



PROJECT MUSE®

Great Powers, Small Wars

Deriglazova, Larisa

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

Deriglazova, Larisa.

Great Powers, Small Wars: Asymmetric Conflict since 1945.

Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014.

Project MUSE., <a href="

<https://muse.jhu.edu/>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/60315>

Access provided at 5 Apr 2020 06:09 GMT with no institutional affiliation



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

CHAPTER 4

The US War in Iraq, 2003–2011

The withdrawal of US troops from Iraq in December 2011 marked the end of one of the largest military operations of the United States in the global war on terror initiated by President George W. Bush. American military leaders and policy-makers often described the war in Iraq as asymmetric in terms of the strategies used by each participant, which provides formal grounds for analyzing it within the framework of asymmetric conflict theory. Unlike military analysts, however, we will focus on evaluating the political outcome of the conflict and whether US goals were achieved. I believe that the war in Iraq delivered a political defeat to the United States in the absence of a military defeat and hence is a perfect case for applying asymmetric conflict theory, which offers explanations for the paradoxical defeat of strong powers in wars against weaker adversaries. In the early 1990s, American military leaders talked about asymmetry in terms of the global military power superiority of the United States, which could not be undermined in “big” or “conventional” war. The United States is often considered to have repeated in the Iraq War the mistakes it made during the Vietnam War, the conflict that provided a springboard for asymmetric conflict theory.

An analysis of the war in Iraq through the lens of asymmetric conflict theory will focus on evaluating the results of the war, and specifically whether US goals in entering the war were met. This analysis has several stages: (1) looking at the war objectives and justification of the war cause;

(2) analyzing the course and outcome of the military operation, as well as the content and results of the reconstruction and democratization programs in Iraq; and (3) examining American public opinion toward the war. Put otherwise, this chapter evaluates the war in terms of the “just goals” claimed for it, the means used, and the results achieved.

The US administration had to present the war cause as legitimate to obtain congressional approval and ensure the support of both the US public and the international community, the latter represented by the United Nations and other influential international actors. Because national and international law regulates the right of sovereign states to use military force domestically and internationally, the exercise of military force today is not merely a military issue but also a legal and political one. For the United States, with its central place in the international relations system and its desire to be a role model, compliance with international norms is a necessity.

A close look at the course of a war makes it possible to pinpoint the components of success or failure of a military campaign and the relation between military and political victory. In this regard, the programs for reconstructing Iraq and facilitating democratization were a crucial part of the military campaign. They were carried out in accordance with international norms regulating occupation and were directed toward achieving long-term peace in the country and the region. These programs were aimed at “winning the hearts and minds” of the Iraqi people by laying the foundations for a modern, developed, democratic state to replace the destroyed autocratic regime.

Debates over the outcomes of the Iraq War are salted with references to the past experiences of the United States and other countries in small wars. Rarely, however, is the view expressed that the war was successful and justified, although assessments of the outcome and opinions about the lessons of the war vary greatly. It is interesting that President Obama began his January 24, 2012, State of the Union speech by labeling the war in Iraq a success, for his evaluation of the war during his first electoral campaign had been precisely the opposite. Here is the relevant part of his State of the Union speech:

We gather tonight knowing that this generation of heroes has made the United States safer and more respected around the world. For

the first time in nine years, there are no Americans fighting in Iraq. For the first time in two decades, Osama bin Laden is not a threat to this country. Most of al Qaeda's top lieutenants have been defeated. The Taliban's momentum has been broken, and some troops in Afghanistan have begun to come home. These achievements are a testament to the courage, selflessness and teamwork of America's Armed Forces. At a time when too many of our institutions have let us down, they exceed all expectations. They're not consumed with personal ambition. They don't obsess over their differences. They focus on the mission at hand. They work together.¹

Because any discussion of what was achieved in Iraq is inevitably highly politicized, we will focus on objective criteria for assessing the war's outcome.

THE WAR'S OBJECTIVES AND LEGITIMATION OF THE WAR'S CAUSE

The war in Iraq—dubbed Operation Iraqi Freedom—was launched on the night of March 19, 2003, by international coalition forces, dominated politically, militarily, and materially by the United States. The accusations that the George W. Bush administration had laid against the Iraqi government served as grounds to start the war. Iraq was accused of developing and possessing weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and maintaining contact with the international terrorist network al-Qaeda. The US-led military operation was aimed at overthrowing the Saddam Hussein regime and was a continuation of the war on terror declared by President Bush in 2001.

There is a widespread opinion that the notion of a forceful disarmament of Iraq was conceived as the result of neoconservative Republicans being in power; however, numerous facts testify in favor of bipartisan continuation of and support for the policy toward Iraq. The problem of Iraq disarmament became urgent in 1998, when Baghdad suspended cooperation with UNSCOM, the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq,² declared it an instrument of US military espionage, and forced UN inspectors to leave the country. In December 1998 the United Kingdom and the United States launched air strikes against targets in the north and south of the country with operation Desert Fox, in order to destroy facilities where

biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons allegedly were being developed and produced.³ The Clinton administration set the task of overthrowing the Saddam Hussein regime, and in December 1998 the US Congress adopted the Iraq Liberation Act, allocating US\$97 million to support the political opposition in Iraq.⁴

Bob Woodward noted in his 2004 book *Plan of Attack* that even before the war the United States had effectively controlled a significant part of Iraqi airspace, and that President Bush was briefed on this before his inauguration in January 2001: “The United States enforced two designated no-fly zones, meaning the Iraqis could fly neither planes nor helicopters in these areas, which comprised about 60 percent of the country.” Woodward then described the coalition’s military control of Iraqi airspace:

Operation Northern Watch enforced the no-fly zone in the northernmost 10 percent of Iraq to protect the minority Kurds. Some 50 U.S. and United Kingdom aircraft had patrolled the restricted airspace on 164 days in 2000. In nearly every mission they had been fired on or threatened by the Iraqi air defense system, including surface-to-air missiles (SAMs). U.S. aircraft had fired back or dropped hundreds of missiles and bombs on the Iraqis, mostly at anti-aircraft artillery.

In Operation Southern Watch, the larger of the two, the United States patrolled almost the entire southern half of Iraq, up to the outskirts of the Baghdad suburbs. Pilots overflying the region had entered Iraqi airspace an incredible 150,000 times in the last decade [1991–2001], nearly 10,000 in the last year. In hundreds of attacks not a single U.S. pilot had been lost.⁵

In February 2001, the United States and Britain carried out bombing raids to try to disable Iraq’s air defense network. The bombings had little international support.⁶ Thus, in retrospect, the issue of the use of military force against Iraq, as well as the desire to overthrow Saddam Hussein and change the regime in Iraq, comes into clear focus.

At the UN, the issue of Iraq was interpreted as a problem of disarmament and achieving efficient control over the disarmament process. It was considered important that such a process should involve the coordinated efforts of the entire international community. After the 1998 crisis in relations

between the UN and Iraq, it took a year to settle the issue of modifying the verification and control regime. UNSCOM ceased its activities, and in 1999 a new UN commission was established, UNMOVIC, or the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission. The new commission proceeded with the UNSCOM mandate under UN Security Council Resolution 1284 of December 17, 1999. The work of UNMOVIC was characterized by more active involvement of the UN Secretary-General, whom the chairman of the commission could address directly, thereby circumventing the Security Council.

At first Iraq rejected Resolution 1284 and demanded an unconditional lifting of sanctions, for, according to the Iraqi government, all demands in the field of disarmament had been met. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan worked hard to find a compromise through a dialogue with the Saddam Hussein government, eliciting heavy criticism from the United States and its supporters. In the course of 2000 the new commission was formed, and another year was spent training inspectors in the special training programs. In July 2002, Hans Blix, the chairman of UNMOVIC, met with representatives of Iraq and Kuwait in Vienna, where the possibility of resuming inspections in Iraq was discussed. By mid-2002 conditions were in place for inspections to resume.

However, these developments did not align with the interests of the George W. Bush administration. For the US administration, the problem of Iraq had been transformed in the context of the war on terror and the war in Afghanistan. Bob Woodward confirmed that President Bush's close circle of advisers—National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and CIA Director George Tenet—tried to convince the president to go to war against Iraq after 9/11. Already by late November 2001 General Tommy Franks, combat commander of CENTCOM, had been requested by Rumsfeld to update the existing Iraq war plan, Op Plan 1003, which outlined an attack and invasion of Iraq designed to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein. Op Plan 1003 had been approved in 1996 and updated in 1998, and called for deploying a force of 500,000 for overall invasion and a preparation phase of seven months. The renewed plan called for a lower troop deployment, 400,000, and a shorter mission time of six months. Woodward also noted that at the time, the war in Afghanistan was seen as a victory: “The

widespread prediction of a Vietnam-style quagmire had been demolished, at least for the time being, and Rumsfeld was in a buoyant mood.”⁷

The Bush administration’s readiness to launch a war against Iraq immediately after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, is confirmed by the fact that a number of agencies, including the Department of Defense, the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs of the Department of State, USAID, and the National Security Council, had begun planning the “postwar administration” of Iraq in the fall of 2001 and on into 2002.⁸ Leading British journalist John Kampfner asserted in his book *Blair’s Wars* that the decision on the United Kingdom’s participation in the war was made during Prime Minister Tony Blair’s visit to the Bush ranch in Texas in April 2002.⁹ All subsequent actions by George W. Bush and Tony Blair in the runup to the war ought to be regarded as attempts to legitimize the planned military operation against Iraq at national and international levels.

The bellicose position of the United States led to a split in the UN Security Council with regard to the possible resolution of the crisis and worsened US relations with European and Arab countries. The United States believed that coercive action would convince Iraq that the international community was determined to finally resolve the problem of Iraq’s disarmament. Moreover, a military operation was seen as preemptive, as was often stated by President George W. Bush in his speeches in the second half of 2002. (As an example, he devoted his whole speech before the UN General Assembly on September 12, 2002, to the Iraq problem.) Bush used the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks to drum up emotional support from UN General Assembly delegates for his new coercive action in the war on terror. He called on General Assembly delegates to support decisive actions against a regime that personified all conceivable threats to peace—promoting terrorism, developing WMDs, engaging in human rights violations—and was also a source of instability and aggression in the region. Bush listed the violations committed by Iraq against UN and international law and called on General Assembly delegates to prevent “far greater horrors” in comparison to which “the attacks of September the 11th would be a prelude.” Bush tried to prove that Iraq represented a threat to peace and security, and that if the UN did not approve military actions against Iraq, the United States would reserve the right to use force. Nothing was said about the use of force as such; however, the message was

unequivocal. Bush stated that the United States “cannot stand by and do nothing while dangers gather,” and that it “must stand up for our security, and for the permanent rights and the hopes of mankind”—and must do this even without UN support.¹⁰

US representative John Negroponte and Secretary of State Colin Powell repeated in their statements before the UN Security Council the argument about the need for war and its just nature. In their statements before the UN Security Council, American and British representatives said that Iraq’s behavior discredited the role of the UN in conflict resolution, security, and the WMD nonproliferation regime and that it was necessary to demonstrate the UN’s readiness to act decisively, which implied a military operation. However, most countries on the UN Security Council were in favor of a peaceful resolution to the Iraq problem.¹¹ The key arguments against the use of force were as follows:

- The use of force would be a violation of international law, for no evidence had been found to prove that Iraq was producing and storing outlawed weapons.
- The use of force would result in more casualties than an attempt at a peaceful resolution and would result in a humanitarian disaster in the country and the region.
- The use of force would destabilize the situation and create another source of instability and threat in the Middle East.

