2003, U.S. troops invaded Iraq in what was described as "Mission Iraqi Freedom" (first described by a few administration cynics as "Operation Iraqi Liberation"--OIL for short). "Shock and awe" tactics were sustained with a heavy emphasis on air support as well as relative indifference to the problem of collateral damage among the civilian population. Troops made an effort to avoid killing civilians, but unprecedented long-range air and artillery attacks necessarily produced their share of casualties. As expected by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, two quick "thunder run" assaults finally brought U.S. troops into Baghdad on April 5th and 8th with relatively few U.S. losses over the preceding sixteen days. Supply lines had been dangerously extended during the week or so preceding the invasion of Baghdad, but the tank attack carried the battle, and Baghdad posed almost no resistance once U.S. forces arrived and settled in. By May 1st, Bush was able to declare total victory aboard the aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln, just off the coast of San Diego. "Mission Accomplished" was the large hubristic banner that could be seen above and beyond his shoulder draped from the Abraham Lincoln's bridge.

The quick restoration of order in Iraq under U.S. and UK authority seemed to have been achieved with marginal costs comparable to those in the capture of Afghanistan. All Americans, both civilian and military, could walk the streets of Baghdad in relative safety, and many felt there was a genuine window of opportunity for the next couple months, when it was possible to establish a friendly provisional government comparable to those of Germany and Japan after World War II. Insurgent attacks on U.S. troops certainly occurred from the very beginning, but they were few and far between. Not more than about 40 U.S. troops either died or were killed

between the capture of Baghdad and July 15, three months later. [Paul Bremer, *My Year in Iraq* (Simon & Schuster, 2006), p. 105] The situation appeared almost entirely under control, and Bush's game plan since the very beginning seemed to be coming true.

But of course the capture of Iraq was but the first step in taking control of Iraq and imposing the American concept of democracy. For victory entailed not just the capture and occupation of Iraq but also the control of its oil reserves and its effective conversion to a free-market economy in compliance with U.S. policy and accessible to U.S. investors. This second step necessitated a full-scale privatization of its resources, and this would pose additional difficulties under civilian authority supported by military force whenever needed.

Jay Garner, a retired army general, was installed as the chief civilian administrator in Iraq. Garner sought to convene a "big tent" meeting of Iraq's leaders to plan national elections in the near future, if possible within ninety days to preempt any chance of civil war among the Shia, Sunni, and Kurds [Greg Palast, *Armed Madhouse*, p. 69.] However, Garner did not share Feith's hope and expectation that Chalabi would be Iraq's first new president, and his intentions became plain to pursue a quick withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq without imposing any basic modifications in its political and economic infrastructure. Also, he was not really in control of the situation. Somebody better and more flexible in response to Pentagon demands was needed. Rumsfeld actually telephoned Garner from Washington the day he arrived in Baghdad to inform him he would be immediately replaced.

Garner's successor, Paul ("Jerry") Bremer, arrived in Baghdad on May 12, a few days after Bush's aircraft carrier speech, to take charge as proconsul of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), which supplanted the hapless Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) led by Garner. [see George Packer, *The Assassins Gate* (Farrar Strauss, 2005), pp. 139-43] From the very beginning Bremer took on an essentially dictatorial position, finally departing by helicopter on June 28, 2004, when it seemed Iraq had a budding provisional government and the CPA was formally dissolved.

Bremer's credentials for his selection were impressive except for his lack of experience dealing with Iraq. He began his career with the State Department as soon as he had completed his Harvard MBA in 1966. His first appointment was as Officer General in Kabul, Afghanistan, and he later served as Kissinger's Chief of Staff, as ambassador to the Netherlands. Still later he became head of the State Department's office of counter-terrorism. He was considered by many to be a close protégé of Rumsfeld, though his choice as proconsul was also highly approved by both Powell and the President.

Probably Bremer's best and most relevant qualification was his authorship of "New Risks in International Business," written in November, 2001, in which he surveyed the difficulties involved in privatizing the natural resources of non-western nations. It turned out that many of the issues Bremer discussed in this paper would be relevant to his administrative decisions in Iraq. [Juhasz, pp. 191-2] However, Bremer was relatively unfamiliar with Iraq, and he compounded his difficulties by having vetoed co-leadership with Zalmay Khalilzad, who possessed extensive diplomatic experience in the region. This unhappy insistence by Bremer in

order to guarantee his full authority dismayed Powell and many others [Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *Cobra II*, pp. 475-76--hereafter cited as G & T]

As when General McArthur took control of Japan after World War II, Bremer was able to exercise autocratic authority in Iraq, in his case for little more than a year. However, this initial period of occupation turned out to be of crucial importance to what followed, for, as much as anything, it was the series of decisions Bremer implemented that led to the ultimate failure of the occupation. These decisions may have seemed appropriate at the time, but they finally caused more problems than they solved.

Unfortunately, Bremer's administration of the CPA was plagued by incompetence at every level. Heavily staffed by untested young Republicans, it was beset with both over-planning and an incessant lack of planning. For its planning was irrelevant to what needed to be planned. It was also vulnerable to rampant corruption among both Americans and Iraqi, and it was increasingly limited to its site in the Green Zone at the center of Baghdad. Often Bremer took impulsive steps without sufficient consultation, most obviously upon his arrival in Iraq, when he ordered that looters to be shot while the act of looting. Looting was almost universal on the streets of Baghdad, often as a matter of survival, and the death penalty for engaging in it would have been obviously counterproductive.

Bremer's first major step, on May 15, was to postpone the creation of an interim government sought by Garner. As Garner had fully understood, this period of stunned truce was when the creation of such a government would have been relatively easy. At a later time, when it might be better under control by the CPA, it was also more vulnerable to sectarian infighting that made cooperation almost impossible. Later Bremer also made the mistake of calling, then cancelling, elections because he was fearful the wrong people would be elected.

By far the most catastrophic choices of Bremer and his team during his thirteen months in power were his very first two official decisions, first to ban the top echelons of the Baathist party from government service, and next to disband the army. He insisted on announcing the first of these steps in public to demonstrate his authority and ensure that his arrival in Iraq be marked by "clear, public and decisive steps to reassure Iraqis that we are determined to eradicate Saddamism." [quoted by G&T, p. 476]

The elimination of Baathists from government seemed of the very highest priority as insisted by Chalabi and his expatriate friends. Encouraged by Rumsfeld and Feith's Pentagon staff, Bremer issued on May 16, ten days after his arrival, his first order of business: Order #1, "De-Baathification of Iraqi Society." This order permanently barred between 20,000 and 120,000 experienced bureaucrats from government jobs and immediately terminated their salaries. This list included any Baathist whatsoever in the top three layers of management in all ministries, affiliated corporations, universities, institutes, and hospitals. Bremer estimated that only 1 percent of the Baathist membership of over two million would be affected by this order, but the impact turned out to exceed his expectations. [Bremer, pp. 39- 42] Such a rigid choice might have benefited Chalabi and others who returned to Iraq expecting to assume full control of the nation once the invasion was completed. However, it excluded the most effective bureaucratic leadership from further service, thus crippling the effort to resume government authority. In

almost any nation in the world today this edict would be utter folly, as might be suggested by the hypothetical possibility of reorganizing the U.S. government in Washington without the participation of anybody in a top government post who was either a registered Republican or Democrat.

Exactly a week later, on May 23, Bremer issued Order #2, "The Dissolution of Entities," (a marvelous example of euphemistic abstraction) to abolish Iraq's army, its Defense Ministry, and its intelligence agencies in a single stroke. Bremer himself apparently devised this second order with the help of Walter Slocombe, a friendly Democratic congressman, but also with the active encouragement of the Pentagon and White House. As a result, between three and five hundred thousand Iraqi troops were disbanded, nullifying their potential usefulness to the new occupation government and setting the stage for many of them to join the mounting insurrection.

Pressured by Chalabi and his associates, Bush's inner team at the Pentagon and White House insisted on both these measures despite the fact that most of Iraq's troops and Baathists in the lower echelons of Iraq's bureaucracy had played little or no role in Hussein's crimes against humanity and could easily have been enlisted to share in the creation of a new government. Instead, they were terminated from their jobs and blacklisted from participating in the reconstruction effort. At about the same time the privatization of Iraq's industries produced an unprecedented level of unemployment estimated between 50 and 70 percent. As a result Baathists and disbanded soldiers and police as well as unpaid pensioners and displaced workers from defunct government industries were free--indeed encouraged--to join the insurrection that followed. Many did not, but it should be no surprise that many others did.

With the combination of Orders #1 and 2, Bremer subtracted substantial potential support for Iraq's occupation government, and, worse yet, he added much of what he had subtracted to its rapidly expanding insurrectionist opposition. The arithmetic involved was quite simple, but Chalabi and other expatriates linked with the Iraqi National Congress (INC) promoted these Draconian changes indifferent to their consequences. These future leaders of Iraq simply did not think it important to take into account the deprivation and public outrage that erupted among the Sunni population. [G&T, pp. 475-6, 479, 482-85] For the record, Rumsfeld at least consented to Order No. 2, if not having demanded it, while Feith first opposed, then supported it. On the other hand, Powell, Rice and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were all surprised by it. They had expected to put as many of these troops as possible into the service of the new government in order to expedite an early withdrawal of most, if not all, U.S. troops.

On August 7, two long months later, Bremer implemented Order #22, which reversed Order #2 by establishing a New Iraqi army and permitting all former soldiers to join up once again. Approximately one quarter of the original army, 106,000 ex-soldiers, took advantage of this opportunity. How many of the rest instead joined the resistance against U.S. occupation can only be guessed. The circumstances were ripe for an insurrection, and that's what happened.

Bremer's initial mission relevant to Iraq's economic development was to impose a wholesale transition from government-owned industries to private ownership by foreign corporations. According to a 107-page plan formulated in 2002 by Bearing Point, Inc. of Virginia, the state-controlled economy was to be submitted to "institutional change" that

guaranteed “free markets, free trade and private property,” and this was to be achieved within a span of not more than three years. Central to this plan was the “mass privatization” of Iraq’s many state-owned industries through foreign investment, mostly from the United States. [Juhasz, pp. 193-95] Of course Iraq would continue to enjoy nominal sovereignty, but most of its lucrative resources would be owned by foreign investors under the protection of both the CPA and the newly established Iraqi government. This plan would be implemented pretty much along lines already imposed by the IMF, WTO, and World Bank for economic globalization throughout the rest of the world, but with many fewer concessions to local autonomy. For nobody in Iraq’s indigenous leadership was in the position to exert much leverage under Bremer’s authority.

Actually, international law prohibits this much intervention after the defeat of a nation as specified by Article 43 of the 1907 Hague Regulations, ratified by the U.S. Army’s Law of Land Warfare, which actually repeats Article 43 word for word: “[that an occupying power] take all the measures in [its] power to restore, and ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety, while respecting, unless absolutely prevented, the laws in force in the country.” The laws in force in Iraq before the invasion unavoidably included all the laws and guidelines relevant to the Iraqi government’s ownership of as many as 192 industries, inclusive of those connected with its oil reserves. Like most of Europe’s nations today, Iraq had a heavily mixed economy, and the effort to end this arrangement in favor of radical privatization necessitated a violation of the “laws in force” provision as described by Article 43. With this purpose in mind, Bremer took upon himself the authority to stretch Iraqi law, hence Article 43 itself, in his May 8 letter to the UN Security Council, in which he declared that his occupation government would--

provide for the responsible administration of the Iraqi financial sector, for humanitarian relief, for economic construction, for the transparent operation and repair of Iraq’s infrastructure and natural resources, and for the progressive transfer of administrative responsibilities to such representative institutions of government.

Nowhere in this context did Bremer mention his intention to reject mixed socialism in favor of free-markets dominated by foreign investors. In sequence, however, the word combinations, “responsible administration . . . of the financial sector,” “economic construction,” “repair of . . . natural resources,” and “progressive transfer” were all weighted to suggest major changes toward such an outcome. Bremer’s intentions can hardly be described as having been “transparent,” as proclaimed in his May 8 letter, but these were easy to decipher. The word “responsible,” for example, could indicate the imposition of free enterprise to meet orthodox *laissez faire* standards considered necessary and appropriate by Friedman school economists and Harvard Business School graduates such as Bremer himself. Anything short of this goal would of course be “irresponsible” as far as these individuals were concerned.