Three permanent members of the UN Security Council—Russia, France, and China—were ready to consider compromise solutions that took into account Iraqi demands yet continued the inspections. The proponents of this position hoped to benefit from economic cooperation with Iraq in the long run, after the lifting of economic sanctions, and hoped for cooperation in exchange for guarantees of debt repayment by Iraq. Most Arab states and the Non-Aligned Movement countries also supported peaceful resolution to the conflict. At the UN General Assembly on March 12, 2003, Mr. Lamba (Malawi) spoke on behalf of the African Group:

The heavy consequences of war in Iraq will be felt very acutely, even in Africa.... Thousands, if not millions, of innocent lives will be lost in Iraq. The fragmentation of Iraq is not inconceivable. The spillover of the war could conceivably create a regional conflagration as the conflict transcends the borders of Iraq. In our global village today a backlash in various forms would destabilize the world even more, and New York or London would not be assured of any safety when the uncertainty of life leads to desperation. Africa considers the war against terrorism as a bigger threat to global peace.¹²

Two positions with regard to Iraq took shape among members of the UN Security Council, and the proponents of both tried to prove that they were pursuing the same objective, Iraqi disarmament, though the positions stemmed from different assumptions and different scenarios for solving the problem. The position that inclined toward a peaceful resolution of the crisis was founded on the presumption of innocence: until Iraq's possession of WMDs was proved, there were no legal foundations for the use of force. To solve the problem, cooperation with Iraq was needed, as well as continuation of the inspections, control over disarmament, and the coordinated efforts of the international community. The second position was based on a conviction that Iraq was guilty and that whatever steps Iraq took would be perceived as inadequate proof of its intent to cooperate, or as a new deception. The conviction that Iraq possessed WMDs and produced them was grounded in previous experience and did not require new evidence, so that continuing with inspections was meaningless. The use of force was to a large extent intended to punish Iraq rather than disarm it.

Under strong US pressure, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1441 on November 8, 2002, obligating Iraq to start fulfilling all disarmament demands without any preconditions or delays.¹³ Bush expressed his approval of the resolution and stressed the language of the resolution: "Iraq is already in material breach of past U.N. demands." He also said that "the full disarmament of weapons of mass destruction by Iraq will occur.... The only question for the Iraqi regime is to decide how. The United States prefers that Iraq meet its obligations voluntarily, yet we are prepared for the alternative."¹⁴ Thus, the only resolution of the Iraq problem that was acceptable to the US government entailed

the use of sufficient force to destroy Iraq's military potential, overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime, physically eliminate the leader himself, and establish a regime that would correspond to US economic and geopolitical interests in the region.

An examination of the events of autumn 2002 and winter 2003 shows that proponents of the use of force were not prepared to consider the change in Iraq's position and the steps it had taken to resume inspections and fulfill its disarmament obligations. No doubt, all these actions were undertaken under strong pressure from the United States and United Kingdom, which were actively preparing for war and made clear their serious intent to initiate the engagement, whatever it took. Nevertheless, the legitimacy of the use of force in this situation remained a highly problematic issue. In accordance with the theory of a just war, a military operation can be considered just and legitimate if it meets the criteria of "jus ad bellum," or the right to go to war, and "jus in bello," the legitimate conduct of war. These concepts, important to the conduct of modern war, can be unpacked as follows:

1. The decision to go to war must be made by a legitimate authority. Here two general scenarios are possible: the decision can be made either at the level of a state or by the international community, represented by an authoritative international organization with *competence in such matters*.
2. The military operation must pursue a "just cause," which in accordance with existing tradition is defined as the right to self-defense or to provide assistance to other countries that have become victims of aggression.
3. The armed actions must stem from "peaceful intentions," which is a subjective expression of the just cause principle.
4. The military operation must be undertaken only as a "last resort," that is, it must be used only when all peaceful means of achieving the just goal have been exhausted.
5. The planned operation must anticipate a "reasonable hope of success."

The principles of humanity in warfare call for the observance of two further principles, that of proportionality and that of discrimination. Proportionality presumes the use of only the necessary and sufficient means to achieve the war objectives, while discrimination means that the fighting forces must distinguish between combatants and noncombatants. Furthermore, war participants must observe international humanitarian law regulating the behavior of belligerent parties and prescribing the rules of occupation and the responsibility of occupation authorities.

As the United States moved forward with the just war argument, a UN decision was needed to legitimate the military operation against Iraq. This decision could be made if a majority of Security Council members were convinced that Iraq had violated disarmament obligations and therefore concluded that there was a need for the forceful disarmament of Iraq. The UN Security Council could also approve a preventive operation to fight against international terrorism, if it was proved that a link between international terrorist groups and the Iraqi regime existed and that Iraq had indeed planned, supported, and carried out terrorist attacks. Another option was to legitimize the military operation at the national level by implementing a country's right to self-defense against aggression and initiating an engagement as a preventive act against the probable aggressive actions of Iraq.

In a September 2002 speech devoted to national security strategy, George W. Bush underscored the United States' readiness to fight regimes that supported terrorist organizations. He emphasized that this fight would be offensive and preemptive: "America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed.... We will disrupt and destroy terrorist organizations by defending the United States, the American people, and our interests at home and abroad by identifying and destroying the threat before it reaches our borders." He also pointedly declared the United States' readiness to go it alone: "While the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country."¹⁵

Faced with a credible threat of war, Iraq agreed to serious concessions. On September 16, 2002, Iraqi foreign minister Tariq Aziz informed UN

Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the Iraqi decision to allow inspectors to return to the country without preconditions. On November 27, 2002, UN inspectors resumed work in Iraq before the end of the 30-day period indicated in Resolution 1441. In early December 2002, Iraq submitted a 12,000-page report to UNMOVIC on the disarmament obligations it had fulfilled. In the subsequent months prior to the military operation, Iraq submitted documents on its military programs and its destruction of chemical and biological weapons stockpiles, and UN inspectors were allowed to inspect Saddam's palaces, a condition previously rejected by the Iraqi government. UN inspectors were allowed to interview without witnesses the Iraqi researchers working for military projects and were permitted to carry out video recording of objects in Iraqi territory from aircraft.

From January to early March 2003, there were heated debates on Iraq at the UN Security Council. The majority of countries interpreted Iraq's actions as a willingness to cooperate and fulfill obligations. Only a small group of countries, led by the United States, insisted on ending the inspections and starting the military operation. These countries saw Iraq's actions as new attempts to deceive the United Nations. In this regard, the statement of Secretary of State Colin Powell at a meeting of the UN Security Council in February 2003 is illustrative: "Resolution 1441 (2002) was not about inspections. Let me say that again: Resolution 1441 (2002) was not about inspections. Resolution 1441 (2002) was about the disarmament of Iraq." He added, "There are no responsible actions on the part of Iraq. These are continued efforts to deceive, to deny, to divert, to throw us off the trail, to throw us off the path."¹⁶

On January 27, 2003, Hans Blix informed the UN Security Council of the work done by UNMOVIC in the course of 60 days after inspections had been resumed. The UNMOVIC report stated that inspectors had failed to find evidence of the production, storage, or development of banned weapons in Iraqi territory. The United States and the United Kingdom were unsatisfied with the UNMOVIC report and tried to use information provided by their intelligence services to prove that Iraq possessed WMDs. However, the UN Security Council did not deem such information sufficient to support a military operation. On March 7, another UNMOVIC report confirmed that no evidence of the presence of WMDs had been found in Iraq. After France announced its readiness to use its veto right if

the issue of a military operation against Iraq was put to a vote in the UN Security Council, the United States abandoned further attempts to obtain UN support and directed its efforts toward forming a coalition of countries that would support the United States in war.

Opposition to a military operation existed not only on the UN Security Council but also in the United States domestically. The Bush administration was criticized for its fascination with military plans to the detriment of domestic economic and social problems. Gerard Powers, director of the Office of International Justice and Peace of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote: "Based on available information, there is no new evidence, no new precipitating event, no new threatening actions by the Iraqi government, no new reason to go to war that did not exist one, two, four, or even six years ago. It is entirely legitimate to ask, therefore: Why now? What is the basis for claiming a unilateral right to use preventive force to overthrow the Iraqi regime? What would be the consequences for Iraq, the Middle East, and international relations?"¹⁷ General Douglas MacArthur's words from May 1951 concerning the war in Korea were frequently brought out to characterize the administration's pursuit of war with Iraq: "The wrong war, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy."

To obtain democratic legitimacy, the Bush administration needed to overcome the opposition in Congress and ensure the support of a majority of Americans. However, when talking to American citizens, Bush gave a different interpretation of the Iraq problem, partially voiced in his statement to the UN General Assembly in September 2002. He cited the need to prevent terror attacks as the main objective of the military operation, rather than the need to disarm Iraq. Bush tried to prove that Iraq presented a real threat to US security and that a military operation was a necessary preventive strike against a potential aggressor. The main pressure point in public opinion and the political opposition that Bush activated was the American fear of terrorist attacks. Bush talked about a link between Saddam Hussein's regime and international terrorism, and claimed that Iraq armed terrorists with WMDs that it secretly produced.

The terrorism-backed perspective Bush gave to reasons for going to war is evident in his address to Congress on January 28, 2003, when he said, "Before September the 11th, many in the world believed that Saddam

Hussein could be contained. But chemical agents, lethal viruses and shadowy terrorist networks are not easily contained. Imagine those 19 hijackers with other weapons and other plans—this time armed by Saddam Hussein. It would take one vial, one canister, one crate slipped into this country to bring a day of horror like none we have ever known. We will do everything in our power to make sure that that day never comes.”¹⁸ Here Bush appealed to emotions, to the fear of a possible repetition of the events of 9/11 and of the use of biological weapons. He claimed that the US intelligence agencies had evidence gathered from records of secret conversations and statements of detainees proving that Saddam Hussein aided and armed terrorists, including members of al-Qaeda.

The speech had the effect of immediately increasing the level of support for the planned military operation. A comparison of opinion polls carried out by various agencies before the war indicates that in early January 2003, the level of support did not exceed 47 percent to 49 percent. After the speech of January 28, 2003, the share of Americans supporting the start of war went up to 58 percent, though this high figure was then followed by an (insignificant) decline in support. Another increase in the level of support was observed in the second half of February, after General Colin Powell’s statement before the UN Security Council, when it was measured at 57 percent. It should be noted that the level of support differed according to how the question was formulated. A question that included a statement that the war against Iraq was a war against terrorism, against Saddam Hussein’s tyranny and his military power, garnered more support than the question “Would you support or oppose the United States going to war with Iraq?” It is noteworthy that the question “Would you support or oppose sending your son or daughter to war to remove Saddam Hussein?” elicited a constant increase in positive responses, from 45 percent in September 2002 to 53 percent in early March 2003, with a slight decrease to 50 percent in mid-March 2003.¹⁹ Americans were more ready to risk the lives of their children to defend the United States from Saddam’s threat than they were to approve a war that could result in thousands of casualties on both sides. It is perfectly obvious that the main reason why the majority of Americans supported the war in Iraq was that it was regarded as a continuation of the war on terror. As the *New York Times* observer Michael Gordon noted, “for many Americans, protecting the nation against terrorists is a far more

persuasive rationale for going to war than preventing Iraq from developing new weapons that could change the balance of power in the oil-rich Persian Gulf.”²⁰ Still, more than half of Americans polled had a negative attitude toward starting the war without UN approval and without the support of the international community, and did not support going to war if the military operation would result in significant casualties among American military personnel and Iraqi civilians. Even before the start of the war, in March 2003, mass demonstrations by antiwar activists were taking place in large US cities.²¹

Opinion poll results demonstrated another crucial feature of American public opinion with regard to Iraq and Saddam Hussein: Saddam Hussein had been successfully demonized. Some experts believed that since the events of September 11, 2001, the American people lived daily in a climate of fear and anger that had been created and nurtured by the Bush administration in order to manipulate public opinion and convince Americans that waging war against Iraq would be beneficial. According to polls taken in December 2002, 66 percent of Americans believed that a connection existed between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, and that Saddam was involved in the September 11 atrocities. An even greater proportion, 86 percent, thought that Saddam Hussein already had nuclear weapons or was on the brink of obtaining them, that he was the world’s most brutal and ruthless tyrant, and was ready to use any weapons against the United States.²² Peculiarly enough, from the start of the war in March 2003 through the rest of the year, this perception remained essentially unchanged, even though no evidence of any link was found, as reported by the CIA. Nevertheless, as the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) stated in September 2009, 69 percent of Americans still believed that Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the September 11 terrorist attacks.²³

As part of the public discussion, the US Institute of Peace organized a symposium on December 17, 2002, at which four presenters, Gerard Powers, director of the Office of International Justice and Peace of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops; Robert Royal, president of the Faith and Reason Institute; George Hunsinger, professor at Princeton Theological Seminary; and Susan Thistlethwaite, president of the Chicago Theological Seminary, were asked to answer the question, “Would an invasion of Iraq be a ‘just war?’” Referring to the experience of the Vietnam War, the

symposium participants doubted both the need for war and the probability of success, and noted the following points:

- “A threat that is not clear, that is not direct, and that is not imminent cannot justify going to war. Measured by just war standards, the war proposed in Iraq fails completely of a sufficient cause.”
“Justifying preventive war in this way would represent a sharp departure from just war norms.”
- “Just war tradition stipulates a reasonable chance of success, but the most probable outcome of an invasion of Iraq would be a long drawn-out bloody war.”
- “An invasion would also wreak havoc on a civilian population already tortured by war and sanctions, clearly violating the non-combatant immunity stipulation.”
- “Iraq is the test case for this muscular unilateralism. U.S. policy towards Iraq is based on three assumptions, each of which can be morally problematic: (1) the United States has a right to use preventive force against Iraq; (2) the objective of U.S. military action should be the overthrow of the Iraqi regime; and (3) the United States has a right to act unilaterally if others are not willing to do as it deems necessary.”
- “U.S. credibility in justifying war on humanitarian grounds is weakened by the fact that some of its allies in the war on terrorism are themselves implicated in egregious human rights abuses and by the fact that humanitarian intervention” is selective.

However, there were those who thought it was necessary to act before it was too late, citing the failed attempt to “pacify an aggressor” with regard to Hitler before World War II.²⁴

The most important task of the Bush administration was to obtain the permission of Congress to use armed forces in Iraq. One consequence of the Vietnam War was the adoption of laws restricting the right of the

president to use armed forces outside the country and strengthening the power of Congress in resolving such issues. The War Powers Act or the War Powers Resolution, adopted in 1973, delimited the powers of the president as commander in chief and Congress as a legislative body at times when the armed forces of the country became involved in war. Under the provisions of this law, the president must obtain the approval of Congress for any use of armed forces.²⁵ On September 19, 2002, the White House forwarded a draft resolution to the House of Representatives and the Senate that would allow starting military action against Iraq, and would also allow using US armed forces “to restore international peace and security in the region.” Discussion continued until early October 2002, and the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq, Resolution 114, was adopted on October 11 and entered into force on October 16, 2002. The US Senate voted 77 in favor and 23 against the resolution. Senator Hillary Clinton, who would later become US secretary of state, voted in favor.²⁶

In accordance with Resolution 114, Bush was “authorized to use the Armed Forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and appropriate in order to (1) defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq; and (2) enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.... [He shall inform Congress no later than 48 hours after exercising such authority and] shall at least once every 60 days, submit to the Congress a report on matters relevant to this joint resolution, including actions taken pursuant to the exercise of authority granted in section 3 and the status of planning for efforts that are expected to be required after such actions are completed.”²⁷ It is important to note that this resolution cited the need “to restore international peace and security” and “enforce United Nations Security Council resolutions relating to Iraq,” typical for UN Security Council resolutions, and specified authorization by Congress.

The Bush administration managed to ensure the necessary level of support from American society and government bodies to start the military operation. An “international coalition of the willing,” comprising 34 countries that agreed to take part in the war, also was formed. On March 17, 2003, the United States presented Iraq with an ultimatum demanding that Hussein and his family leave Iraq within 48 hours. Iraq rejected the ultimatum, and on the night of March 19, 2003, the Combined Joint

Task Forces began military actions in Iraq. On March 20, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated: “The United States and the international community have made every effort to avoid war. Diplomacy and sanctions over more than a decade have not worked. And now, by rejecting President Bush’s ultimatum, the Iraqi regime has chosen military conflict over peaceful disarmament.... This is not a war against a people. It is not a war against a country. It is most certainly not a war against a religion. It is a war against a regime.”²⁸ On March 21, George W. Bush in a Presidential Letter informed Congress that US armed forces had been sent to Iraq, and referred to legislation that allowed him to start the war against Iraq, including the 1973 War Powers Act: “Consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93-148), I now inform you that pursuant to my authority as Commander in Chief and consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102-1) and the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107-243), I directed U.S. Armed Forces, operating with other coalition forces, to commence combat operations on March 19, 2003, against Iraq.”²⁹ As Bush has said repeatedly, the war had two missions: disarming Iraq, and then transforming it into a “free and hopeful society.”³⁰

COURSE OF THE WAR AND THE EVOLUTION OF STRATEGIES

It did not take long for the coalition forces to crush the resistance of the Iraqi army. Baghdad was captured on April 9, and Tikrit was captured on April 15. On April 17, the remains of the government forces surrendered near Baghdad, and the Iraqi government ceased to exist. Saddam Hussein and Iraqi high officials fled and were put on the wanted list. Information about them was disseminated among coalition soldiers in the form of a deck of 55 cards; Saddam Hussein, the ace of spades, was wanted “dead or alive.”³¹ On May 1, 2003, on the deck of the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, which was returning to base after taking part in battle, President George W. Bush announced victory and the end of the military operation. In his speech, which quickly became known as the “Mission Accomplished” speech, after the banner displayed behind him, Bush acknowledged, “America’s work

in Iraq is far from done. If anything, securing a durable peace in Iraq will be harder than winning a military victory.”³² The coalition forces were to reconstruct what had been destroyed (cities, infrastructure, industrial objects), ensure security in the country, and prepare the country for the transfer of power to the local government in accordance with international law regulating an occupation regime. In the meantime, the international community severely criticized the looting of historical and cultural monuments in Iraqi territory that started after the Iraqi government fell.

Phases of the War

The US involvement in actions in Iraq can be divided into several phases, marked by important shifts in the military and political situation in Iraq and in US strategy.

Phase 1: March 20 to May 1, 2003. This phase of active military operation aimed at disabling Iraq’s military power capability and overturning Saddam Hussein’s government. This period ends with the coalition forces gaining control of a large part of Iraq and George W. Bush’s “Mission Accomplished” speech on the flight deck of the USS *Abraham Lincoln*.

Phase 2: May 2, 2003, to June 28, 2004. This phase is marked by the start of guerrilla warfare by Ba’athist groups and supporters of Saddam Hussein. The struggle started in the area north and west of Baghdad known as the Sunni Triangle. Fighting for the city of Fallujah, in Al Anbar province, where Hussein had many supporters, was especially fierce. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) was established following Security Council Resolution 1500 of August 14, 2003. Security was precarious, however: on August 19, 2003, a suicide bomber attacked UN headquarters in Baghdad and killed 22, including Sérgio Vieira de Mello, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative in Iraq. In total, more than 100 people were injured in the attack, and Kofi Annan ordered UN staff to withdraw from Iraq; staff did not return until April 2004, under greatly increased security.³³ In late October 2003, a terrorist attack was carried out against a delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross, prompting this organization too to withdraw its representatives from Iraq. Partly in response to these attacks on nonpartisan aid organizations, on October 16, 2003, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1511, which authorized “a multinational force under unified command to take all necessary measures to

contribute to the maintenance of security and stability in Iraq.”³⁴ Paragraph 16 of the same resolution emphasized “the importance of establishing effective Iraqi police and security forces in maintaining law, order, and security and combating terrorism”—anticipating a handover of security responsibilities from coalition forces to the Iraqi police force.

In the second half of 2003, Shia opposition to occupation troops coalesced under the leadership of the religious figure Muqtada al-Sadr, and the Mahdi Army was created. In April, a Shia uprising started in central and southern Iraq. During this period, many representatives of Saddam’s government were detained, and the former leader of Iraq was arrested on December 13, 2003. Shortly thereafter, in April 2004, the abuse of Iraqi detainees by American soldiers in Abu Ghraib prison became known to the general public.

On June 8, 2004, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1546. According to the provisions of this resolution, power was to be transferred to “[the] sovereign and independent Interim Government of Iraq by 30 June 2004,” and the multinational coalition forces were to coordinate their stay and actions in Iraqi territory with the interim government. Coalition troops stayed in the country at the request of the new government and were given a UN mandate under Resolution 1546. This resolution also stipulated the right of Iraq to create its own security forces and armed forces.³⁵ The UN Security Council began to receive quarterly reports from the commander of the Multi-National Force–Iraq. The period ended with the termination of the occupation regime, when the Coalition Provisional Authority transferred sovereignty to the Iraqi Interim Government, led by Prime Minister Ayad Allawi.

Phase 3: June 29, 2004, to January 30, 2005. On October 12, 2004, the UN General Assembly gave the right to vote back to Iraq, thus restoring Iraq’s official representation in the United Nations.

Guerrilla actions against coalition forces continued, however. In August 2004 the coalition forces inflicted a military defeat on the Mahdi Army, and Muqtada al-Sadr abandoned armed struggle. In late 2004 the coalition forces waged fierce battles for Fallujah, and by late November the city was captured. At around the same time, presidential elections took place in the United States, and Iraq was one of the key issues in the electoral campaign. Following George W. Bush’s reelection to serve a second term, the

period ended with general parliamentary elections in Iraq on January 30, 2005. During the elections the number of terrorist acts and attacks against coalition forces went up. The majority of the seats in the parliament, 140, were won by the United Iraqi Alliance (Shia). Of the remaining seats, the Kurdistan Alliance took 75, the Iraqi List won 40, and the Sunnis won 17. Members of parliament were to elect the president and president's deputies, so that the latter could form a government.

Phase 4: January 31 to December 14, 2005. The Iraqi Interim Government was formed in April. Its tasks were to draft and adopt a constitution. As the US representative reported to the Security Council on May 31, 2005, "some 165,000 Iraqi soldiers and police officers have been trained and equipped. The Iraqi army has over 90 battalion-level units conducting operations. Some of those forces conduct independent security operations, and others operate alongside or with the support of the multinational force. The Iraqi battalions are out in the cities and rural areas of the country, and they are getting results. Iraqi police and military forces are shouldering the burden in 12 of Iraq's 18 provinces."³⁶ At the request of the Iraqi government, the United Nations extended the mandate of the Multi-National Force-Iraq to ensure security in Iraq. On October 15, a referendum was carried out to adopt a new constitution, and profound divisions between political factions became evident. The draft constitution was rejected in several Iraqi provinces (in Salah ad-Din by 82 percent, in Ninawa by 55 percent, and in Al Anbar by 97 percent).³⁷ This period saw continued fierce fighting with Sunni groups, and an increased number of terrorist attacks against Iraqi military and religious leaders.