Apparently aware of such an interpretation, the Security Council replied to Bremer on May 22 with a resolution that emphasized, among other things, full compliance with the “obligations under international law including in particular the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the 1907 Hague Regulations of 1907.” And indeed, it turned out that Bremer had no intention to abide by these principles. Instead, he launched into a sustained effort to promote privatization that favored international investors, mostly from the United States.

As explained by Juhasz, Bush accordingly sought to “lock in sweeping advantages to U.S. corporations, ensuring long-term U.S. economic gain while guaranteeing few, if any, benefits to the Iraqi people.” [pp. 187-88] Bremer might not have fully recognized this fatal discrepancy, but it was everywhere operative. As a result the Iraqi people were reduced to an unprecedented level of misery through an abrupt reversal of economic “revolution” (Adam Smith supplanting Karl Marx) on top of a violent “shock and awe” invasion that brought to a close the previous decade’s embargo. In turn this embargo had followed heavy warfare with Iran and the 1991 Gulf War. Preceding the Gulf War, Iraq had actually ranked as high as fifteenth out of 130 countries on the 1990 United Nations Human Development Index. [Juhasz, p. 198] Then came the quarantine by the George H.W. Bush and Clinton’s administrations. Finally, with the success of the 2003 invasion, Iraq could be driven into total poverty in the cause of free enterprise. By October, 2003, most of Iraq’s work force was unemployed, the inflation rate was as high as 36 percent, and future prospects were anything but optimistic.

Over the thirteen months during which Bremer served as proconsul, he imposed exactly one hundred Orders, many of which specified the needed steps to convert a centrally planned economy into a radical market economy. Order 12, for example, suspended all tariffs, customs duties, import taxes, licensing fees and similar surcharges for goods entering or leaving Iraq. As explained by Palast, this turned Iraq into “the world’s first large economy with no tariff protection whatsoever,” providing a quick windfall opportunity, for example, to Cargill of Minneapolis, the world’s largest grain merchant, when it dumped hundreds of thousands of tons of wheat on Iraq. [Palast, pp. 72-73] Also helpful to foreign corporations, Order 37 replaced Iraq’s progressive taxes with a flat tax favorable to large investors. Orders 40 and 94 sold off Iraqi banks to foreign ownership. Order 57 established an Inspector General selected by Bremer to promote policies and procedures for each of the government ministries. And Orders 81 through 83 rewrote Iraqi patent and copyright laws to guarantee U.S. rights. [Juhasz, pp. 200-211]

By far the most important of these economic rules was Order 39, the so-called “foreign investment Order,” in which Provision #1 allowed for the privatization of all government-owned industries. Provision #2 terminated all Iraqi commercial laws that would prevent foreign investment and ownership of companies. Provision #3 similarly forbade unfavorable treatment of foreign investors. Provision #4 permitted the limitless transfer of profits and dividends abroad (a small portion of which was incidentally contributed to Republican candidates during the 2004 election). And Provision #6 permitted foreign companies and investors to transfer legal disputes to international tribunals whenever they found it expedient to do so. The strict enforcement of all these regulations would be disastrous imposed on any nation in the world.

The exception to this Draconian economic plan was Provision #5, regarding oil extraction, which was limited to renewable 40-year leases. This modification seems to have been imposed by Texas oil interests, led by the James A. Baker III Institute, which instead promoted the centralization of oil production through a state-owned monopoly whose control by private corporations could be guaranteed by Profit Sharing Agreements (PSA). Neoconservatives led by Wolfowitz had sought wide-open privatization that would have dispersed ownership among too many corporations, and Bremer himself was willing to accept this arrangement.

However, Texas oil interests differed. The Texas oil executive Phillip Carrol made a special flight to Baghdad and very quickly changed Bremer's mind. [Palast, pp. 88-106] The Iraqi government was accordingly permitted to retain control of the seventeen oil fields already in operation, of course answerable to U.S. demands and expectations. Apparently as a sop to the neoconservatives, all new fields (estimated to be well over sixty) were opened to later acquisition and development by British and American corporations.

Foreign investors almost immediately benefited from Bremer's transition to privatization. Additional to the wheat farmers already mentioned, banks and construction companies arrived on the scene in full force, and cement and fertilizer plants, phosphate and sulfur mines, pharmaceutical factories, and Iraq's national airline were all privatized answerable to foreign investors. [Juhasz, p. 214] Altogether, more than 150 U.S. companies have benefited from the arrangement with contracts worth more than \$50 billion (more than twice Iraq's entire GDP) toward reconstruction necessitated by the shock and awe invasion as well as a deteriorating infrastructure at least partly resulting from the earlier embargo. Several of the largest corporations can be listed here:

<u>billions of dollars</u>	<u>corporations</u>
\$ 11	Halliburton
5.3	Parsons
3.75	Fluor
3.1	Washington Group International
3	Shaw Group
2.8	Bechtel
2.5	Perini
2.3	Contract

Juhasz insists that all these contracts could and should have been awarded to Iraqis themselves. [Juhasz, p. 218] Perhaps such a blanket requirement was not possible under the circumstances, but if just a few of these contracts could have been diverted to Iraqi contractors with Iraqi employees, the financial crisis in Iraq could have been significantly mitigated.

Most important, according to Juhasz, oil production has been renewed to almost full capacity by U.S. oil corporations despite frequent sabotage by Iraqi dissidents. By October, 2003, U.S. oil imports reached 734.5 barrels per day, a level surpassed only three times in previous years. On average since the invasion, the U.S. has imported 542.6 thousand barrels per day, and as late as August, 2005, fully half of Iraq's oil was reported to have been sent to the U.S. [Juhasz, pp. 251-53] Oil production has thus been brought to exactly the right level whereby its profits could be diverted to help pay for the occupation of Iraq, as promised by Wolfowitz preceding the invasion, but without having produced any kind of a glut in the world's oil markets feared by Texas oil interests. As sought by Baker and others, oil productivity could be sustained at a level that justifies maximum prices (today's cost of gasoline at \$3 per gallon) on the assumption that supply-demand considerations are exclusively in effect. As in the past, the price of oil is presumably dictated strictly by its supply relative to demand.

That major economic dislocations resulted from the transition from an Iraqi economy to an occupation economy under foreign authority should have been no surprise. For any major conversion toward privatization by foreign investors, even in a stable peacetime context, is almost inevitably guaranteed to produce severe distress to the host population. Bremer himself had already acknowledged this probability in his paper, “New Risks in International Business,” where he warned of “the *painful consequences* of globalization . . . felt long before its benefits are clear.” [Juhasz, p. 191--italics added for emphasis] Such an outcome seems especially problematic, however, if full and rapid conversion is sought for a captive nation beginning within weeks of its invasion, as has been the case in Iraq. A three-year limit had been imposed in fully privatizing Iraq’s economy, but Bremer was, if anything, well ahead of schedule. His earlier concession of potential hardship in his article had applied to a peacetime transition to private enterprise, not to one after a full-scale invasion that could only aggravate the level of “painful consequences,” especially when the transition was from local government control with an indigenous work force to ownership and control by foreign private corporations that imported most of their workers from abroad. Why, then, was Bremer so uncompromising in his robust pursuit of privatization? Probably because he, Rumsfeld, and others in authority did not realize the extent to which a hardball privatization strategy could only serve to intensify the problem and thus the threat of an insurgency. They were pouring gasoline on a fire, unaware of the consequences.

The havoc wreaked on Iraq could only have been intensified by the failure of foreign private corporations to hire Iraqi workers displaced by privatization. Many of these workers could have been hired to replace themselves, but they weren’t. Usually this was because managers found they could not trust these workers, but with the unfortunate Catch-22 that the untrustworthy “liberated” work force would necessarily be deprived of gainful employment, thus aggravating its untrustworthiness. This problem has been especially problematic in the construction industries for rebuilding Iraq’s infrastructure, in which imported foreign workers, especially Americans, have been paid extravagant wages, while Iraqi with comparable ability and experience have been rejected without any prospect of employment elsewhere. At best they could find jobs in short-term projects by working for Iraqi subcontractors at far lower wages. The same has been true among truck drivers. An American driver, for example, can be paid as much as \$8,000 per month to drive oil trucks, an extravagant amount somewhat justified by the risks involved. Those fortunate Iraqi hired as truck drivers have been paid less. Inevitably, the financial differences were blatant, and Iraqi workers living on the brink of poverty can be expected to have been resentful.

Moreover, there has also been widespread waste and fraud among the foreign corporations and at all levels of administration. As the very biggest foreign contractor in Iraq, Halliburton has been found guilty of a grand total of \$1.5 billion in excessive charges. At one point it actually billed the CPA for \$27.5 million to transport heating and cooking fuel worth \$82,100 from Kuwait to Iraq. Here transportation costs were approximately thirty times as high as the cost of the fuel transported, and of course the cost of the fuel was also probably inflated. But all foreign corporations, not just Halliburton, seem to have been part of the boondoggle. By June, 2004, the CPA budget for funding projects, \$24 billion from U.S. taxpayers and \$18.4 billion from Iraq’s oil revenue, was just about half spent (more than half from Iraqi funds), but with \$8.8 billion completely unaccounted for. [Juhasz, pp. 238-39; see also Packer, pp 242-43]

This incredible loss was undoubtedly pocketed by hustlers, primarily Americans but with at least a few Iraqi collaborators.

How did this happen? Roughly 363 tons of U.S. currency, worth six hundred million dollars, has been shipped to Iraq since 2003, available in solid bricks of U.S. currency for what amounted to “walking money.” According to Palast,

Agents could check out these cash bricks, like library books. Unlike a library, they didn’t have to return them as long as they brought receipts. One agent took \$23 million in a tub of cash and returned with \$6 million in receipts. Another took \$25 million and returned, it appears, with nothing at all. [Palast, p. 75]

Any other time, anywhere else in the modern history of collective re-privatization begun by Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of England, this extravagant profiteering dependent on quick cash would have been curtailed to a certain extent, but not in Iraq, where at least half the losses could be charged to Iraq’s oil profits. American taxpayers have picked up the tab for only fifty percent of the losses.

The most outrageous misuse of the effort to rebuild Iraq can be chalked up to Bechtel Industries, which as early as April 17 was awarded with a \$680 million contract for a large variety of projects. The most important of these was the restoration of Iraq’s electrical system, which had earlier been in operation under the authority of Hussein’s government. Electricity was essential for providing a water supply as well as eliminating both sewage and garbage and meeting the pre-invasion demand for electricity by industries and the public at large. As a result, the Iraqi people were totally dependent on electricity beyond the obvious need for refrigeration and air conditioning in order to endure Iraq’s torrid summers with temperatures at times as high as 140 degrees Fahrenheit.

Countless repairs were needed in the electrical grid from one site to the next across the war-blighted nation that had survived two major wars, the international embargo, and the American invasion. The task was not insurmountable, and Iraqi electricians alone could have been employed to bring it to completion. However, a bigger and more profitable arrangement suggested itself. Bechtel accepted the contract for a piecemeal approach to the problem but, bait and switch, it quickly decided to introduce new state-of-the-art electrical power stations that would incidentally cost far more both to purchase and install as well as requiring maintenance by Bechtel engineers familiar with their complexities. And of course a thorough nation-wide assessment of the costs involved was first needed to begin such a project, so a comprehensive study was undertaken over a period of five months through the summer of 2003, exactly when the Iraqi work force was unemployed and on the brink of insurrection. The electricity supply was intermittent at best during the summer, reducing the lives of ordinary Iraqi citizens to chaotic misery in unbearable heat. Bremer himself tells of having been informed by one of his assistants on August 4 that this was the fifty-eighth straight day when the temperature exceeded 100 degrees by 9:00 a.m. On the next day, August 5, it rose as high as 131 degrees. [Bremer, pp. 122, 130] Everybody in Baghdad and throughout the nation was daily--indeed hourly--kept aware of the sacrifices imposed by the American occupation.