Phase 5: December 15, 2005, to January 31, 2007. On December 15, 2005, new parliamentary elections were held. The Shiite United Iraqi Alliance was again victorious, winning 128 seats, while the Sunni Iraqi Accord Front won 58 seats and the Kurdistan Alliance took 53 seats. The elections were accompanied by extraordinary security measures. Some 150,000 Iraqi soldiers and policemen were delegated to guard the elections, and Iraq's borders were closed.³⁸ A new four-year, constitutionally based government took office in March 2006, and a new cabinet was installed in May 2006.

Observers often consider this phase as the start of the civil war, when coalition forces suffered the biggest casualties since the beginning of hostilities. In October 2006, George W. Bush for the first time publicly

compared the war in Iraq to the war in Vietnam. During the congressional midterm elections of November 2006, the Republican Party lost its majority in both chambers. As the Baker-Hamilton Commission (the Iraq Study Group) report noted, many in the United States considered the results of the elections to be a referendum on progress in Iraq.³⁹ US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who is considered one of the war initiators, resigned. The Iraq Study Group was appointed by Congress in March 2006, and in December 2006 its report was published. On December 30, 2006, Saddam Hussein was executed, following a ruling of the Supreme Iraqi Criminal Tribunal.

On January 10, 2007, George Bush announced the new US strategy in Iraq, according to which the American presence was to be increased by 21,000 troops, along with an increased term of deployment. The strategy “New Way Forward” was informally called the “surge.”

Phase 6: February 1, 2007, to July 19, 2008. This phase saw the implementation of the surge strategy. From February to November 2007, the military operation Law and Order was carried out by American and Iraqi armed forces in Baghdad. In March 2007, during the visit of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to Baghdad, a mine exploded not far from where he was delivering his speech. The decision to increase the US military presence in Iraq resulted in strong disagreement between Congress and the president in spring 2007. George W. Bush vetoed a congressional resolution that linked the allocation of new war funds to a specific schedule of American troop withdrawal from Iraq.⁴⁰

From June to August 2007, an operation was carried out to establish control over the city of Baqubah, north of Baghdad. An improvement of the situation in the province of Diyala allowed some US troops to be withdrawn from Iraq. In Al Anbar province, the American command concluded a contract with local elders on cooperation in the fight against al-Qaeda. Under this agreement, the United States armed the local Sunni militia, which brought criticism from the official Iraqi leadership. This period saw even more casualties among the multinational coalition forces, Iraqi security forces, and civilians. However, by late 2007 the wave of violence in Iraq had begun to subside. In March and April 2008, uprisings in Basra and Baghdad started again. The Mahdi Army forced the Iraqi government to start talks. In August a ceasefire was reached between the Iraqi government

and Muqtada al-Sadr. Summer 2008 saw the lowest level of casualties during the whole war. According to official estimates, the reduced level of violence in Iraq was associated with three factors: (1) an increase in the number of US combat units; (2) the creation of local nongovernmental security forces that stood against al-Qaeda, which reduced violence in some parts of Iraq, especially in Al Anbar province; and (3) the conclusion of the ceasefire agreement in August 2007 with Muqtada al-Sadr.⁴¹

Phase 7: July 20, 2008, to December 18, 2011. After the troop surge and accompanying operations were completed, the coalition forces conducted operations in the northern provinces of Iraq against al-Qaeda fighters. In August to September there were large-scale terrorist attacks in Baghdad, Baqubah, and Mosul. Turkey bombed the Kurdish provinces of Iraq in response to the activities of Kurdish separatist groups in the north of Iraq.

In autumn 2008 the presidential elections in the United States ended with the victory of the Democratic candidate Barack Obama. On November 17, 2008, an agreement was signed between the Iraqi and US governments that specified a deadline for the withdrawal of all US combat units from Iraq. Under this agreement, the United States was to transfer complete control over military operations to Iraqi security forces and withdraw all combat units from cities and villages by June 30, 2009. The withdrawal of all American troops from Iraq was to be completed in December 2011.⁴² On June 31, 2009, American troops withdrew from urban areas, a step that reinforced Iraqi sovereignty. In accordance with the agreement, the US strategic approach in Iraq changed from a conditions-based strategy to a time-based approach for drawing down US forces.⁴³ The Strategic Framework Agreement for a Relationship of Friendship and Cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq outlined the main areas of interaction: technical, social, cultural, legal, and health-related. The need for joint combat operations against corruption was mentioned in the section on legal cooperation, along with joint combat against terrorism; drug trafficking, organized crime, money laundering, and the export of stolen archaeological artifacts.⁴⁴ The agreements entered into force on January 1, 2009.

The UN mandate sanctioning multinational forces in Iraq ended in late 2008. As of early 2009, the armed forces of four countries were still deployed in Iraq (the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, and

Romania) with a total of 147,000 troops, 142,000 of them from the United States and 4,000 from the United Kingdom.⁴⁵ From July 2009, when all coalition forces were withdrawn, the United States was the only country retaining a military presence in Iraq (128,000 troops). On February 27, 2009, President Obama confirmed the change of strategy in Iraq and the time frame for US troop withdrawal.

The new US strategy in Iraq included the following components: (1) completion of combat operations and withdrawal of the main part of American troops from Iraq within 18 months (i.e., by August 31, 2010); (2) the retention of 50,000 US troops in Iraq to ensure stability; (3) the pursuit of “a regional diplomatic strategy” to solve the problem of refugees and to provide assistance to the Iraqi government in resolving political problems; and (4) a “principled and sustained engagement with all of the nations in the region, and that will include Iran and Syria.”⁴⁶ The spring and summer of 2009 saw heated discussion in Congress about the economic recovery in Iraq and plans to terminate the US military presence. Until late 2011, the United States tried to fulfill a dual task—ensure security and reconstruct Iraq—to complete the actual missions announced at the beginning of war.

On January 31, 2009, Iraq held elections for provincial councils in all provinces except the three provinces of the Iraqi Kurdistan region, and Kirkuk province. On March 7, 2010, Iraq held a second round of national elections to choose the members of the Council of Representatives, which in turn would choose the executive branch of government. The Iraqi National Movement coalition, led by former prime minister Ayad Allawi, won the most seats (91), followed by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki’s State of Law coalition (89 seats), the Kurdish bloc, headed by Kurdistan Democratic Party president Masud Barzani and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan president Jalal Talabani (57 seats), and the Iraqi National Alliance, led by Muqtada al-Sadr (70 seats), with the remaining 18 seats won by other smaller political and minority parties. On November 11, 2010, the Council of Representatives convened to elect Jalal Talabani to a second term as president of Iraq. Osama al-Nujayfi of the Iraqi National Movement coalition was elected parliament speaker. On December 21, 2010, the Council of Representatives approved President Talabani’s nomination of Nouri al-Maliki for a second term as prime minister after al-Maliki proved able to secure the minimum parliamentary majority of 163

seats. The Council of Representatives also approved a majority of al-Maliki's Council of Ministers.⁴⁷

Final phase? A new stage in the US military presence in Iraq started on August 31, 2010. It was associated with the end of combat operations and was symbolically indicated in the change of the mission title from Operation Iraqi Freedom to Operation New Dawn. The elimination of terrorist number one, Osama bin Laden, on May 2, 2011, was a crucial symbolic achievement of the Obama administration. On December 18, 2011, the last convoy of US soldiers pulled out of Iraq.

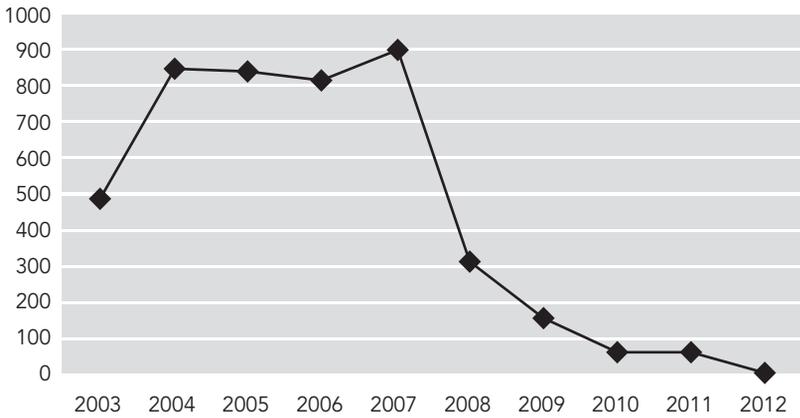
Evolution of US Strategies in Iraq

The strategies followed by the United States in the course of the Iraq War were of three general kinds. In chronological order, these were (1) an anticipated short-term military operation, which proved impossible to implement successfully as the struggle transitioned into guerrilla and civil war; (2) the 2007 troop surge in Iraq, under the working title (especially for press purposes) of “The New Way Forward,” which took into consideration the findings of the Baker-Hamilton Commission (the Iraq Study Group) and its proposition to increase US troop presence; and (3) the strategy to bring to an end the American military presence in Iraq. These three strategies are associated with certain terms widely used by American politicians and military personnel during the corresponding periods of war. The Iraq War started as a continuation of the war on terror and went on as a COIN—counterinsurgency—operation; in the final stage, the war was regarded as a limited-presence or contingency conflict.

The war started with a clearly defined goal: to change the political regime and establish a new government, founded on democratic principles and representing the main population groups. This strategy was based on prewar assessments of the unpopularity of Saddam Hussein's regime among Shiites and Kurds. The operation was planned as a swift destruction of the unpopular regime, followed by a quick reconstruction of local civilian authorities, the de-Ba'athification of political life, and the creation of a foundation for the long-term cooperation of the United States with the new regime. The Iraq reconstruction plans implied the reconstruction of industrial structures and infrastructure destroyed during the war, so that Iraq could return to the global market as a large oil exporter.

A rapid normalization of the situation within the country and of Iraq's place in the international arena was regarded as a prerequisite for the country's ability to sustain itself on funds from oil exports. The United States hoped for beneficial terms of sale that would recognize its presence in Iraq and its role in regime change and postwar reconstruction. Thus, the prewar planning presumed massive funding of a short-term military operation and the allocation of limited funds for postwar recovery, which would allow the United States to derive immediate benefits from the military operation. Unlike the war of 1991, which to a large extent was a "no-contact" war of the new arms generation, Operation Iraqi Freedom relied on a massive military presence in the territory of the whole country, that is, an occupation regime, with its associated legal, political, economic, and military-strategic problems.

The initial course of the war in 2003–2004 followed the prewar planning script. The military defeat of the half-million-strong Iraqi army, the destruction of the political institutions of Saddam Hussein's regime, the insignificant resistance of the remaining Iraqi troops—all this dovetailed with the concept of a swift military operation backed by the significant material and technical superiority of the United States and its allies. The initial enthusiasm on the part of Iraqi society for regime change was broadcast by American mass media and inspired hope for a peaceful turn of events and the quick recovery of the political and economic life of the country. A few surprises followed: the emergence of a powerful Shia movement against foreign occupation by late 2003, and uprisings in central and southern Iraq, in addition to the prolonged struggle in the Sunni Triangle in central Iraq. The Kurdish north of the country was relatively quiet from the security standpoint. However, the United States had serious disagreements with Turkey about Kurdish autonomy in Iraq. American politicians expected that the situation would normalize after the transfer of power from occupation forces to the new Iraqi government. However, despite the military defeat of the Mahdi Army in August 2004, guerrilla operations and terrorist attacks against coalition forces and Iraqis cooperating with coalition forces continued to increase in number. Moreover, the development and adoption of the Iraqi constitution in 2005 not only did not lead to national reconciliation, but also demonstrated the strength of the conflicting tendencies in Iraqi society. Between May 1, 2003, when President George W. Bush announced

Figure 4.1. US Forces Fatalities by Year, 2003–2012

Source: “Iraq Coalition Casualty Count,” iCasualties.org (<http://icasualties.org/>).

the end of the war in his “Mission Accomplished” speech, and December 15, 2005, 2,013 American servicemen died, or around half of all US troop fatalities sustained during the course of the war. The largest casualties were suffered by the US Army during the surge (see figure 4.1).