Jobless, without electricity, water or plumbing, or refrigerators or air conditioning, unavoidably sweltering and engulfed in mounds of foul garbage, the miserable inhabitants of Baghdad, once a proud modern city, could only be infuriated by the imposition. This, according to Juhasz, seems as much as anything to have been the straw that broke the camel's back, producing sufficient critical mass to foment the rebellion that followed. [Juhasz, pp. 229-34] And maybe so. A quick solution to the electrical breakdown might have succeeded. But soon enough insurgents found the deprivation of electricity was helpful to their cause, so what had at first seemed a temporary inconvenience became a tactical nightmare to American occupiers. They couldn't prevent the sabotage of electrical facilities, and they were held responsible for their inability to do so.

4. Toward Blowback

A CIA report in March, 1954, first used the term "blowback" to describe the unintended consequences of covert activities abroad. In *Blowback* (Henry Holt, 2000), Chalmers Johnson expanded the definition to include producing any hostile effect contrary to the intended outcome, and in *The Sorrows of Empire* he applied the term on a global scale relevant to U.S. expansionism in recent decades. Here I want to explore some of the oversights that produced the blowback which occurred during Iraq's occupation, when the unexpected insurrection nullified the successful invasion that had preceded it. For the capture and control of Iraq posed a number of difficulties that had not been given serious consideration in earlier projections. Unless these were fully and effectively taken into account, the entire operation would be in jeopardy. And in fact this turned out to be the case. Iraq's occupation began to unravel by the end of spring, descending into nasty and protracted warfare that continues to worsen even today.

At first Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld was able to dismiss the insurgency as nothing more than the futile misbehavior of Baathist "dead-enders," criminal gangs and al Qaeda terrorists. By August, 2003, he finally conceded "pockets of resistance" but assured reporters that these did not pose much of a threat. Soon afterwards, however, a confidential Pentagon report later obtained by Seymour Hersh finally admitted serious unexpected problems. It conceded that the insurgents' "strategic and operational intelligence has proven to be quite good," and explained--

Politically, the U.S. has failed to date. . . . The disaster that is the reconstruction of Iraq has been the key cause of the insurgency. There is no legitimate government, and it behooves the Coalition Provisional Authority to absorb the sad but unvarnished fact that most Iraqis do not see the Governing Council [the Iraqi body appointed by the CPA.] as the legitimate authority. Indeed, they know that the true power is the CPA. [quoted by Hersh, pp. 57-58]

In other words, the Iraqi people were unwilling to accept the temporary puppet government imposed by U.S. troops and the miserable living conditions they endured under its authority. They couldn't stop the invasion but refused to cooperate with the occupation.

Today, despite a constitution and a supposedly independent elected government, the problem has become, if anything, much worse. No longer are the streets of Baghdad safe for Americans, either civilian or military. Schools, hospitals, and the local constabulary are in shambles, and electricity, water, sewage and garbage services remain totally inadequate. Car bombs take a horrendous daily toll, and suicide bombers martyr themselves in the act of blowing up American troops and their Iraqi sympathizers. Gangs and religious factions are everywhere in bloodthirsty combat with each other additional to a mounting insurrection that keeps Americans restricted to Baghdad's Green Zone and other such defensible enclaves. Significantly, when Rumsfeld visits Iraq he does not venture beyond the Green Zone. For Iraq has become a major international catastrophe. How, then, did the grand design concocted by Bush and his friends descend from apparent success into chaos and incessant bloodshed?

Michael Gordon and General Bernard Trainor address themselves to this question in the final chapter and epilogue of *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*. Throughout their text they fulsomely praise U.S. troops and their commanders, but they also reject the overall plan of attack with equal vigor. Their Epilogue begins by listing five "grievous error," all of which seem valid and important to acknowledge relevant to military operations: (1) misreading the foe; (2) an over-reliance on technological advancement; (3) the failure to adapt to developments on the battlefield; (4) the dysfunction of American military structures; and (5) Bush's disdain for any kind of nation building similar to the occupation of Bosnia under President Clinton.

Obviously, a large variety of more specific mistakes can be listed under each of these categories, many of which have already been mentioned. However, other problems can also be listed beyond the purview of Gordon and Trainor's assessment.

First of all, Bush, Rumsfeld, and others did not sufficiently recognize that Iraq had always been a "difficult" nation to occupy. Like Yugoslavia, it was an artificial sovereignty from the very beginning, when it was established by the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres as a League of Nations mandate under the administration of Great Britain. The forced unity among Sunni, Shi'ite, and Kurd populations was primarily guaranteed by a tyrannical government of one sort or another, so Saddam Hussein's regime turned out to be little more than the latest and most oppressive of these. Hussein's defeat thus posed the threat of reviving earlier hostilities among the various sects and factions in the country. And the two possibilities could not be discounted that the restoration of a stable government might only have been possible under a totalitarian leadership not much better than that of Hussein himself.

Moreover, Pentagon strategists did not give sufficient weight to the problem that the Shi'ite and Kurdish portions of the nation had close ties with adjacent nation. Unavoidably, Shi'ites stayed in contact with the large Shi'ite majority in Iran, as did Kurds with the Kurdish population in Turkey and Syria. In the first instance significant military and financial support could be expected from Iran to promote either the dominance of Iraq's Shi'ite majority or, better yet, the secession of Shi'ite territories from Iraq. On the other hand, the independence of Iraqi Kurds, especially in a state of their own, could be expected to encourage secessionist movements elsewhere in the region toward the creation of an enlarged Kurdish nation. These were important problems that would oblige sensitive diplomacy, whatever else happens in Iraq.

Moreover, U.S. planners sought to impose an egalitarian arrangement that would have demoted the influential Sunni minority from its earlier dominance to a subordinate role. This turned out to be a substantial departure from the British choice eighty years earlier to permit the traditional Sunni dominance in order to guarantee its support in maintaining order with other groups. In power already, the Sunni would remain leaders under the direction of the British, a plan of action that helped to sustain British authority throughout much of its empire for more than a century. Instead, American occupiers organized these previously oppressed groups in an effective *de facto* coalition to wrest control from the Sunni. This was a far more ambitious strategy, and with necessarily different and more hazardous consequences.

The Pentagon also miscalculated Hussein's tactics for defending Iraq against an invasion. Military planners expected the Republican Guard to be their most effective enemy, so when the Guard suddenly dissolved upon U.S. forces having reached Baghdad, it seemed there would be no serious opposition afterwards. According to Hersh, U.S. military strategists did not realize that Hussein had already decided as early as 2001, when informed that Bush brought neo-conservatives into his foreign policy apparatus, to prepare for guerrilla warfare modeled after the success of Al Dawa against Hussein himself a decade earlier. It is speculated by Hersh and others that Hussein split three military divisions into a large number of small cells, each of them almost entirely independent and ignorant of the rest. All were stockpiled with weapons and ammunition in hidden caches for their use when occupation began. Exactly when U.S. troops approached Baghdad on April 7, Hussein dissolved the Republican Guard and the rest of the defensive forces, and ordered them to return to their homes and wait until the opportunity to begin a full-scale insurrection. [Hersh, pp. 258-59]

Gordon and Trainor reject Hersh's thesis that Hussein had made such preparations. Instead, they argue, what Pentagon strategists neglected to take into account was the effective supportive role of the so-called Fedayeen Saddam, who were widely dispersed in towns and villages throughout Iraq. These irregular fighters had long been trained as a decentralized militia to resist an invasion by Iran until regular troops could be brought in. So it was little trouble for the Fedayeen to make the needed adjustments for mounting an effective defense against the American invasion. Apparently U.S. intelligence had no knowledge whatsoever of this possibility, or, if it did, did not sufficiently take it into account. [G&T, pp. 498-99, 504-5]

Obviously, Gordon and Trainor's account differs from Hersh's regarding Hussein's choice of personnel, but without significant differences regarding the guerrilla tactics that followed. I would suspect a full explanation of what happened would combine the two explanations, showing how both the Fedayeen and Republican Guard were brought into play by Hussein, the former focused in the countryside and the latter in the cities.

U.S. planners also failed to take into account the fact that they would be dealing with two different populations, the minority of Bedouin tribalists who live in the countryside, and a full three-quarters of the Iraqi population, who live in urban circumstances. Urban conflict was thus a much bigger factor than in recent warfare elsewhere, since only 18 percent of the Afghanistan population and only half of the population in Bosnia and Kosovo lived in urban circumstances. [G&T, p. 104] Unavoidably a different and what might be described as a more labor-intensive

military occupation was called for in Iraq. More troops were needed, and a friendlier and more cooperative relationship with the host population would have been more appropriate.

U.S. planners also neglected to take into account the normal stock of weapons and ammunition that were available in almost every household as a matter of social convention. Without anything equivalent to Article Two of the Bill of Rights to justify the practice, most of the Iraqi public possesses firearms, and with much the same effect. On one hand, the almost universal possession of firearms has probably increased the necessity for strict authoritarian rule typified by Hussein's regime, but on the other hand it has presented obvious danger to any kind of an invasion by foreign powers, the U.S. included.

Likewise, the Pentagon did not take into account the ardent family and tribal loyalty among the rural Iraqi population. This fierce allegiance to kinsmen favors family over clan, clan over the nation, and nation over everybody else, especially foreign invaders. Every time a relative, neighbor, or countryman has been shot at a checkpoint, or taken from his house and tortured, retribution has become a necessity for others sufficiently courageous to accept the responsibility. Similarly, Iraqi women raped by GIs have often been ritually killed by their brothers, but these brothers have gone on to risk their own lives in the effort to kill GIs. One suspects the great majority of today's insurgency has been stirred by the vestigial impact of this tradition than any abiding hatred of western civilization or the United States in particular.

Likewise, the Pentagon did not anticipate that the black market would become a major uncontrollable variable in the governance of Iraq. This became the most apparent in the marketing of oil. Today forty percent of the gasoline consumed in Iraq is estimated to be purchased on the black market, and in 2005 alone oil smuggling, both shipped abroad and from abroad, has produced as much as \$2.5 and \$4 billion profits, almost ten percent of Iraq's total GDP. As a result the "legal" profits of U.S. oil producers are accompanied by almost as lucrative "illegal" profits for Iraqi black market operators, at least some of which have been diverted to support the insurrection against U.S. occupation. [see James Glanz and Robert Worth, "Attacks on Oil Industry in Iraq Aid a Vast Smuggling Network," NYT, June 4, 2006, p. 1]

Likewise, U.S. planners did not anticipate the difficulties that would be encountered in the effort to restore public safety in Iraq once under occupation. As explained by Michael Moss and David Rohde, "A population that had lived in a police state with virtually no street crime for 25 years was dismayed as murder, kidnapping and rape soared." [see "Misjudgments Marred U.S. Plans for Iraqi Police," NYT (May 21, 2006)] Before the invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration had rejected a Justice Department plan to use U.S. civilian trainers for rebuilding the police force. When this issue was raised at a White House Meeting, Condoleezza Rice herself postponed making early preparations with the assurance that the problem could be dealt with once Hussein was removed from power. But this didn't happen--nothing was done to guarantee police protection once the occupation began. In fact, exactly the opposite course was taken. As soon as Baghdad was "liberated" from Hussein, its police force was immediately disbanded along with the military, but without any arrangement to enlist a new police force under the authority of the coalition government. As a result, looting and burning quickly took hold and persisted for a month until Bremer arrived on May 12 to take control. Finally, three days after Bremer's arrival, a Justice Department team was brought in to install a new police force as well

as criminal courts, and a prison system. But it was too late. Eighty percent of Iraq's original police force did not return to duty, and for months not enough U.S. trainers could be found willing to work with those who remained.