The beginning of civil war in 2006 was evidence of the coalition forces’ failure to control the situation and ensure security in the country. In fact, the coalition forces failed to ensure security even in Baghdad, for terrorist attacks were successfully carried out in the most protected Green Zone of the city. In addition to military clashes, the number of terrorist attacks and instances of violence increased drastically, and the number of abductions went up. The abduction of people for ransom became a real business. According to the Brookings Institution’s Iraq Index, a regularly updated index of information about Iraqi security issues, between 2003 and 2010, 312 foreign citizens were kidnapped in Iraq, of whom 60 were murdered, 149 were freed, 4 escaped from their kidnappers, and 6 were released as a result of special operations.⁴⁸ Some information agencies reported that in 2006, around 30 to 40 Iraqis were kidnapped every day in Iraq; however, in 2007–2008 the situation improved noticeably.⁴⁹

There was a growing concern in US political circles and society that the war was turning into another Vietnam, a protracted, futile war that could be neither won nor lost. In the context of guerrilla warfare, the reconstruction of civilian and industrial infrastructure had become a black hole, absorbing millions of dollars allocated for recovery. The results of audits published by the US Government Accountability Office disclosed a serious problem with control over supplies of arms to Iraqi security forces. “Thus, DOD and MNF-I cannot fully account for about 110,000 AK-47 rifles, 80,000 pistols, 135,000 items of body armor, and 115,000 helmets reported as issued to Iraqi forces as of September 22, 2005. Our analysis of the MNSTC-I property book records found that DOD and MNF-I cannot fully account for at least 190,000 weapons reported as issued to Iraqi forces as of September 22, 2005.”⁵⁰ These arms were often found in the hands of fighters and were used against American troops and allies.

The expectations of the US allies for a quick improvement in the situation and benefits from the postwar reconstruction of the oil-producing sector were not met. Iraqi oil production and export levels did not reach their prewar figures, even though Iraq ranks second after Saudi Arabia in terms of oil reserves. Starting in 2004, the European countries that had supported the United States as part of the coalition forces began to withdraw their troops from Iraq. After the terrorist attacks of March 11, 2004, in Madrid, the parliamentary elections were won by the Spanish Socialist Party, which was against the war. The new government, led by José Zapatero, announced the immediate withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq. The Netherlands withdrew its troops in 2005. Italy withdrew its forces in 2006 after the electoral defeat of the center-right coalition of Silvio Berlusconi, who had supported the war in Iraq. Prime Minister Romano Prodi called the war in Iraq a mistake. The United Kingdom reduced its military presence in Iraq from 46,000 troops in March 2003 to 7,200 troops in late 2006.⁵¹ Significant resources of the United States’ European partners were being drawn away by the ongoing military operation in Afghanistan, which was being carried out as a NATO operation.

Commentators at the time often voiced an unequivocal and desperate assessment of the situation in Iraq: it was chaos. The inability of the coalition forces to ensure security in Iraq nullified all efforts to reconstruct the country and contribute to its development. In the United States, the num-

ber of people supporting an immediate withdrawal of troops from Iraq went up. In March 2006, Republican former secretary of state James Baker and Democratic congressman Lee H. Hamilton were chosen to create a bipartisan congressional commission to consider the Iraq issue. The results of the Baker-Hamilton Commission activities were made public in December 2006. The word “consensus” was used three times in the short preface to the report. According to the commission, the United States needed consensus not only to develop the strategy in Iraq but also to implement it successfully: “Yet U.S. foreign policy is doomed to failure—as is any course of actions in Iraq—if it is not supported by a broad, sustained consensus.” The report noted that “the situation in Iraq is grave and deteriorating” and that “there is no magic formula to solve the problems of Iraq.”⁵²

The report analyzed the situation in Iraq in four main areas: security, politics, the economy, and international support. The section on security evaluated the major sources of violence and the position of the coalition forces and the United States, the security forces, the police, and departmental security forces in Iraq. The authors suggested shifting the center of gravity in security to Iraqi forces and police. The training of local security forces was to become the main task of the American military presence in Iraq. The report also emphasized the need to render military and technical assistance to Iraqi armed forces and police. The main conclusion with regard to security was as follows: “Security efforts will fail unless the Iraqis have both the capability to hold the areas that have been cleared [of insurgents] and the neighborhoods that are home to Shiite militants. U.S. forces can ‘clear’ any neighborhood, but there are neither enough U.S. troops present nor enough support from Iraqi security forces to ‘hold’ the neighborhoods cleared.”⁵³

The review of the political situation assessed the main political forces in Iraq, their leaders, and their degree of participation in the legal political process and in armed struggle against each other and the coalition forces. In characterizing the various groups fighting the coalition forces, the authors of the report identified both uniting and dividing factors. The key objective in the political domain was to achieve national reconciliation that involved all the political forces in governance, including the Sunni technocratic elite that had been removed from power. Of the several possible forms of Iraqi political organization, preference was given to a federation, with the caution that a balance needed to be struck so that the federal

bodies would be able to represent the interests of Iraq's main political, religious, and ethnic groups.

The economic review noted that the economy of Iraq was almost 100 percent dependent on the oil-producing sector and oil exports. It also noted that "Iraq's economy has been badly shocked and is dysfunctional after suffering decades of problems: Iraq had a police state economy in the 1970s, a war economy in the 1980s, and a sanctions economy in the 1990s." The main obstacles to the normal functioning of the country's economy were "insecurity, corruption, lack of investment, dilapidated infrastructure, and uncertainty."⁵⁴ The report noted that the Iraqi leaders aimed to redistribute control over the oil-producing sector and had concluded separate contracts with foreign companies on oil extraction, which aggravated discord in the country; one of the report sections was titled "The Politics of Oil." Inflation in the country was up to 50 percent a year, the unemployment rate had risen from 20 percent to 60 percent, and foreign investment was less than 1 percent of gross national product. The recovery efforts of various US agencies were nullified owing to the ongoing war and the never-ending attacks of fighters on infrastructure and the structural objects of the oil-producing sector, such as pipelines and refineries.

The report's analysis of international support in Iraq's recovery offered an estimate of the financial assistance available from developed countries. It also evaluated the degree to which countries in the region had a stake in continuing the war in Iraq. Iran was assigned the strongest negative impact; however, US attempts to start negotiations with Iranian officials had not paid off. The negative influence of Syria was also noted, as was the "passive and disengaged" position of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf states. Turkey's position on the Kurdish issue—namely, its disapproval of the creation of a Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq, on the Turkish border—was considered a contradiction to the US position. The assistance of Jordan and Egypt was positively assessed, as those countries had helped train Iraqi security forces and police units and gave asylum to Iraqi refugees. Turkey's restraint with regard to Iraqi Sunnis was appreciated. The report noted that, with the exception of British forces in Basra and the southeast of the country, coalition forces played a limited role in Iraq; Britain also played an active role in working toward political settlement. The report briefly reviewed the degree

of involvement of the United Nations, the World Bank, the European Union, and US nongovernmental organizations.⁵⁵

The report offered a sobering assessment of the constantly worsening situation in Iraq: the increasing chaos in the country, the region, and the world, and the deterioration of the US security position as a result of the increased terrorist activity of various international groups. The report cited an Iraqi official as saying “Al Qaeda is now a franchise in Iraq, like McDonald’s.” According to the report’s authors, “Iraq is a major test of, and strain on, U.S. military, diplomatic, and financial capacities.”⁵⁶ As for future developments, the report clearly indicated that the war in Iraq could not be won by military means. Success completely depended on achieving national reconciliation in the country and on Iraq’s ability “to govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself.” The US task was to render comprehensive assistance to the Iraqi people in this process.⁵⁷

The report’s 79 recommendations were divided into two parts, international and domestic tasks. A crucial feature was the synchronization of tasks for Iraq and the United States, or, in the language of the report, “Helping Iraqis help themselves.” Recommendations with regard to resolving security problems included strengthening regional cooperation and achieving an international consensus on Iraq, the latter of which would entail greater diplomatic efforts to resolve the problems with Iraq’s neighbors and the countries of the Greater Middle East: Afghanistan, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Solving Iraq’s internal problems would require a hierarchy of tasks. Any political settlement within the country had to be directed at winning the trust of Iraqis in the Iraqi government and at promoting national reconciliation, efficient governance, and amnesty for participants in the resistance. The problem of security was to be addressed by increasing the fighting capacity of the Iraqi armed forces and police; providing a clear schedule of US troop presence in or withdrawal from Iraq, with special heed paid to the US armed forces and defense budget; and augmenting cooperation between the intelligence agencies of the United States and Iraq. Economic tasks included the development of Iraq’s oil-producing sector and coordinating US efforts aimed at reconstruction and efficient spending of funds.⁵⁸

The Baker-Hamilton Report, the congressional debates, and the comments of leading analysts paved the way for a drastic revision of the war

strategy. On January 10, 2007, President George W. Bush announced a new strategy for Iraq in his State of the Union address.⁵⁹ The strategy, known informally as the “New Way Forward,” contained six key elements: devolving greater responsibility and independence to Iraqi authorities, protecting the Iraqi civilian population, fighting extremists, strengthening the political process aimed at national reconciliation, diversifying US efforts in Iraq’s recovery, and promoting a regional approach to security. In this address and in a subsequent address to Congress on January 23, Bush argued that the United States could not lose the war in Iraq because it would mean a US defeat in the war on terror.⁶⁰

The success of the military component of the “New Way Forward” is often linked to the name of American general, David Petraeus, who was appointed to command the multinational coalition forces in Iraq in January 2007. On assuming this position, General Petraeus told a meeting of the Senate Armed Services Committee that strengthening the security of the local civilian population and coordinating coalition efforts with those of Iraqi security forces and police ought to be the main objectives of the military operation in Iraq. He also pointed to the frequent change of government in Iraq (four governments in three and a half years) and the suffering of Iraqis. His remarks were largely concordant with the tone and recommendations of the 2006 Baker-Hamilton Report.⁶¹

Implementation of the comprehensive strategy had positive results. By the summer of 2008, significant improvements in stability had been observed, and that allowed some US forces to be withdrawn, control in Iraqi provinces to be transferred to Iraqi security forces, and planning to begin on the termination of a US military presence. The Obama administration systematically implemented the new US course in Iraq, moving from a conditions-based strategy to a time-based approach for drawing down US forces.⁶² In February 2009, President Obama announced the change of strategy in Iraq, and all subsequent actions of the US government confirmed the intention to end at least one of the wars that were “inherited from the previous administration,” as relentlessly repeated by the new president.⁶³ However, not everyone regarded the operation itself and the decision to start the troop withdrawal in a positive light. Some commentators believed that the surge had strengthened the hand of actors who would be able to continue a full-scale struggle for power and resources

after the US departure from Iraq, and demanded that troop withdrawal represent a “responsible retreat.”⁶⁴

Starting in the spring of 2009, American political leaders and military personnel had to shift attention and resources from Iraq to Afghanistan because of a worsening situation there, the activation of the Taliban, and the Taliban’s destabilizing influence in Pakistan. At first, American military personnel talked openly about the success of the counterinsurgency operation in Iraq and the intent to use this experience in Afghanistan. For instance, Admiral Michael Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, made a statement at the Brookings Institution on May 18, 2009, in which he mentioned the undoubted success in Iraq and US troops in Afghanistan enthusiastically perceiving and understanding the new approach to warfare against Taliban fighters and al-Qaeda.⁶⁵ However, by the second half of 2009 the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan had shown that the apparent success of the reconciliation strategy in Iraq and the possibility of transferring the same strategy to Afghanistan were illusory.

THE WAR’S OUTCOMES

The main problems the Iraqi government and the missions of international organizations had to face together were generated by the military operations of the coalition, the civil war that followed, and the presence of international terrorist groups in Iraq. Some of these problems were inherited from Saddam Hussein’s regime. For Iraq to become stable and peaceful, the following problems had to be resolved:⁶⁶

- security problems created by various opposition movements and terrorist groups;
- reconstruction and the creation of infrastructure to ensure economic and political development;
- the integration of Iraqi society and elimination of discord and hostility between various groups to achieve stability in the country,

including conflict over access to power and the distribution of natural resources and related revenues;

- settling Iraq’s conflicts with other countries in the region (Syria, Kuwait, Turkey, Iran);
- the problem of refugees and displaced persons;⁶⁷
- improving living standards and medical services for the Iraqi population,⁶⁸ and
- Iraq’s external debt.

Beginning with President Bush’s “New Way Forward” strategy, there was a concerted attempt to shift the focus of the US presence in Iraq from security to reconstruction and development. Ironically, this strategy originated in the strengthened military presence of the surge. Furthermore, an analysis of funds allocated by the United States for reconstruction in Iraq indicates how the spending on civilian programs was insignificant compared with the spending on security programs and the training of Iraqi security forces. As of January 2009, Congress had allocated US\$51.01 billion to Iraq reconstruction, of which \$41.42 billion had been accepted for execution and \$36.58 billion had been spent. From the total sum allocated for reconstruction in Iraq, around \$18.4 billion was intended for the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund 2, \$18.039 billion for the Iraq Security Forces Fund, \$3.569 billion for the Commander’s Emergency Response Program, \$3.737 billion for the Economic Support Fund, and \$2.475 billion for the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund 1.⁶⁹ Funds earmarked for the Emergency Response Program had in fact been fully spent on recruiting former fighters to Iraqi security forces in the program called Sons of Iraq.⁷⁰ The total size of the Sons of Iraq troops was around 99,000 in early 2009.⁷¹ These troops were controlled by the coalition command. It was planned that all Sons of Iraq units would be gradually transferred to the control of Iraqi authorities and would be integrated into Iraqi security and police forces.⁷² These troops predominantly consist of Sunnis (80%), with the remainder being Shias (19%).⁷³

Beginning in 2005, the United States started pursuing the policy of tying the spending of funds allocated by the US government for the recovery of Iraq to the funds of the Iraqi government, mainly generated by oil sales. General Raymond Odeirno, commander of Multi-National Corps–Iraq, noted in September 2008 that “any money we spend must be tied to Iraqi spending and should be in a ratio of three to one. Three dollars of Iraqi money to every one dollar of U.S. money.”⁷⁴ However, the Iraqi government not only should plan to spend certain funds for the country’s recovery and development but also should want these funds to be purposefully spent. According to the US Government Accountability Office, in the period 2003–2008 the United States allocated US\$10.9 billion for Iraqi reconstruction, and \$9.5 billion was spent. In 2005–2008, the Iraqi government planned to spend the equivalent of \$17 billion and actually spent \$2 billion. The report referred to US officials’ opinion that Iraqi managers lacked the skill level and authority to create plans and buy materials necessary to sustain Iraq’s energy and water sector projects. Owing to high oil prices before 2008 and the fact that the budgeted amount had not been spent, the Iraqi government budget accumulated a surplus of \$47.3 billion over 2005 to 2008.⁷⁵

The United Nations Fund for Iraq was established, and total contributions to it amounted to US\$1.36 billion as of December 31, 2008. In December 2008, the Paris Club wrote off almost US\$45 billion of the total \$52 billion Iraqi national debt within the program of assistance for Iraq’s reconstruction. At a meeting of the UN Security Council on February 26, 2009, an Iraqi representative noted that an agreement had been reached with the governments of Greece and China to reduce the amounts that Iraq owed them by 80 percent.⁷⁶ In February 2008, Russia signed a bilateral agreement with Iraq on debt relief, reducing the amount owed from US\$12 billion to \$1.5 billion, without any preconditions.⁷⁷

Despite an improving situation in Iraq, it still could not be called safe, which created problems for American civilian reconstruction representatives. The United States increasingly relied on private companies to ensure security. Thus, between 2006 and 2008, US\$1.1 billion was spent to fund approximately 1,400 security contractors to provide security for US State Department employees in Iraq.⁷⁸ Security then was gradually turned over to private security companies, which deployed between 150,000 and 180,000

people in Iraq. The use of contractors to provide security quickly generated questions, which never completely died away. The New Hampshire congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter, referring to her experience visiting Iraq, noted at a meeting of the House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services that employees of private agencies protecting American government buildings often did not speak English, and she asked whether the security contractors in Iraq were reliable (“When I went to Iraq last time, we were using contractors to guard the bases. And some of the contractors in this particular group were from the continent of Africa, and I didn’t even think that they even understood English, never mind understood what I thought they needed to know in order to properly defend our troops there. Is there a risk, an inherent risk, of having people besides Iraqis or US soldiers defending and protecting our bases, and have you looked at any of those contracts?”).⁷⁹

Inefficient spending was one of the most hotly debated aspects of Iraq’s recovery. On March 25, 2009, the results of audits carried out by the Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction were announced at hearings of the US House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services. According to the report of Inspector Stuart Bowen, some 15 to 20 percent of the funds from the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq had been “spent in vain,” or between US\$2.76 billion and \$3.68 billion out of \$18.4 billion.⁸⁰ More than 163,000 private contractors took part in Iraq’s recovery and development projects.⁸¹ (Though this statistic does not necessarily reflect the activities of civilian contractors, most private contractors in Iraq likely offered security services and were not civilians.)

Another problem standing between the US and Iraqi governments was the issue of detained Iraqis who were suspected of participating in military or terrorist actions against coalition forces. At the 6087th UN Security Council meeting in February 2009, the figure of 15,000 detainees was brought up.⁸² That number reflected a significant reduction from December 2007, when there were 24,000 detainees in Iraqi prisons under the control of the coalition forces and another 26,000 in prisons under the control of Iraqi authorities. By July 2010 the number of detainees had fallen to 200 people in US custody. In total, according to the Brookings Institution’s Iraq Index for 2011, nearly 90,000 individuals were detained by the United States during the seven years following the invasion.⁸³

After control over security in Iraq was transferred to Iraqi authorities, US forces were to coordinate all military operations with Iraqi authorities. On a number of occasions, Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki severely criticized the actions of US troops that resulted in the deaths of Iraqi civilians. For instance, on April 2, 2009, al-Maliki gave an interview to the BBC after several large-scale terrorist attacks in Iraq. He acknowledged that the US announcement of combat unit withdrawal by June 30, 2009, had been followed by several terrorist attacks and a worsening of security in Iraq, but the Iraqi government did not plan to postpone the withdrawal of US troops.⁸⁴

The loss of a professional class also hurt Iraq badly. As fighters from various ethnic and religious groups ramped up violence, thousands of people fled Iraq because of direct threats to their lives and property. According to various sources, up to 40 percent of professionals left Iraq—educated people who were unlikely to return to the country as long as it faced problems with security and survival. These individuals were representatives of the middle class, which is a necessary foundation for a democratic form of government. Without a professional middle class, the modern system of governance, education, health care, and other civic provisions is impossible. This social layer scarcely existed in the time of Saddam Hussein and was catastrophically reduced during the war. Andrew W. Terrill of the Strategic Studies Institute, in a work on the spillover effect of the Iraq War, referred to the 2008 International Crisis Group estimates that the number of refugees from Iraq exceeded the number of refugees during the Vietnam War, and that Iraq ranked second in the world in number of refugees. The number-one spot was held by Afghanistan,⁸⁵ where the United States had been waging war for more than 10 years.

The state of the economy in Iraq is still at a prewar level, according to some indicators, though the production of electrical energy exceeds that of the prewar period. According to the regularly updated Iraq Index of the Brookings Institution, access to essential resources in Iraq in 2009 looked as shown in table 4.1.

The sector of public services—education and health care—suffered the most from the war. According to the Brookings Institution, the number of Iraqi physicians registered before the 2003 invasion was 34,000, and around 20,000 left Iraq after the start of war, while only 1,200 physicians returned

Table 4.1. Estimated Availability of Essential Services in Iraq, 2008–2011

Service	February 2008	February 2009	February 2011
Sewage (% of population with access to sanitation)	8	20	26
Water (% of population with access to potable water)	22	45	70
Electricity (% with access to 12+ hours of power per day)	25	50	n/a
Fuel (% of population with needs met)	25	48	n/a
Public health (% of population with access to health services)	18	30	n/a
Housing (% of population with adequate housing)	25	50	n/a
Trash (% of population serviced)	18	45	n/a

Sources: Data for 2008 and 2009 from “Iraq Index,” Brookings Institution, February 26, 2009, 43; data for 2011 from “Iraq Index,” Brookings Institution, November 30, 2011, 25.

in 2007 and 2008. As of December 2008, around 16,000 physicians worked in Iraq. During the war, around 2,000 physicians were killed and 250 were kidnapped. In 2011, more than 20 percent of the 2,250 graduates of Iraqi medical training institutions planned to leave the country.⁸⁶

According to the World Bank, Iraq ranked 164th out of 183 economies in the Doing Business 2012 report, and the indicators had steadily worsened over the preceding years (table 4.2). The World Bank’s overall assessment of the economic situation was sobering:

The level of economic freedom in Iraq remains unrated this year, because of the lack of sufficiently reliable data. The Iraqi economy has slowly recovered from the hostilities that began in 2003, but progress has been uneven, and the country faces continuing tension among different ethnic and religious factions. With its economic

Table 4.2. Global Rankings of the Business Environment in Iraq, 2008–2012

Indicator	Rank					Trend over past year
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	
Control of Corruption Indicator, World Bank Group	196 (202)	195 (202)	193 (202)			↑
Regulatory Quality, World Bank Group	172 (202)	169 (202)	173 (202)			↓
Country Credit Rating, Institutional Investor	161 (178)	144 (178)	136 (178)	144 (178)		↓
Index of Economic Freedom, Heritage Foundation and the <i>Wall Street Journal</i> ^a	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Political Risk Rating (ICRG), PRS Group	139 (140)	139 (140)	137 (140)	137 (140)	137 (140)	↔
Doing Business Ranking, World Bank Group	141 (178)	N/A	N/A	159 (183)	164 (183)	↓
Doing Business—Trading Across Borders	178 (178)	N/A	N/A	180 (180)	180 (180)	↔