Moreover, U.S. planners did not consider the possibility that new recruits sought to fill the gap in policing Iraq might turn out to be criminals and members of death squads, or members of Sunni and Shi'ite militias, or members of the insurgency itself, or any combination of the above. Large numbers of Iraqi have since been murdered by killers in police uniforms, and, then again, many of the police themselves have been killed--as many as 547 this year alone. This turn of events has been entirely new for the Iraqi public, which, as already indicated, had taken for granted the dictatorial guarantee of urban crimelessness Today, the lead editorial for the NYT of May 28, 2006, tells of how the the lack of an effective police force has put the entire nation on the brink of chaos and civil war with enemies in every direction:

Right now armed gangs of thugs, many of them wearing government uniforms, are spreading terror throughout the country. Some were trained by American forces to work for the Interior Ministry, but actually do the bidding of Shiite political and religious leaders. They harass, kidnap and murder people who follow different religious practices or support competing politicians, often with the help of weapons and equipment provided by an American government that had very different objectives in mind. . . . [meanwhile] Sunni forces working for the Ministry of Defense who were supposed to be guarding Iraq's oil pipeline [are] instead freelancing as death squads, assassinating people who cooperated with the same government that [pays] the gunmen's salaries.

Is this the western-style open democracy that the Bush administration supposedly wanted to install as a replacement for Hussein's dictatorship? Or does it seem more likely that Bremer and others were so eager to exploit Iraq's resources that they did not pay sufficient attention to the social dislocations produced by their effort? And by a dysfunctional police force more dangerous than useful to the public at large?

U.S. planners were also misguided in their assumption that the invasion of Iraq would distract al Qaeda and contribute to their defeat in a remote theater of conflict on the other side of the world. To begin with, there were no terrorists in Iraq before the invasion except for its northern region restricted to the Kurds by U.S. air control during Clinton's presidency. As already indicated, bin Laden (a devout Muslim) and Saddam Hussein (a tacit secularist committed to a mixed economy) had actually been enemies, as bin Laden insisted in his tape released February 13, 2003, five weeks preceding Iraq's invasion. As a result, Al Qaeda's involvement in Iraq began with the invasion, not preceding it, and, if anything, violent conflict in Iraq has inspired terrorist acts by Muslims elsewhere in the world who have been willing to identify themselves with its cause without having had any direct relationship with its leadership.

And finally, in light of all these considerations, it was a mistake for the Pentagon to devote not more than a couple months of planning the occupation that followed the invasion, as opposed to the eighteen months that had been spent in preparing for the invasion itself. [G&T, p. 503] For the occupation of Iraq turned out to be a far more complex problem to deal with.

Indeed, the State Department had already drafted extensive plans for Iraq's occupation, but Rumsfeld refused to take these plans into account in order to avoid giving Secretary of State Powell any direct role to play in Iraq's occupation. The entire Iraqi operation, both the invasion and its occupation, would therefore be kept entirely in the hands of the Pentagon. If failure resulted, it would be mostly the failure of the Pentagon. As in fact it has been.

Rumsfeld also made the mistake of subordinating strategic issues to the tactical benefits of a swift mechanized invasion. At the beginning his emphasis on rapid strike capabilities was obviously superior to a slow, grinding land assault. A shock-and-awe strategy let surgical precision guarantee victory before Hussein's forces could mount an effective counter-attack, or destroy bridges, or retreat to more defensible positions. And, indeed, this reinvention of the Blitzkrieg turned out to be both useful and appropriate despite almost two weeks of tactical indecisiveness at the very beginning that resulted from weak supply lines. Unfortunately, however, the benefits of swift and decisive maneuvers do not apply to the more cumbersome occupation of captured nations that follows.

This obvious paradox was earlier demonstrated by the fate of Chief Parker's strategy for keeping the Los Angeles police department small, culminating in the 1992 riots. He took pride in a lean but aggressive and well-armed police force who remained inside police cruisers except to make arrests. Indeed, the L.A. police intimidated everybody they dealt with, but they were despised, and the rule of law ultimately suffered. The same goes for the occupation of a captured nation, when a large contingent of foreign troops is best brought in as a constabulary whose overwhelming advantage permits a friendly and cooperative relationship between occupiers and the host population. For this reason more troops are needed occupy a nation than to capture it.

So how big should Iraq's occupation army have been? The ratio of 20 soldiers per 1,000 civilians had been found appropriate in Bosnia and Kosovo. The Army's Chief of Staff, General Eric Shinseki, accordingly recommended an occupation force of several hundred thousand troops, and this suggestion seems to have cost him his job. [G&T, pp. 477, 495, 503] With a small and therefore aggressive military presence, conflict became inevitable between occupiers and the occupied, and under the circumstances its escalation was no less inevitable. As suggested by Ahmd Sadik, an Iraqi Air Force general quoted by Hersh, "The ultimate enemy [for the U.S. turned out to be] the occupation itself: the failure of the American occupiers to understand the Iraqis and the increasingly harsh tactics of the American troops as they sought to quell the continuing violence." [Hersh, p. 260] This is an important point to emphasize: it was the occupation itself--the way it was carried out--that was primarily responsible for having provoked the insurrection.

To guarantee a supportive staff committed to the success of his occupation strategy dependent on as few troops as possible, Rumsfeld completely replaced U.S. leadership in Iraq with compliant and inexperienced personnel once peace seemed to be restored. Richard Myers was appointed the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff because he was a "team player," while Tom White, the Secretary of the Army, was forced to resign because of his close relationship with General Shinseki. [G&T, p. 486] Garner's staff of experts was replaced, as were personnel friendly with Khalilzad despite their extensive backgrounds in the region. General McKiernan, one of General Shinseki's most trusted officers, was transferred to Kuwait, as was his entire

staff, many of whom were considered the army's top experts in the region. McKiernan himself was replaced by General Ricardo Sanchez, a relatively untested officer who was commander of the latest division in Iraq to have arrived from Europe. [G&T, pp. 488, 495, and 502] Ironically, Bremer and Sanchez later fell into disagreement, primarily because Bremer came to feel that an occupation army double its size was needed. [Bremer, p. 106] Sanchez, however, who was better attuned to the virtue of hierarchy, refused to challenge Rumsfeld's authority by making such a request.

The lack of preparation among this new leadership under Bremer's authority was perhaps best illustrated by their initial choice of the acronym NIC for New Iraqi Corps, in order to designate the Iraqi units they were trying to install under U.S. authority. As spoken, the word "nic" meant FUCK in Arabic, indicated in capital letters, so any variant would obviously have been preferable to those conversant in Arabic. It seems nobody with this particular skill was consulted for quite a while. [G&T, p. 483] But this should have been no surprise. At one point only seventeen of the CPA staff of 800 in Baghdad could speak Arabic and only one of these could be described as an expert on Iraq. [John Barry and Evan Thomas of *Newsweek*, Oct. 6, 2003--quoted by Juhasz, p. 198] Not surprisingly, occupiers and the occupied spoke entirely different languages, further exacerbating the American mission in Iraq.

5. Crackdown

Perhaps the primary mistake, unrecognized at the time, was to extend shock and awe "attitude" among U.S. troops from the invasion to the occupation that followed. As during the invasion, intimidation continued to be a factor in dealing with the Iraqi population, if on a less wholesale basis. Indeed, many U.S. troops tried to take into account civilian needs, but at least as many continued to coerce Iraqi civilians at an unacceptable level except during combat. When a marine officer sweepingly offered to the people of Iraq what seemed the generous promise that the U.S. marines could be either their best friends or worst enemies, he was making the obvious threat that all Iraqi unable to accept the offer of uncompromising friendship would be dealt with as mortal enemies. Intermediate gradations did not exist. Nothing between was possible, and too often, it turned out, with devastating consequences for the Iraqi citizens involved. Such a threatening offer by the officer to his wife might well have triggered a divorce.

"Shoot first and ask questions later" was the operative slogan. Unfortunately, this meant there was nobody to ask such questions once the shooting subsided. Too often U.S. troops have shot and killed suspicious-looking individuals who turned out to be innocent, for example by firing on cars that did not follow directions soon enough, killing everybody inside--now and again entire families. And too often U.S. troops at check points have been rough and insulting during searches. Their hyper-macho bearing and authoritarian military attire as well as their use of dark glasses to prevent eye contact have contributed to this effect among civilians. Any competent psychologist could have predicted the result of this blatant effort to intimidate the host population--suppressed fear and loathing when challenged, and active resistance later if given the chance. As a result, a spiral of animosity seems to have taken place since the very beginning, and far more rapidly and with greater intensification than in the portion of Iraq policed by UK

troops, whose experience in the occupation of Ireland more than a decade earlier had demonstrated the value of a more constrained deployment.

The intensification of hostility was slow at first but by mid-summer, 2003, it rapidly gained momentum in the confrontation between U.S. troops and insurrectionists far better armed and willing to fight than anticipated and quick to learn the necessary means for combating superior American firepower. The most horrendous example of this spiral occurred in Fallujah, an historic city with perhaps a 300,000 population that had been ignored during the initial invasion. It was first occupied by the 82nd Airborne Division in mid-April. On April 28, two days before Bush's triumphalist U.S.S.S. Lincoln speech, two hundred demonstrators held a rally before a local school, shouting relatively harmless slogans such as, "No to Saddam, no to the U.S." These demonstrators were all unarmed, but somebody nearby might have fired a single shot in an incident of "celebratory gunfire," as U.S. soldiers later insisted. In any case, these soldiers used this single shot, whether heard or not, as their pretext for opening fire on the crowd, killing thirteen demonstrators. Two days later, at a second rally to protest the killings, two more Iraqi were shot and killed. Angry relations followed, culminating eleven months later, on March 31, 2004, with the vicious murder and ritual butchery of four Black Water mercenary employees by Iraqi teenagers.

Ample U.S. publicity of the event led to two unsuccessful attacks on the city, Operation Vigilant Resolve and Operation Plymouth Rock, culminating in the third attempt, Operation Phantom Fury of November, 2004, timed to begin just after the U.S. presidential election. According to Dexter Filkins of *The New York Times*, the Pentagon's goal was simply to "trap and kill as many of the enemy as possible." [cited by Dave Lindorff and Barbara Olshansky, *The Case for Impeachment* (St. Martin's Press, 2006), pp. 192-94--hereafter cited as L and O] Ten thousand heavily armed troops of the First Marine Expeditionary Force surrounded the entire city and used checkpoints to sort out crowds that sought to escape the impending conflict. Women and children were permitted to depart, and also, supposedly, all men with no traces of gunpowder to be detected on their hands. The rest of the adult male population were denied passage, as well as many, it turned out, without any trace of gunpowder on their hands.

Then followed three weeks of intense air attack using MK-77 white phosphorus bombs that burn through skin without stopping, producing hideous simmering wounds that penetrated flesh all the way to the bone. Supposedly limited to their use as incendiary devices to illuminate battlefields, these bombs were brought into the fray as anti-personnel weapons, and with hideous consequences. An eight-day battle completed the attack, during which Marine snipers with telescopic gun sights steadily picked off anybody they could see in the streets who was still alive. Official statistics included between two thousand and six thousand deaths among the Iraqi, but there were probably many others as well. In contrast, between 52 and 92 U.S. troops were killed, depending on how they were counted. To help cushion bad publicity, the U.S. took steps toward rebuilding the city with the construction of a wastewater treatment plant, four new schools, and several health clinics. However, the level of damage far exceeded anything that could be done toward full recovery. Between 36,000 to 50,000 homes had been demolished as well as 60 schools and 65 mosques and shrines. Quite literally, as a U.S. officer had once famously said of a Vietnamese town (Ben Tre, lest we forget), the city of Fallujah was destroyed in order to save it.

This counterproductive use of force has also been at play on a smaller scale in all of the midnight arrests of suspected terrorists at their homes. Time and again a squad of GI's would drive up to a house in the middle of the night, suddenly kick in the front door and rush inside armed and fully prepared to shoot. Occasionally they have killed one or more male family members foolish enough to brandish a weapon in defense. The wanted suspect, usually a husband, would then be roughed up in front of his terrified family, then cuffed, hooded, and led to a vehicle outside to be taken to a police station or prison camp, usually to be tortured for a couple of weeks before released. The household was also likely to be torn apart by GIs in search for evidence. Sometimes theft actually occurred during these searches. [Fisk, p. 1012] As many as half of these suspects, it seems, later turned out to be totally innocent of direct involvement in the insurrection, at least toward the beginning of the summer. In retrospect it is difficult to imagine how an insurrection could have been more effectively orchestrated.