Note: a. The Index of Economic Freedom, compiled annually by the conservative Heritage Foundation (US) and the *Wall Street Journal*, does not rank Iraq, though the comments contain an indication of the low development level of other countries of the region—Iran, Libya, and Syria. “Vast Oil Wealth Doesn’t Translate into Economic Freedom, Index Finds” (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, January 13, 2009), <http://www.heritage.org/press/newsreleases/Index09d.cfm>.

growth highly volatile, Iraq's ongoing economic reconstruction, though facilitated by high oil prices and foreign economic aid, has been fragile. Political instability and pervasive corruption continue to undermine the limited progress made over the past years. Operating well below potential, the Iraqi economy lacks effective monetary and fiscal policies. The weak state of the financial system, coupled with its limited role within the economy, also makes development of a much-needed dynamic private sector extremely difficult.⁸⁷

In the Global Peace Index rankings compiled by the nongovernmental organization Vision of Humanity, Iraq ranked last from 2007 to 2010; only in 2011 did it give up this rank to Somalia and become next to last.⁸⁸

Opinions on the War

When evaluating the situation in Iraq, it is important to include the results of Iraqi opinion polls. Regular polls conducted by the BBC and ABC beginning in 2003 allow close monitoring of changing public sentiments.⁸⁹ Iraqi society is divided with regard to the invasion, though a negative assessment prevails to some extent. A negative attitude toward the invasion was minimally present in 2004, only 39 percent negative versus 49 percent positive. The peak of the negative attitude was registered in August 2007 during the US troop surge (63% negative versus 37% positive). In February 2009, a negative assessment (combining the categories "somewhat wrong" and absolutely wrong") exceeded a positive assessment (combining the categories "somewhat right" and "absolutely right") by 14 percentage points. These percentages, and the predominantly positive attitude toward the invasion, suggest that Saddam Hussein's regime was not popular and that opposition sentiments, taken into consideration by US officials when planning the invasion, were to a large extent justified. Table 4.3 serves as an illustration.

Evaluation of the general situation beyond security issues also uncovered a division in society, but a positive assessment slightly prevailed. The gradual increase in positive views from 2005 to 2009 is noteworthy. In February 2009, a positive assessment exceeded a negative one by 18 percentage points, whereas in 2005 the ratio was reversed: 53 percent negative and 44 percent positive. Also of note is the serious decline in optimism in 2007, a result of the intensive military actions connected to the troop

Table 4.3. Iraqi Opinion on the Coalition Invasion, 2004–2009

Answers to the Question, “From today’s perspective and all things considered, was it absolutely right, somewhat right, somewhat wrong, or absolutely wrong that US-led coalition forces invaded Iraq in spring 2003?”

	2004 (%)	2005 (%)	February 2007 (%)	August 2007 (%)	March 2008 (%)	February 2009 (%)
Absolutely right	20	19	22	12	21	19
Somewhat right	29	28	25	25	28	23
Somewhat wrong	13	17	19	28	23	28
Absolutely wrong	26	33	34	35	27	28
Refused/ Don’t know	13	4	—	—	—	2

Source: Iraq Poll, February 2009.

Table 4.4. Iraqi Assessment of the Situation in Iraq, 2005–2009

Answers to the Question, “Now thinking about how things are going, not for you personally, but for Iraq as a whole, how would you say things are going in our country overall these days?”

	2005 (%)	February 2007 (%)	August 2007 (%)	March 2008 (%)	February 2009 (%)
Very good	14	4	3	7	20
Quite good	30	31	19	36	38
Quite bad	23	35	40	36	25
Very bad	30	30	38	20	15
Refused/ Don’t know	3	—	—	1	2

Source: Iraq Poll, February 2009.

Table 4.5. Iraqi Assessment of Personal Situation (General Poll), 2004–2009
Answers to the Question, “Overall, how would you say things are going in your life these days? Would you say things are very good, quite good, quite bad, or very bad?”

	2004 (%)	2005 (%)	February 2007 (%)	August 2007 (%)	March 2008 (%)	February 2009 (%)
Very good	13	22	8	8	13	21
Quite good	57	49	31	31	41	44
Quite bad	14	18	32	34	29	19
Very bad	15	11	28	26	16	16
Refused/ Don't know	1	1	—	—	—	—

Source: Iraq Poll, February 2009.

surge. According to the opinion poll, in August 2007 the total negative assessment of the situation in Iraq was 78 percent, versus 22 percent positive (table 4.4).

Answers to the question about one's own prosperity showed a declining positive opinion from 2004 to 2007 and a rise in optimism from 2008. However, the share of Iraqis who assessed the situation as “quite bad” or “very bad” was stable and significant: 35 percent in 2009, little different from the low value of 29 percent in 2004 and 2005 (table 4.5).

A breakdown by the main population groups indicates greater optimism among Kurds and Shia in the polls of 2008 and 2009 (table 4.6).

The polls demonstrated a stable and negative attitude of Iraqis toward the coalition forces and their actions in Iraq. The maximum positive attitude was observed in 2005 (total of 37%), while the minimal negative assessment the same year, 59 percent, exceeded the positive assessment by 22 percentage points. A negative attitude on this dimension peaked in

Table 4.6. Iraqi Assessment of Personal Situation, by Community, March 2008 and February 2009

Answers to the Question, “Overall, how would you say things are going in your life these days? Would you say things are very good, quite good, quite bad, or very bad?” by community, February 2009 (March 2008 result in parentheses)

	Kurds (%)	Shia (%)	Sunni (%)
Very good	32(24)	25(14)	8(7)
Quite good	41(49)	46(48)	42(27)
Quite bad	23(20)	16(27)	23(38)
Very bad	4(7)	13(11)	28(28)
Refused/Don't know	—	—	—

Source: Iraq Poll, February 2009.

Table 4.7. Iraqi Assessment of Coalition Performance in Iraq, 2005–2009

Answers to the Question, “Since the war, how do you feel about the way in which the United States and other Coalition forces have carried out their responsibilities in Iraq? Have they done a very good job, quite a good job, quite a bad job, or a very bad job?”

	2005 (%)	February 2007 (%)	August 2007 (%)	March 2008 (%)	February 2009 (%)
A very good job	10	6	3	6	11
Quite a good job	27	18	15	23	19
Quite a bad job	19	30	32	35	30
A very bad job	40	46	48	35	39
Refused/Don't know	5	—	1	1	1

Source: Iraq Poll, February 2009.

August 2007, with an 80 percent negative evaluation and an 18 percent positive evaluation. In February 2009 negative assessments exceeded positive ones by 39 percentage points (table 4.7).

The breakdown of poll results by community demonstrates that Kurds had the most optimistic attitude toward the situation (total of 63% positive in 2007 and 62% positive in 2009), whereas the lowest positive assessments were observed among the Sunnis (total of 6% in 2007 and 8% in 2009) (table 4.8). These results directly reflect the population groups that gained the most from the regime change (Kurds) and those that lost (Sunnis).

The polls demonstrated a low level of trust in US occupation forces among Iraqis. The total share of Iraqis who (variably) mistrusted American occupation forces ranged from 72 percent in 2003 to a maximum level of mistrust in August 2007 of 85 percent. In 2009, the share of Iraqis mistrusting American occupation forces exceeded the share of those who trusted them by 47 percentage points (table 4.9).

Table 4.8. Iraqi Assessment of Coalition Performance in Iraq, by Community, March 2008 and February 2009

Answers to the Question, “Since the war, how do you feel about the way in which the United States and other Coalition forces have carried out their responsibilities in Iraq? Have they done a very good job, quite a good job, quite a bad job, or a very bad job?” by community, February 2009 (March 2008 result in parentheses)

	Kurds (%)	Shia (%)	Sunni (%)
A very good job	23(19)	12(5)	3(-)
Quite a good job	39(44)	20(27)	5(6)
Quite a bad job	22(23)	33(36)	28(40)
A very bad job	14(13)	34(32)	62(53)
Refused/Don't know	2	1	2

Source: Iraq Poll, February 2009.

Table 4.9. Iraqi Level of Trust in US Occupation Forces, 2003–2009

	2003 (%)	2004 (%)	2005 (%)	February 2007 (%)	August 2007 (%)	March 2008 (%)	February 2009 (%)
Great deal of confidence	7	8	7	6	4	4	12
Quite a lot of confidence	12	17	11	12	11	16	14
Not very much confidence	20	23	23	30	27	33	28
None at all	52	43	55	52	58	46	45
Refused/Don't know	9	8	5	–	–	1	1

Source: Iraq Poll, February 2009.

Table 4.10. Iraqi Assessment of Government Control, 2005–2009

Answers to the Question, “Who do you think currently controls things in our country; is it the Iraqi government, the United States, somebody else, or no one?”

	2005 (%)	February 2007 (%)	February 2009 (%)
Iraqi government	44	34	32
United States	24	59	53
Somebody else	17	4	9
No one controls things	6	3	3
Refused/Don't know	9	–	3

Source: Iraq Poll, February 2009.

Answers to the question about who controlled the situation in the country demonstrated a decline in the number of Iraqis who believed that the Iraqi national government exercised control: from 44 percent in 2005 to 32 percent in 2009. Over the same period there was an increase in the proportion of those who believed that the United States controlled the situation in Iraq, from 24 percent in 2005 to 53 percent in 2009 (table 4.10).

Assessment of the level of trust in national institutions demonstrated a higher level of trust in power institutions (police and army) than in the government, and the level of trust in power institutions kept rising. The level of trust in the army increased from 38 percent in 2003 to 73 percent in 2009; in the police forces, from 46 percent in 2003 to 74 percent in 2009. An insignificant decline in trust in these institutions was observed in 2007. It is not entirely clear what army and police were implied in the polls of 2003, as the army and police of Saddam Hussein's government had ceased to exist by then and the new forces were in the early stages of being formed (table 4.11).

The level of trust in the Iraqi national government changed over time. In 2005, after the transfer of power from the Coalition Provisional Authority to the Iraqi Interim Government, the level of trust was quite high (53%), whereas in 2007 the level of mistrust (61%) exceeded the level of trust (39%). In 2009 the situation was the direct opposite: 61 percent of respondents trusted the government and 39 percent did not. Polls from early 2007 and 2008 showed an almost equal division of society with regard to that issue.

One of the tasks that US leaders wanted to achieve in Iraq was a transformation of the political regime from tyranny (autocracy) to democracy. In this regard, it would be interesting to know the Iraqis' opinion on a preferred political regime for Iraq. The question that was asked, and the answers given, do not point to a univocal commitment of Iraqis to a democratic system. Furthermore, the question as it was phrased presented a definition of democracy that barely encompasses even the most rudimentary vision of this form of political system ("government with a chance for the leader to be replaced from time to time"). This definition of democracy is not inconsistent with two other of the suggested forms of political system, autocracy and an Islamic state. The poll results showed a similar degree of support for governance by a strong leader and governance by an Islamic state, though both fell short of the support recorded for even the

Table 4.11. Iraqi Level of Confidence in Different Institutions, 2003–2009
Answers to the Question, “I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, please tell me if you have a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence, or none at all?”

	2003 (%)	2004 (%)	2005 (%)	February 2007 (%)	August 2007 (%)	March 2008 (%)	February 2009 (%)
Iraqi Army							
Great deal of confidence	13	18	36	24	23	28	37
Quite a lot of confidence	25	38	31	37	43	37	36
Not very much confidence	29	25	18	25	21	24	24
None at all	16	10	12	14	12	11	3
Refused/Don't know	17	9	3	–	–	–	–
Police							
Great deal of confidence	18	26	38	32	33	33	36
Quite a lot of confidence	28	41	31	32	36	34	38
Not very much confidence	30	20	18	16	17	20	20
None at all	15	8	12	20	15	13	5
Refused/Don't know	10	4	2	–	–	1	–
National government of Iraq							
Quite a lot of confidence	N/A	N/A	30	31	28	31	–
Not very much confidence	N/A	N/A	25	27	31	26	26
None at all	N/A	N/A	16	24	30	25	13
Refused/Don't know	N/A	N/A	6	–	–	1	1

Source: Iraq Poll, February 2009.

impoverished definition of democracy. The poll results (table 4.12) demonstrate how answers changed from 2004 to February 2009.