Needless to say, these operations have been costly to the task of winning friends among the Iraqi people. The entire family whose household has been violated in this manner could only emerge from the experience infuriated by their encounter with U.S. troops. A comparable effect can also be expected with all the neighbors who are awakened by the small convoy of military vehicles sliding by their houses, then by the sound of a front door kicked in, followed by indecipherable command-voices in a harsh foreign language, female screams, perhaps a couple of shots, and then somebody dragged out the front door to be loaded into a vehicle, and finally the rapid departure of the convoy followed by silence. We can only imagine what husbands and wives huddled in bed in nearby homes whispered to each other about what they had just heard in the dark.

Simplistic authoritarian righteousness might provide sufficient justification for the average college-age non-college GI involved in such military break-ins, but the level of brutality tends to increase once such GIs have experienced the loss of their "brothers" either to gunfire or roadside explosive devices. This change in attitude has been conceded by a young sergeant: "I sympathized with the Iraqis when we first got here. But now I'm cold, I feel no remorse. When you see some of your friends get killed, it changes you." Asked if he distinguished between "good" and "bad" Iraqi, he replied, "How can you too them apart? The same guy that waves at you can shoot you with an RPG." [Packer, p. 328] One can only speculate to what extent this GI and others might have reflected on the responsibility of the U.S. military occupation itself for this duplicity. How many Iraqi, for example, have been making almost exactly the same complaint about Americans, and with at least as many specific instances to justify themselves? And with the knowledge--a good deal more accurate than that of the GIs--that their rights were being violated in an invasion that had no justification except falsified evidence.

This level of animosity on both sides of the conflict could only have been aggravated by excessive heat day after day as well as by troop levels having been stretched so thin that some soldiers had only three days furlough during the first six months of occupation. [Packer, p. 247] The result has at times been predictably catastrophic, entire households slaughtered by U.S. troops willing to cross the dotted line and perpetrate homicidal crimes. One of the worst cases, for example, occurred on November 19, 2005, at the desert city of Haditha, where a roadside bomb killed one marine and severely injured another of the 1st Marine Division. Enraged by this

attack, a dozen fellow marines invaded between two and four nearby houses, shooting nineteen who lived there as well as five others who were getting out of a cab, as ordered, with their hands up. Altogether, those killed included eleven women and children (one of them a 3-year old girl) as well as a grandfather while reading the Koran.

A similar attack, reported by Matthew Schofield for Knight Ridder, recently took place near the town of Balad, where eleven members of a family were lined up in one room of a house and gunned down. A single older male standing against one wall was shot in the head, and ten others in the family who were lined up against the opposite wall were shot in the head, chest, or both at close range. These included four women, a couple of five-year olds, and a couple of three-year olds. Then the bodies were covered with blankets and the entire house was blown up to suggest an aerial attack had killed everybody. [consult the Schofield interview, Democracynow.org, May 30, 2006] How and why would such a massacre have taken place? It would seem that the entire family was shot one at a time in front of the older male in order to coerce information from him, but that he refused to cooperate, or his answers weren't useful enough. As a result everybody was executed, he included at the very end.

The most recent example receiving widespread publicity was when Pfc. Steven Green, of the 101st Airborne Division, along with three or four buddies (one a sergeant), invaded a home in Mahmudiya to rape a fourteen-year old girl. They herded her parents and five-year old sister into a bedroom, where Green shot and killed them, after which he and at least one of the others, yet to be identified, raped the girl on the living room floor. Then Green alone repeatedly shot her. At this point there is no clear evidence how many of the group were involved in the effort to burn her body as well as the house in order to destroy the evidence.

By now the Haditha massacre and Green's rape-murder episode have been acknowledged by the American press with the assurance that these were isolated incidents by a "few bad apples" resulting from excessive "stresses and strains." However, one need only remember the precedent of My Lai during the Vietnam War, when its unforgettable story overshadowed countless other episodes of the same kind, to wonder how many additional such incidents have occurred in Iraq only to be more successfully covered up. As with rats observed in a barn ("see one, count eight"), the ratio between publicized incidents and the overall number of such encounters, both publicized and unpublicized, might be high--in fact, a good deal higher than counting rats in a barn.

Iraqi complaints about such brutality have become commonplace in recent weeks. According to Abdul Salam Al-Kubaissi, a spokesman for the Muslim Cleric's Association, who spoke in the same interview by Amy Goodman--

This type of situation, like Haditha, is happening on almost a daily basis on one level or another in Iraq, whether it's civilian cars being shot up at U.S. checkpoints and families being killed or, on the other hand, to the level of, for example, the second siege of Fallujah, where between 4,000 and 6,000 people were killed, which I think qualifies as a massacre, as well.

According to Dahr Jamail, an independent journalist based in Baghdad, who was also included in Amy Goodman's May 30 interview,

. . . the media coverage surrounding what has happened around Haditha [is taking place] simply because Time magazine covered it, and thank heavens that they did, but this has gotten so much media coverage, and in comparison, so many of these types of incidents are happening every single week in Iraq. And I think that's astounding and important for people to remember, as well.

Iraq's current Prime Minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, upgrades the rate of frequency from weekly to daily atrocities, having argued at least twice that violence against civilians has become a "daily phenomenon" by troops in the American-led coalition who "do not respect the Iraqi people." He adds with dramatic specificity, "They crush them with their vehicles and kill them just on suspicion." Deputy prime Minister Salam al-Zubaie concurs, "As you know this is not the only massacre, and there are a lot . . . The coalition forces must change their behavior. Human blood should be sacred regardless of religion, party and nationality." [*New York Times*, June 2, 2006, p. 1, and July 7, 2006, p. A11]

As far as hawkish U.S. troops are concerned, their task is simply a matter of killing or capturing all suspected terrorists, with collateral damage always a regrettable possibility. But as far as Iraqi citizens are concerned once exposed to U.S. military violence, these soldiers of democracy have become military death squads either to be fought or avoided at all cost. Taking advantage of this lethal tendency among U.S. troops, Iraqi insurgents now actually stage attacks near relatively neutral towns. American troops predictably overreact in response to these attacks by taking punitive measures against everybody nearby, and more enemies are thus recruited to the cause. As explained by an anonymous U.S. military analyst to Seymour Hersh:

The [insurgent's] S.O.P. [standing operating procedure] is to go further out, or even to other towns, so that American retribution does not fall on their locale. Instead the Americans take it out on the city where the incident happened, and in the process they succeed in making more enemies. [Hersh, p. 282]

In other words, not only do U.S. troops generate a nation of enraged insurgents by their violent conduct, but the insurgents themselves help the Americans to maximize the effectiveness of this unintended recruitment strategy.

In a brief and deliberately generalized paragraph of *Cobra II*, Gordon and Trainor concede the obsession with violent reciprocity among GIs as a "default to meet violence with violence" and attribute it to their frustration with insurgent attacks and their "lack of preparation" to deal with "the complexities of Iraq." [p. 494] This cursory acknowledgement of a major problem nevertheless suggests at once inadequate training and inferior military discipline among American troops. During a full-scale invasion such a reactive "default" might be useful; during occupation it becomes counterproductive, and perhaps to a dangerous extent. As already indicated, the hostile treatment of Iraqi citizens by American troops, especially the marines, seems to have helped make the insurgency possible.

In response to the Haditha incident, Marine Corps Commandant General Haggee, has belatedly urged marines “not to allow the deaths of their friends in combat to make them indifferent to the loss of human life.” Haggee’s promise to provide mandatory refresher training on “legal, moral and ethical standards on the battlefield” to all U.S. troops stationed in Iraq seems appropriate, but a bit late. At this point there are too many enemies out there to make much of a difference.

To a certain extent this misguided righteousness on the part of GIs derives from their almost total ignorance about their operation. As demonstrated by a poll taken among GIs as late as September, 2003, fully 70 percent of the GIs were still convinced that Hussein had been involved in the 9/11 Trade Center attack and that he had resorted to the use of chemical weapons against our troops. [Morris Berman, *Dark Ages in America*, p. 212]. But not true. All of this evidence has been totally discredited without exception since the invasion took place despite the insistence of Fox reporters, Vice President Cheney, and the sustained effort of inspectors scouring Iraq’s countryside for telltale traces of evidence. For it should be of concern to GIs that the Iraq invasion was neither legal nor ethically justified in the first place. Christian morality (Thou shalt not kill, etc.) and the rule of international law were first violated not by the Iraqi people, but by unwelcome foreign troops ultimately resulting from greed and intentional deception at the highest levels in the Bush administration.

American troops indignant about Iraqi attacks should also take into account a favorable kill ratio between 20-1 and 40-1 (twenty-five hundred GIs as compared to between 50,000 and 100,000-plus Iraqi). Also overlooked is the fact that roughly 70 percent of the Iraqi casualties have been noncombatants, as opposed to U.S. casualties, all of whom volunteered to serve in the military, if without having anticipated the full consequences of their choice. [Bassem Mroue, “Iraqi casualties remain high despite Zarqari death,” Associated Press, July 3, 2006] In other words, each and every U.S. volunteer accepted the mortal risk of going to war, whereas the overwhelming majority of Iraqi casualties did not. Too many of the Iraqi were innocent victims caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, while those Iraqi engaged in combat considered themselves to be freedom fighters dedicated to their country’s liberation from foreign enemies. And there was at least a grain of truth to their logic.

6. Torture Works

By fall, 2003 armed resistance was intensifying with such success that it could easily have thwarted the Bush administration’s entire design for Iraq. The invasion was on the brink of failure, and too much was at risk. U.S. control of Iraq’s oil reserves, thus the world’s total oil reserves, would have been thwarted. Moreover, the American presence in the Near East would have been jeopardized, Iraq’s useful example of a laissez faire democracy in the Arab world, and the invasion’s no less useful example as a war machine in action with rapid-strike effectiveness would have been totally discredited. And there was every possibility that the Iraqi conflict would sink into protracted violence that finally necessitates a negotiated withdrawal comparable to Kissinger’s tacit surrender of South Vietnam. To prevent the repetition of such a demeaning outcome, something needed to be done as soon as possible, and as effectively as possible. The

American forces somehow had to “get ahead of the curve” in the cycle of violence that was taking place in Iraq.

Large prison camps--essentially concentration camps--thus came to be emphasized to detain potential insurgents and to obtain as much information as possible about their connection with the insurgency. The notorious Abu Ghraib prison facility was completely reburbed, supplemented by Camp Bucca near Basra, Fort Suse near Suleimaniya starting in October, 2005, and Camp Cropper for high status prisoners next to the Baghdad airport. As early as May, 2003, there were 11,300 Iraqi prisoners of war. [Fisk, p. 1101) Between eight and fourteen thousand prisoners are said to have been held in these camps on a steadily rotating basis according to official reports, but there were probably many more. According to Amnesty International, tens of thousands have been held for weeks and months, and thousands for more than a year, most of them, one might add, on a “preventative” rather than a punitive basis. According to Seymour Hersh, as many as 50,000 prisoners have been held at a time at Abu Ghraib [Hersh, p. 20]. It has been estimated that perhaps half these prisoners, whatever the total, turned out to be no threat whatsoever.

Many prisoners were at least “roughed up” during interrogation, and word of what was going on quickly spread throughout Iraq, if without having been reported by the embedded U.S. press. However, the approach was not systematic and it bore inadequate results. The mounting number of successful ambush attacks by insurgents accordingly depended on a substantial imbalance between, on one hand, the quick intelligence they received from informants at every level of authority in the sponsored transitional government, and, on the other, the random and unreliable information U.S. troops had at their disposal coaxed from prisoners sometimes over a period of weeks. Worse yet, Hussein’s elaborate cell structure minimized the familiarity of any particular guerrilla with the identity and scheduled activities of others in the movement. As a result, more information was needed from more sources, and as quickly as possible to be effective in preventing future attacks.

So what was to be done? The single most compelling answer was torture. The great revelation, as explained by one of Robert Fisk’s anonymous sources, was, simply enough, the hideous truth that “torture works.” [Fisk, p. 1011] Of course Article III of the Geneva Conventions prohibits torture, and of course most information obtained from prisoners under torture consists of desperate lies to stop being hurt by their interrogators. Nevertheless, torture techniques can be used that presumably fall short of Geneva limitations, and enough information obtained by torture turns out to be true in the opinion of those engaged in torture who justified its use in order to save American lives. For indeed some prisoners “sing like a bird,” and their cooperation has in fact turned out to be of crucial importance to the American counter-insurgency, whatever the cost in further antagonizing the Iraqi population as a whole.

In retrospect this dependence on torture can be seen to have been an inevitable outcome of our nation’s invasion of Iraq. It was in fact part of the package if the operation was to have any chance of success from the very beginning if there was any prolonged resistance to be suppressed. For if the size of the occupation army was to be kept as small as possible, and if the capture and occupation of Iraq was to be combined with its immediate privatization, producing high levels of unemployment and social turmoil, and if the flood of bogus intelligence by the

Pentagon's Office of Special Plans (OSP) was any indication of the reliability of information otherwise available to U.S. military planners, a better and more reliable source of intelligence was essential to be able to take the upper hand. A quick expedient was necessary to fill the intelligence gap, and what better answer to this challenge than the effective use of torture? Torture had been used to a certain extent in many previous wars, most notably in the Phoenix Campaign during the Vietnam War. Here in Iraq it became an urgent necessity.

Torture had already been emphasized in Afghanistan with the excuse that al Qaeda troops did not serve a sovereign nation and could therefore be treated without any constraints imposed by the Geneva Conventions. The same excuse seemed to apply with the use of Guantanamo Bay as a prison for al Qaeda captives. Here torture came to be practiced with more consistency in accord with constraints imposed by both the Pentagon and White House. "Torture lite," as usually described, was featured as an application of seemingly harmless procedures whose combination bore an even more devastating impact than the more traditional modes of torture. The two primary applications involved sensory deprivation (being hooded, etc.) and the use of stressed body positions (being forced to stand, sit, or lie in one position for an extended period, sometimes days at a time). When sensory deprivation and stressed body position were used in combination, the effect could be devastating, for example in the celebrated photograph of a hooded prisoner standing on a box and hooked up with wires supposedly to electrocute him if he changed his position and fell off the box. Such an approach was cruel, especially when supplemented by not so "lite" applications such as electric shocks, water-boarding, pulled fingernails, and of course severe beatings.

By late August, 2003, when it was plain that the insurgency was entirely out of control, General Geoffrey Miller, the commander of Guantanamo Bay, brought this sophisticated use of torture to Abu Ghraib. Miller also sought to "Gitmoize" Iraq's prison system by depending on the use of personnel from the Special Access Program. Moreover, he insisted that Iraq prisons should primarily emphasize the collection of information needed to improve the war effort, and suggested the additional leverage that the military police could be used to "soften up" prisoners in preparation for the interrogation sessions. Miller claimed that with these few changes "a significant improvement of actionable intelligence [would] be realized within thirty days." [Hersh, pp. 46-47] In order to help demoralize prisoners preceding their interrogation, it was also decided that enforced sexual conduct could be used to humiliate them as suggested in George Patai's book, *The Arab Mind*, published in 1973. Patai's arguments seem to have been taken seriously by the torture specialists at Abu Ghraib when they photographed prisoners naked in various groupings. These photographs could also be used later to blackmail prisoners into further cooperation as neighborhood spies once released from prison. [Hersh, pp. 38-39]

By November, 2003, torture was in full force, combining a large variety of torture techniques, as later specified by the Taguba Report, some of which may be listed here:

Punching, slapping, and kicking detainees; jumping on their naked feet; forcibly arranging detainees in various sexually explicit positions for photographing; forcing detainees to remove their clothing and keeping them naked for several days at a time; forcing groups of male detainees to masturbate themselves while being photographed and videotaped; arranging naked male detainees in a pile and

then jumping on them; positioning a naked detainee on a MRE Box, with a sand-bag on his head, and attaching wires to his fingers, toes, and penis to simulate electric torture; placing a dog chain or strap around a naked detainee's neck and having a female soldier pose for a picture; a male MP guard having sex [rape?] with a female detainee; using military working dogs without muzzles to intimidate and frighten detainees, and in at least one case biting and severely injuring a detainee; taking photographs of a dead Iraqi detainee; breaking chemical lights and pouring the phosphoric liquid on detainees; threatening detainees with a charged 9mm pistol; and sodomizing a detainee with a chemical light and perhaps a broom handle. [L and O, pp. 224-26]

Also found useful were the use of restraint chairs and the application of extreme heat and cold.

Applied in combination, these techniques could be dangerous. At least thirty detainees have died either during and immediately following torture in Iraq, and the total might be many more. Among torture centers throughout the world, including Bagram in Afghanistan and top-secret "black sites" in such countries as Poland, Rumania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bulgaria, and the Ukraine, it has been estimated, according to Al Gore, that as many as a hundred prisoners have been killed by torture. ["Restoring the Rule of Law." (January 16, 2006)].

One doubts, however, that the exact number of prisoners killed in Iraq's detention centers will ever be disclosed, since many of them are submitted to "enforced disappearance." As "ghost detainees," their identity has been kept top secret and they are transferred incommunicado from one prison to another to avoid detection by the Red Cross, Amnesty International, and other such agencies. They are also shuffled by "extraordinary rendition" to various black sites across the globe or to nations (Egypt, Syria, etc.) that are willing to stretch the Geneva Conventions even further to extract information from prisoners. At least a hundred such individuals have been counted (if not identified) in Iraq alone by Amnesty International. ["Beyond Abu Ghraib: detention and torture in Iraq," March 6, 2006]. Some of these individuals can be expected to "disappear" altogether, too physically impaired and mentally damaged to be permitted to share their experience with others.

The American dependence on torture was first publicized by CBS's *60 Minutes* exposé on April 28, 2004. This program displayed a couple dozen photographs of prisoners being prepped for torture with an emphasis on homosexual interaction. There was an enormous outcry throughout the world against our nation's use of torture in Iraq, and Senator McCain of Arizona, himself a victim of torture during the Vietnam War, put forward a bill in the U.S. Senate that would totally ban the practice by the U.S. government. After much haggling, McCain's bill finally gained passage in January, 2006, and it was signed by President Bush, but with an appended "signing statement" which declared in so many words that he "would not be bound by the provisions of the bill in his role as chief executive and commander in chief." [L and O, p. 147] In effect he accepted the legality of the bill but at the same time declared he would only enforce it when he pleased.

Today the American personnel of Iraq's detention centers take a more circumspect approach to torture. It is still practiced, but as much as possible in detention centers under the

control of Iraq's Interior Ministry. For example, the largest of these Iraqi centers, the prison on al-Nasr Square, is said to be visited on a daily basis by U.S. troops, who are able to watch what happens to prisoners without directly participating in making it happen. Not until December, 2005, did a U.S. military commander, Major General John Gardner, finally declare, "We will not pass on facilities or detainees until they [the Iraqi authorities] meet the standards we define and that we are using today." [Amnesty International, March 6, 2006] Unfortunately, on-site inspections by the Red Cross, Amnesty International, and other such organizations have been more severely limited. As a result torture has actually increased in frequency by Iraqi police linked with its provisional government rather than American supervisors.

The difference between torture by U.S. and Iraqi personnel, respectively applied in 2003 and 2005, is illustrated by the example of Karim R., which is cited by Amnesty International. A 47-year old imam and preacher. Karim is also the head of a charity who was first detained by U.S. forces in 2003 and later by Iraqi forces in 2005. American interrogators insulted, blindfolded, beat and subjected him to severe electric shocks from a stun gun before releasing him from detention seven days later without charging him with any crime. In contrast, Iraqi interrogators later detained him for sixteen days, a period over twice as long. They also blindfolded and beat him, but they shocked him with a more powerful electric charge while they kept him suspended from the ceiling by his arms tied behind his back. Also, unlike the Americans, they forced him to make an oral confession on camera before releasing him uncharged.

The excesses of presumably unsupervised torture that culminate in death are more dramatically illustrated by the killing of Abd Hamad Mawoush, an Iraqi general, two weeks after he turned himself in to U.S. authorities. U.S. army interrogators supposedly rolled him back and forth in a sleeping bag, sat on his chest, covered his mouth to prevent him from breathing, and savagely beat him with hoses. Even more graphic is Amnesty International's autopsy description of the Sunni cleric, Hassan al-Nu'aimi, a member of the Association of Muslim scholars, who was found dead in Baghdad in May, 2005:

There are police-issue handcuffs still attached to one wrist, from which he was hanged long enough to cause his hands and wrists to swell. There are burn marks on his chest, as if someone has placed something very hot near his right nipple and moved it around. A little lower are a series of horizontal welts, wrapping around his body and breaking the skin as they turn around his chest, as if he had been beaten with something flexible, perhaps a cable. There are other injuries: a broken nose and smaller wounds that look like cigarette burns. An arm appears to have been broken and one of the higher vertebrae is pushed inwards. There is a cluster of small, neat circular wounds on both sides of his left knee. At some stage [al-Nu'aimi] seems to have been efficiently knee-capped. It was not done with a gun--the exit wounds are identical in size to the entry wounds, which would not happen with a bullet. Instead it appears to have been done with something like a drill. What actually killed him, however, were the bullets fired into his chest at close range, probably by someone standing over him as he lay on the ground. The last two hit him in the head. ["Beyond Abu Ghraib" (March 6, 2006)]

And so much for religious freedom. Indeed, American supervisors were probably not involved in this particular incident of torture and murder, but chances are excellent that the Shi'ite interrogators who were, were trained, subsidized, and perhaps encouraged by Americans. Moreover, Americans are finally responsible for having made this kind of violence possible. Of course Hussein's regime had committed many similar (and even worse) uses of torture, but President Bush's promised to expose the Iraqi people to something better, and he didn't. Instead he restored the practice of potentially homicidal torture, this time in the cause of American democracy.

There has been repeated effort to extenuate the U.S. government officials at its very highest levels regarding the use of torture by exclusively blaming it on a few Appalachian GIs that staff Abu Ghraib. Such ordinary soldiers as Ivan Frederick, Charles Graner, and Lynndie England are supposed to have taken many dozens of provocative photos of themselves and their prisoners for sheer sadistic pleasure. However, there is a good deal more to the story than this. As already indicated, their sadistic misbehavior, usually during the night, was intended to "loosen up" prisoners scheduled to be interrogated the next day. The chain of command for undertaking this approach seems to have gone all the way to the top--from Colonel Pappas, the senior commander of military intelligence at Abu Ghraib, to General Miller, to General Sanchez, to General Abizaid, to Stephen Cambone (Assistant Secretary of Defense), and finally to Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld himself as well as President Bush.

Secretary Rumsfeld had already been in frequent telephone contact with General Miller and others at Guantanamo Bay about finding the best and most effective sequence for the torture of one particular al Qaeda prisoner, Mohamed al-Katani (the so-called twentieth hijacker). [see Michael Scherer and Mark Benjamin, "What Rumsfeld Knew," salon.com, April 14, 2006] As in the case of al-Katani's torture, the warming up sessions at Abu Ghraib also brought the issue of effective sequence into play among different uses of torture, so the possibility cannot be discounted that Rumsfeld had a hand in this as well, at least as a final authority already familiar with the usefulness of such considerations.

Rumsfeld's April 16, 2003, "Memo on Torture" also demonstrated his awareness of the issue, as did President Bush's keen interest in the use of torture demonstrated by Alberto Gonzales's January 25, 2002, "Memorandum for the President," authored by Jay Bybee, which authorized Bush to ignore the Geneva Conventions regarding torture short of killing prisoners. Also relevant, as already indicated, was Bush's signing statement that indicated his unwillingness to abide completely by Senator McCain's anti-torture bill. And last but not least, as reported June 5, 2006, in *The Los Angeles Times*, it cannot be ignored that the portion of the Army's Field Manual (Directive 2310) that has extended Article 3 of the Geneva Contentions to the avoidance of torture by U.S. troops has recently been removed from the text by President Bush's civilian lawyers. No longer does the Field Manual prevent the use of torture.

So torture has become standard operating procedure, and it was only a matter of time before it was exposed and publicized. Unlike the Phoenix program in Vietnam, which was kept entirely under wraps, the softening up of prisoners for torture in Iraq was photographed for later use in blackmailing ex-prisoners, the photographs came to be shared by GIs, most of whom seem

to have taken pleasure in them, and eventually they reached the press. Tangible proof, the naked snapshots, could not be denied, after which the entire story unraveled. The result? The outcome has been totally disastrous. It may be speculated that Iraqi dissidents are now far more willing than before to fight to the death as an alternative to surrendering and being tortured. They are consequently a good deal more effective than they would have been if offered acceptance in an amnesty program that specifically precluded torture. Moreover, the use of torture by some Iraqi against others, as encouraged to free up American interrogators from the onus as torturers, was reciprocated by potential victims of torture, and soon enough everybody was torturing everybody else. As in fact has happened more or less in this sequence. Meanwhile, the American public can only be horrified by the practice. Liberals have been able to express their outrage, whereas conservatives have more likely sought out less distasteful “good” reasons to question the value of the Iraqi occupation that could be acknowledged at the family dinner table.

And of course the rest of the world is acutely aware of the extent to which torture has been practiced. Al Jazeera has led the pack in publicizing the issue in the Near East, but Europe has also kept abreast, as has South America, Southeast Asia, and everywhere else. For it turns out that a systematic reliance on torture finally serves its purpose in the same manner as robbing a bank. In both instances criminal violation “works” in the sense that immediate benefits are possible as long as one avoids capture. When one is finally exposed the jig is up and the entire venture backfires just as it ought to. For the consequences turn out to be far worse than the advantage sought. Major penalties result, prison time in one instance, a badly tarnished international reputation in the other. And that’s exactly what has transpired in Iraq.

7. A Global Overview

Some pundits and prognosticators still consider Mission Iraqi Freedom to be a qualified success. Victory continues to be their goal, whatever it takes, and they deem it mandatory to bring the operation to its final successful outcome. This Panglossian optimism has dominated the pronouncements of Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Condoleezza Rice as well as both Republican lawmakers and at least a few of their conservative Democratic colleagues such as Lieberman and (alas) Hillary Clinton. Also supportive--even enthusiastic at times--have been retired talking-head generals and colonels, CNN and Fox newscasters, *The Wall Street Journal* editorial staff, and Thomas Friedman of *The New York Times*, whose repeated assurances that the Iraqi debacle is exactly now turning the corner have become a joke among internet bloggers.

In his useful but establishmentarian book, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco*, David Phillips also conveys optimism by suggesting the many mistakes that have been made in Iraq can still be rectified in light of our improved sophistication resulting from these mistakes. Next time around we won’t be making them, he promises. On the other hand, he finds relevant the pungent aphorism, “When you’re digging a hole stop digging.” [p. 237] He also concedes that false optimism has been encouraged based on a quick two-year sequence of arranged political accomplishments in Iraq:

At every critical juncture in Iraq's political transition--establishment of the Iraqi Governing Council, the November 15 Agreement, adoption of the Transitional Administrative Law, the hand-over of sovereignty to an interim authority on June 28--the Bush administration claimed that Iraq was turning the corner. True to course, U.S. officials were exuberant about Iraq's election of January 30. Alas, not much has changed. [p. 222]

However, he does not discount the possibility of victory and argues that most of the missteps in Iraq can at least be avoided in our nation's future effort (god help us) to promote regime change in other nations of the world.

In *The Bush Agenda*, Antonia Juhasz expresses a far more appropriate skepticism of the U.S. effort. However, she also concedes the modest successes of the invasion, in her case by emphasizing specific accomplishments rather than the constitutional modifications to bring them about:

While violence increases daily in Iraq and the resistance grows, the Bush administration can be confident about a few things. First, the economic restructuring is well in place and moving forward. The banking, investment, patent, copyright, foreign ownership, commercial, utilities, taxes, media, and trade laws, among others, have been changed according to plan, and Iraq is on its way to WTO membership. Second, U.S. corporations continue to earn billions of dollars for work in Iraq and have the potential to earn far more. Third, a government is in place that, while not ideal, is certainly preferable to the previous regime in terms of its willingness to advance Bush administration goals. Fourth, and most important to many, the oil sector has been opened to U.S. corporate access and control. Everything may not have gone exactly according to the Bush administration's plans in Iraq, but all things considered, Bush's key political and corporate allies have much to be optimistic about. [p. 259]

Both Phillips and Juhasz, one suspects, are far too generous in their assessment of current gains and future U.S. prospects in Iraq. And the single ingredient they tend to deemphasize relevant to its importance is, simply enough, the level of violence involved--both American violence and Iraqi violence. Juhasz does mention violence but without sufficient acknowledgement of its importance.

For excessive violence has since the very beginning been an essential feature of the invasion and occupation of Iraq: (1) resulting from massive fire power during the initial shock-and-awe invasion of Iraq; (2) resulting from abuse by an undermanned occupation army; (3) resulting from atrocities committed by demoralized troops against an increasingly hostile populace; and (4) resulting from the use of prisons and torture in the effort to reverse the likelihood of failure. And thus the crucial role of violence since the very beginning.

When our troops invaded Iraq in March, 2003, too many Americans were beset with a vulgar triumphalist naïveté too often mistaken for patriotism. "Bring 'em on," the President exclaimed, and a large majority of the public pumped their fists in the air in enthusiastic

agreement. It seemed to be payback time for 9/11, and for once with us on the winning side against an evil dictatorship. Not surprisingly, the treatment of Iraqi, described as “ragheads,” was condescending, often insulting. Our troops pushed them around and barked orders at them with the assumption that we were helping “these people” by taking charge of their country to give them our superior version of democracy. Hence our God-given right to impose rigorous military rules and procedures that justified occasional “shoot first, ask questions later” encounters, whether these turned out to be justified or not.

Many Iraqi were necessarily offended by this abuse, and they responded with their own version of violence, necessarily a good deal more furtive but also, dollar-for-dollar, more effective. As with comparable situations elsewhere in the world through the twentieth century (also, incidentally, during the American Revolution in the late eighteenth century), insurgents have resorted to hit-and-run guerrilla tactics. In Iraq, with its unique resources, this tactic entailed an emphasis on the plentiful use of bombs. Not surprisingly, Iraqi insurgents have been unable to confront American troops face-to-face in a direct encounter, as demonstrated during the siege of Fallujah, but they could instead resort to surprise bombings wherever possible.

The gradual effect on U.S. troops has been a mounting hatred not too different from the hostility felt by the Iraqi toward Americans. GIs began by using violence to dominate the host population; later they have also resorted to violence to express their anger and frustration, and of course their loss of constraint has intensified the backlash that further contributes to the worsening of their situation. Insurgents are accordingly being recruited as fast as they can be killed, and recent polls indicate that a whopping 83 percent of the Sunni population want U.S. troops withdrawn within six months, and at least 71 percent of the Shi’ite population stretch this timetable to no more than two years [see Noah Feldman, “Disunities,” *NYT Magazine*, April 9, 2006, p. 11]. If current reports are correct in indicating a change of mind among some of the Sunni leadership, it’s only because the Shi’ite slaughter of Sunnis has gotten completely out of hand in recent weeks on the streets of Baghdad. Though these leaders continue to oppose the occupation for having brought about this slaughter, they are more willing to accept its temporary extension to help minimize Shi’ite atrocities as much as possible. [see Edward Wong and Dexter Filkins, “In an About-Face, Sunnis Want U.S. to Remain in Iraq,” *NYT*, July 17, 2006, p. 1]

But there are negative complications elsewhere as well. Unfortunately, sustained warfare in Iraq has brought about a relative neglect of the occupation in Afghanistan, where as a result the Taliban is beginning to make a comeback. As a result our nation is now involved in two active wars at this point, not just one, and the overall cost has been much higher than first anticipated. According to the House Budget Committee’s Democratic staff, Bush will have spent more than \$445 billion (including next years’ funds) on the Iraq and Afghanistan wars combined since 9/11. Presently it is estimated that warfare is costing the U.S. taxpayer \$150 million per day. A higher estimate but easy to remember is \$10 billion per month.

In other words, our nation is losing the war pretty much as it did in Vietnam, if in a more complicated way. Not that any of the factions in Iraq is winning except possibly the Kurds, who keep to themselves as much as possible. Otherwise, hostilities have degenerated into chaos, the conflict between U.S. troops and the insurgency having bought civil war just as many had earlier predicted. Violence has proliferated at every level--clan versus clan, religious faction versus

faction, neighborhood versus neighborhood, and even, one suspects, family members within households divided among themselves about what to do. Approximately 100 Iraqi have been killed per day since January, 2006, according to a UN estimate, some in combat with U.S. troops, but most in internecine conflict among various factions. [Kirk Semple, "Iraqi Death Toll Rises Above 100 Per Day, UN Says," NYT, July 19, 2006), p. 1.] Conflict between Sunni and Shi'ites has spread to conflict among competitive Sunni and Shi'ite factions, most notably among the Sunni guerrilla groups, the Mahdi Army, the Badr Corps, and the Marsh Arabs of the Iraqi Shites. Killers kill police officers, and police officers turn killers themselves. Kidnappings occur daily by criminals as well as political activists, and large numbers of those kidnapped are executed, many of them beheaded. Scholars and intellectuals have been targeted and killed, by whom nobody can be certain, and the wealthy pay whatever seems needed to flee the country. Whose fault has it been? The answer is quite simple, almost too simple to admit: this incredible bloodthirsty quagmire is what our government has produced by invading Iraq. In the effort to "save" the country, as Bush claimed at one stage in his public relations campaign supportive of Iraq's occupation, we have actually produced its ruination. And we didn't just destroy a city to save it, as in the case of Fallujah. We have accomplished this feat for the entire nation.

Moreover, the Near East as a whole has been severely destabilized by the operation. Bugged down in Iraq, the Bush administration has had insufficient leverage to prevent Iran's advancement of its nuclear program. Similarly, Israel has limited the Bush-Blair "road map" to granting the independence of the Gaza strip alone among its occupied territories. When Gaza Palestinians elected the Hamas in free elections, the Bush administration fully supported Israel in its harassment of the Hamas government in order to force its immediate recognition of the state of Israel. After sustained aggression by Israel, the capture of a single Israeli soldier by Hamas guerrillas (just a day or so after Israeli troops captured two non-combatant Palestinian college students) triggered Israel's systematic destruction of Gaza's civilian infrastructure, inclusive of its power grid and government office buildings. Hezbollah came to the support of Hamas from Lebanon, probably at the instigation of Iran and Syria, and now deadly retaliatory bombings occur between the cities of Beirut and Haifa, again with Israel stressing the destruction of civilian infrastructure (47 bridges and a convoy of ambulances within the first forty-eight hours, etc.) as well as benefiting from a 10-1 kill ratio.

Meanwhile, contrary to the promise of neo-conservatives, the price of oil has risen to more than three dollars per barrel, and our nation confronts the imminent prospect of a 1973-style recession. Of course our oil industry benefits from this spike in oil prices, but so do the nations of Russia under Putin and Venezuela under Chavez, producing an entirely new challenge to U.S. foreign policy. Would any of this have happened if the Bush administration had not attacked Iraq? Perhaps. But chances are excellent that it could have been prevented or better played out.

At least as important as the issue of violence in the failure of Operation Iraqi Freedom has been the issue of incompetence. For as usual the two go hand in hand. It has taken excessive levels of administrative failure to produce such high levels of destruction. A lot has gone wrong in implementing the invasion and occupation, and without the many mistakes that have been made at every turn of events, an entirely different outcome just might have been possible. So who was it that made these mistakes? Virtually everybody, it seems.

At the very top of the pyramid is President Bush, who risked his entire eight-year administration in his effort to capture and occupy Iraq. As the saying goes, he bet his enterprise on a single product that didn't sell. Though he has yet to admit it, he's lost his bet in Iraq, just as he did before his presidency with two speculative oil ventures as well as the Texas Rangers when he both traded Sammy Sosa and shortened the outfield walls. Nor was he deserving of praise when he presided as governor of Texas over more executions than any other governor in U.S. history. He also fell short of possibilities after his reelection to the presidency, when he tried to privatize Social Security and ignored the New Orleans flood disaster. Time and again Bush seems to have won in order to lose, just as he has made a show of his honesty in order to tell lies, and jumped to quick and superficial decisions only to back them up with obstinate inflexibility afterwards. John-Wayne swagger aside, he turns out to be both dangerous and pathetic--a war president unable to win any of his wars.

On the other hand, we cannot overlook the hubristic failure of other, more talented high officials that has ultimately been more dangerous. Wolfowitz, for example, as well as Feith, Luti and Shulsky of the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans, were remarkably competent in their effort to make the invasion happen. However, their ability to "massage" CIA intelligence in order to confirm their *idée fixe* that the capture of Iraq would be easy and of essential importance in meeting the needs of both Israel and the United States should have been more effectively balanced by a full awareness of alternative possibilities. They should have double and triple-checked concocted truths that turned out to be entirely false, and they should have more fully taken into account everything that could and did in fact go wrong. For the primary source of their inside misinformation was almost entirely Chalabi's stable of expatriate Iraqis who were even more dedicated to stirring up an invasion, whatever lies needed to be told. As a result, the success of Wolfowitz and his group at the expense of the CIA and State Department was ultimately counterproductive for everybody involved.

Bremer also played a tragic role. As proconsul he dictated Iraq's policies with efficiency exactly when it mattered in meeting the rigid schedule, whatever it was at the time, toward the creation of an Iraqi constitution and a nominally democratic state. And he seems to have been sincere in his effort to bring this about. However, the entire process turned out to be irrelevant to the mounting civil war, and he was incompetent when his decisions truly mattered. He should have accepted the advice Khalilzad and others who knew much more of Iraq than he did. He should not have disbanded the Iraqi army and blacklisted the entire top Baathist leadership. Nor should he have tolerated Bechtel's bait-and-switch promise to fix the existing electrical system followed by ambitious plans to create an entirely new system. Worst of all he should not have imposed privatization favorable to U.S. investors until order was fully restored in Iraq. By trying to create democracy and totally privatize industries at the same time, he set the stage for the ultimate failure of both.

And Rumsfeld has been no less tragic. He was a remarkably talented Secretary of Defense, but his contempt for both the State Department and the Pentagon's Chiefs of Staff he inherited from the Clinton administration was a mistake. Also, his effort to micro-manage the entire operation led to fatal mistakes as soon as the occupation began. What had been won on the battlefield was lost during the so-called period of transition that followed, and ultimately

Rumsfeld was in full control in both instances. His problem--as had been Napoleon's and Hitler's--was that he overreached himself, in his instance by keeping the number of U.S. troops as low as possible both during combat and during the occupation, the latter exactly when their numbers should have been enlarged to at least double their size in order to obtain an amicable relationship with the host population. The streets of Baghdad should have been full of GIs with broad smiles on their faces and candy bars to give children. Their appropriate task was to make friends, not to conquer enemies. That had already been done.

And finally Vice President Cheney cannot be overlooked, as much as anything because of his effort to merge Clinton's pursuit of globalization with the cash-cow Cold War economy emphasized in previous decades. Clinton had largely abandoned neo-Keynsian militarism for a peaceful but risky alternative strategy of globalization that almost effortlessly exported our major industries for the bottom-line profitability that could be obtained from outsourcing labor. For Chinese workers, it turned out, could serve Wall Street's needs better than unionized U.S. workers with supposedly inflated health and retirement benefits (benefits that government itself provides in most other advanced industrial nations). The unique "genius" of Cheney's synthesis has been to resuscitate cold-war economic policies in the pursuit of globalization. For why not combine the two by putting shock-and-awe teeth in foreign investment? Appropriately, the first task toward this hybrid strategy was to capture Iraq's oil fields as a modern-day crown jewel to guarantee sustained economic dominance for many decades to come. This preliminary step was of paramount importance, since oil, which burns, lubricates, and makes plastics, is the key to the ownership of everything else. Alas, however, bloodthirsty failure in Iraq has turned out to be, if anything, even more damaging to Bush's version of globalization than its success would have been useful to it. Our nation is far worse for the experience.

Some have argued that Bush and his supporters wanted to leave Iraq within a few months of the invasion, suggesting that a permanent relationship was never in the works. [Packer, p. 147] However, this is simply not true. Such an idealistic expectation was doubtful to begin with, and for exactly this reason Jay Garner, who best represented the honest effort to implement it, was quickly ejected from his leadership role. An entirely different plan emerged to focus exclusively on the establishment of a permanent presence in Iraq. Why otherwise the elaborate competitive strategies for the control and development of Iraqi oil? Why the construction now in progress for as many as fourteen permanent military bases in Iraq as well as the biggest embassy in world history, a 104-acre site in the Green Zone, the very heart of Baghdad? And with the very biggest embassy staff in the world? Simply enough, it seems plain that Cheney and others at the top of the administration, whatever their claims otherwise, never intended to abandon Iraq once a puppet regime could be established. Instead, Iraq would have been organized as a permanent client state ultimately of, by, and for American interests.

The benefits of such an arrangement would have been multiple. The Iraqi people would of course have been permitted to enjoy nominal sovereign authority, but a sufficient presence of U.S. troops would have kept in permanent facilities to guarantee U.S. interests in an arrangement similar to those of countless South and Central American nations in the past. Foreign investors would one way or another have exerted full control of Iraq's natural resources. Oil in particular would have been entirely controlled by U.S. oil corporations, and as a result OPEC would have been marginalized. Moreover, Israel would have enjoyed better security; the dollar would have

been safe from usurpation by the Euro; U.S. financial institutions would have continued to dominate the world economy; and the American people (those with decent jobs and/or lucrative investments) could enjoy their affluence for many decades to come.

The problem is that Clinton's version of globalization depended on the good will of all parties involved, whereas the slaughterous occupation of Iraq hardly benefits our international reputation as a desirable trading partner. Right now the entire Muslim corridor that sweeps from Casablanca to Bali is antagonistic to U.S. interests except for a couple of obvious "sweetheart" oil producers. A few governments in the region might try to seem compliant, but they must also cope with a populace that has become murderously hostile toward the United States. Europeans, on the other hand, almost unanimously treat us with suppressed contempt, and South America is engaged in emancipating itself. Venezuela and Bolivia have become outright enemies, and most of the rest of the continent is at least unsympathetic. As for China and Russia, both are obviously biding their time toward future encounters.

Iraq has become a monumental blunder no matter what kind of an outcome takes place. Even if our troops finally win in Iraq, we have already lost the war relevant to the far more important objective of securing what might be described as the fealty of Iraq's government and people as well as promoting our friendly and cooperative hegemonic dominance in the world's economy. For now that we are the most powerful nation in the world, we have also become demonstrably the single most dangerous "rogue nation" in the entire world--so dangerous, in fact, that nobody in power elsewhere (except Hugo Chavez of Venezuela) is able to admit it publicly. Nevertheless, the whole global community can finally see for themselves that the emperor walks naked--no less bare than the groveling prisoner whom Lynndie England held at the end of a leash while smoking a cigarette in one of her infamous torture photographs.

The most likely historical outcome now seems obvious. In his latest book, *American Theocracy* (Viking, 2006), Kevin Phillips quotes Will Durant and others to the effect that most of the major epicenters of modern European civilizations--he cites Spain, the Netherlands, and England, neglecting to mention France and Germany--went through distinct stages of growth and decline that began with agriculture and progressed to emphasize industry and commerce and then a final period of high debt levels and intensive banking and investment. This seems to apply to today's U.S. economy, for example, through the heavy dependence on credit cards, a real estate bubble, and an open-ended military budget. [pp. 300-302] If this simple paradigm is combined with Paul Kennedy's earlier theory of excessive military expansionism as a source of economic collapse, which he proposed in his 1987 book, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, it seems possible to locate the United States well on the road to the final stages of decline. As a result the Iraq debacle turns out not to herald future success, but to provide a militaristic interlude in the economic collapse of our nation. In the misbegotten effort to leverage our nation's hegemonic dominance into something better, our government has produced blowback on a grand scale best described as collective tragedy every bit as demeaning as our defeat in Vietnam.

England's hundred-thirty year period of hegemonic ascendancy provides a useful comparison relevant to the pattern of decline. England's Waterloo victory in 1815 combined with the 1814-15 Congress of Vienna finally catapulted it into the status of a singular empire unhampered by competition with France. The 1853-56 Crimean War confirmed this ascendancy

despite its somewhat uncertain outcome. However, England's dominant role in India, Africa, and elsewhere gradually lost its profitability, and the nation's benevolent image as an imperial power suffered its first major setback with the Boer War at the turn of the twentieth century, when it was obliged to invent the concentration camp as a necessary expedient toward the achievement of victory. Then the two World Wars, which were presumably successful defenses of its hegemonic authority, turned out to be disastrous to its economy, and this necessitated the transfer of its imperial role to the United States at the end of World War II. Without having lost a single war, paradoxically, England discovered by 1947 that it could no longer afford its earlier policies, and it reluctantly accepted its second-class status.

And what of our own nation's future prospects on a comparable scale? The end of World War II in 1945 seems to have been our equivalent to England's Waterloo. Victory against the axis powers was enormously profitable to the U.S. economy, as confirmed by the arrangement imposed by the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference that shifted central banking from London to New York City. Just as Versailles had capped victory at Waterloo for England, Bretton Woods capped victory during World War II to the United States. However, later military conflict turned out to be a good deal less helpful to our international role than it had been to England's. The Korean War resulted in a negotiated truce after General McArthur's catastrophic drive to the Yalu River. Then came outright defeat with North Vietnam's invasion of South Vietnam after a "decent interval," in the words of Kissinger. Today it seems safe to argue that we are once again confronted with defeat in Iraq, whether we win the war or not. True, the 1989 Panama and 1990 Gulf War episodes were easy victories, as were the reluctant victories in Bosnia and Kosovo. But the bigger wars--those that mattered--have borne less than satisfactory results in the advancement of American imperial expectations as a superpower.

Fortunately, the dollar has provided the universal medium of exchange over this period, but it is falling off rather quickly in today's competition with foreign currencies such as the Euro and Yen. Moreover, as with England preceding the two World Wars, our economy has been stretched to the limit by our overly expansionistic expenditures. In military matters alone, the maintenance of 725 military bases abroad seems extravagant, a major factor in our inability to provide sufficient troops in Iraq. [Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire* (Metropolitan Books, 2004), pp. 4, 24]. As a result, we seem stymied in the sixtieth year of our hegemonic fling, half the period of time enjoyed by England after Waterloo. Like Germany, which consumed itself in the seven decades that elapsed between the Franco-Prussian War and Hitler's defeat, our claim to imperial status seems to have been in trouble almost before it began, and without the many cultural benefits that both England and Germany enjoyed during their heyday--their amazing advances in science, philosophy, literature, music and art. Like Spain during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we have little to show for our successes. Spain invented El Greco and Don Quixote; we've invented electronic technology, synthetic products, and the atomic bomb. That's about it.

Does this mean that the Iraq debacle predicts utter collapse for the United States? Not at all. One suspects a "soft landing" will happen instead. Bush or one of his successors in the White House will find a respectable way to remove the American presence from Iraq, and our political and economic leadership will do everything necessary to maneuver a gentle aftermath when the dollar finally bottoms out, as it shall. Afterwards we will be able to carry on with our

lives just as Spaniards have done since the seventeenth century, just as the French have done since Waterloo, and just as the English and Germans have done since the end of World War II. And, lest we forget, just as Canada has done since its very beginning. Of course our imperial pretensions will be far more modest than before, but we shall be better for it. And eventually we might live down our infamous reputation acquired in both Vietnam and Iraq.

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