The breakdown of answers to that question by community in 2009 shows a similar distribution of answers and the absence of significant differences. However, differences were evident in 2007. Among Kurds, “democracy” remained the most popular form of political system (66%), while Sunnis expressed greatest support for the idea of a “strong leader” (58%). Among Shiites, “Islamic state” (40%) and “democracy” (41%) were almost equally popular (table 4.13).

The polls of 2004 to 2009 show a low assessment of the state of the country (security, reconstruction, governance) by Iraqis, a low level of trust in created institutions, and a negative attitude toward the coalition forces. An especially negative attitude was recorded among the Sunnis.⁹⁰

A poll conducted in February 2009 uncovered an increase among Iraqis with regard to security: 85 percent of all respondents described the situation as very good or quite good, up 23 percentage points from a year earlier; a total of 52 percent said that security had improved over the last year, up 16 percentage points from March 2008; only 8 percent said that it was getting worse, compared with 26 percent in 2008. Those who said their lives were going very well or quite well were 65 percent of the total, up 9 percentage points. There was a 14 percentage point increase, to 60 percent, in those who thought things would be better in Iraq as a whole a year later. The same poll revealed a negative assessment of the war itself and the actions of the United States, United Kingdom, and coalition troops. Fifty-six percent of respondents thought that the 2003 invasion was wrong (up 6%), while 42 percent said it was right (down 7%). Only 30 percent thought that the coalition forces were doing a good job, while 69 percent thought they were doing a bad job, more or less the same as a year earlier. Overall, 59 percent of those questioned thought that Britain’s role was negative, 22 percent said it was positive; 64 percent said that the US role was negative, 18 percent said it was positive; 68 percent viewed Iran negatively, 12 percent viewed Iran positively.⁹¹

The higher assessments of the state of security most likely owed to the objective improvement in the situation, as well as to subjective factors, such as the expectation of complete withdrawal of foreign troops. The only legitimate reasons to retain a foreign military presence in the country

Table 4.12. Iraqi Preferences on Governance (General Poll), 2004–2009
Answers to the Question, “There can be differences between the way government is set up in a country, called the political system. From the three options I am going to read to you, which one do you think would be best for Iraq now?”

	2004 (%)	2005 (%)	February 2007 (%)	February 2009 (%)
Strong leader: government headed by one man for life	28	26	34	14
Islamic state: politicians rule according to religious principles	21	14	22	19
Democracy: government with a chance for the leader to be replaced from time to time	49	57	43	64
Refused/Don't know	4	3	—	3

Source: Iraq Poll, February 2009.

were to ensure security and to fight al-Qaeda. The optimistic assessments reflected the increasing confidence among Iraqis that the Iraqi army and police could ensure security in Iraq on their own.

Public opinion polls in Iraq in autumn 2010 demonstrated that in general, there were no noticeable improvements. Instead, assessments of the situation in the country were becoming increasingly pessimistic. The polls conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) showed that assessment of the economic situation almost equally divided Iraqis into optimists (49%) and pessimists (50%); 57 percent of respondents noted that things in Iraq were going in the wrong direction.⁹²

An IRI poll carried out in April 2011 showed that in the most problematic—that is, northern—parts of Iraq, the Sunni or Northern Triangle, “the economic mood was fairly optimistic.” A majority of respondents in three of the five northern provinces (Diyala, Ninawa, and Salah ad-Din) had answered

Table 4.13. Iraqi Preferences on Governance, by Community, February 2007 and February 2009

Answers to the Question, “There can be differences between the way government is set up in a country, called the political system. From the three options I am going to read to you, which one do you think would be best for Iraq now?” by community, February 2009 (February 2007 result in parentheses)

	Kurds (%)	Shia (%)	Sunni (%)
Strong leader: government headed by one man for life	12(25)	9(19)	20(58)
Islamic state: politicians rule according to religious principles	15(10)	26(40)	11(4)
Democracy: government with a chance for the leader to be replaced from time to time	71(66)	62(41)	65(38)
Refused/Don't know	2	3	4

Source: Iraq Poll, February 2009.

“good” or “very good” when asked to describe the current economic situation in Iraq: Diyala (58%), Ninawa (59%), and Salah ad-Din (54%). The other two northern province had less optimistic results. In Kirkuk, only 49 percent of responses were positive and 51 percent were negative, and in Anbar a pessimistic mood prevailed, with 22 percent positive responses and 75 percent negative. According to the analysis accompanying the published IRI poll results, “the positive mood about the economy did not carry over on the question of whether Iraq is headed in the right direction. Of the five provinces, only Diyala responded positively, with 60 percent responding that Iraq was headed in the right direction. The other provinces indicated the country was headed in the wrong direction: Anbar—86 percent wrong direction, 10 percent right direction; Kirkuk—57 percent wrong direction, 33 percent right direction; Salah ad-Din—45 percent wrong direction, 35 percent right direction; and Ninawa—47 percent wrong direction, 44 percent right

direction. Diyala's relative optimism may be attributable to a decline in violence that occurred more recently compared to the rest of Iraq." When asked about "the single biggest problem facing their provinces, respondents were split among basic services, security, unemployment and other issues. The responsibility for the problems with electricity, security, unemployment and government corruption the majority has placed on Iraq's Prime Minister Nouri Maliki."⁹³

On April 10, 2012, Martin Kobler, head of UNAMI, made a statement at a meeting of the UN Security Council. According to his briefing, many of the issues discussed above remained unsolved. According to Kobler, "in the first three months of 2012, a total of 613 civilians were killed and 1,835 injured, slightly less than in the same period of last year, but still horrific," and "there were still more than 1.3 million persons unable or unwilling to return to their places of origin." Baghdad hosted the largest number, with more than 300,000 refugees representing almost 60,000 families registered. Kobler: "The achievement of security and stability was and will remain a central priority for the national partnership Government, a principle clearly embodied in the Iraqi security forces' ability to take full responsibility for the country's security before and after the withdrawal for foreign forces." In his opinion, the domestic political impasse, continued terrorism and displacement, and the potential fallout from regional crises such as the one in Syria still posed obstacles for Iraq "as it marches on the road to full recovery." In particular, "the continued delays in convening a national conference underscores the urgent need for Iraqi leaders to summon the requisite political will and courage to work together to solve the country's problems through an inclusive political dialogue." Kobler pledged that UNAMI would remain steadfast in its commitment to help Iraqis address those challenges.⁹⁴

The Cost of War

Servicemen and women from 38 countries took part in the military actions in Iraq. The largest number of non-US coalition troops (more than 1,000) were deployed by Australia, the United Kingdom, Georgia (whose troops were withdrawn in August 2008 because of the war in South Ossetia), Denmark, Ukraine, South Korea, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Poland, and Spain. Statistics on casualties among the coalition forces over the course of the war, according to the nongovernmental organization iCasulties.org,

Table 4.14. Iraq Coalition Military Fatalities by Year, 2003–2012

Year	US	UK	Other	Total
2003	486	53	41	580
2004	849	22	35	906
2005	846	23	28	897
2006	823	29	21	873
2007	904	47	10	961
2008	314	4	4	322
2009	149	1	0	150
2010	60	0	0	60
2011	54	0	0	54
2012	1	0	0	1
Total	4,486	179	139	4,804

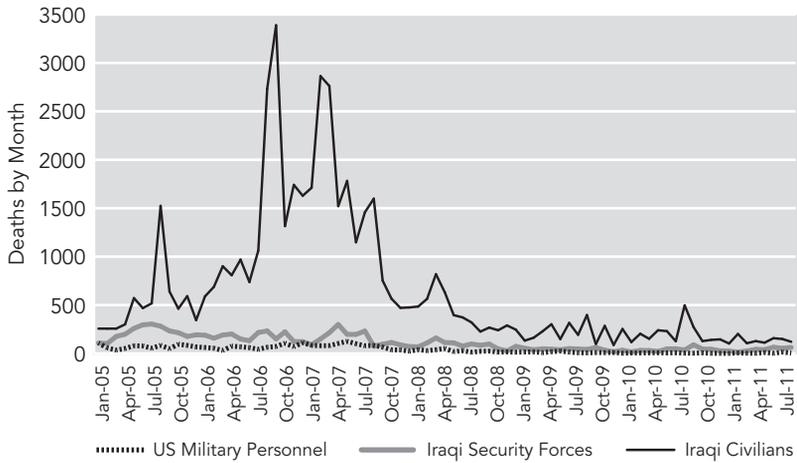
Source: “Iraq Coalition Casualty Count,” iCasualties.org (<http://icasualties.org/Iraq/Index.aspx>).

are presented in table 4.14. The largest numbers of casualties were sustained by the United States and United Kingdom.

A comparison of casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq shows that the overall number of casualties in the military operation in Afghanistan, which involved 22 countries, was 3,197 for the period 2001–2012. From 2009 on, however, the fatalities increased dramatically, from a total of 1,129 from the start of the war to 2009 to 3,197 by 2012. The greatest numbers of casualties were sustained by three countries: the United States, which lost 2,132 troops, the United Kingdom, which lost 433, and Canada, which lost 158.⁹⁵ According to the US Department of Defense, 4,489 US servicemen died in Iraq and 32,230 were wounded between March 19, 2003, and September 11, 2013. In Afghanistan the figures were 2,267 troops killed and 19,287 wounded between October 7, 2001, and September 11, 2013.⁹⁶

A protracted military campaign and the rotation of troops are factors that often lead to post-traumatic stress disorders and increased rates of suicide among servicemen, and multiple deployments to a combat area are one reason for such psychological trauma. Of the 513,000 active-duty soldiers who served in Iraq between 2003 and 2008, more than 197,000 (68%) were deployed more than once, and more than 53,000 (31%) were deployed three or more times. According to official data, after a first deployment in Iraq 17 percent of soldiers were diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. This figure increased to 18.5 percent after the second deployment and to 27 percent after the third.⁹⁷ On May 11, 2009, Sergeant John Russell shot five people, two officers and three soldiers, at a hospital for military personnel suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder on the US base in Baghdad, where he was undergoing a medical checkup. He was on his third deployment to Iraq.⁹⁸ The situation itself is not unique, though the number of victims killed in that episode was the highest over the course of the campaign. Defense Secretary Robert Gates stated in connection with this incident that the Pentagon should redouble its efforts to help servicemen suffering from stress. According to official statistics, in 2006 102 suicides were registered in the army, in 2007 115 suicides, and in 2008 140 suicides. In 2009, 244 suicides were registered among servicemen, rising to 300 in 2010 and continuing the rising trend from previous years.⁹⁹ Starting in 2009, the psychological stress that servicemen, their families, and their relatives experienced as a result of deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan was discussed at US congressional hearings.¹⁰⁰ Also in March 2009 the Department of Defense Task Force on the Prevention of Suicide by Members of the Armed Forces was established. In 2010, it presented 76 recommendations. Twenty-five of these recommendations focused on establishing Department of Defense units to address suicide prevention on a constant basis. The change of attitude toward suicide and its survivors was reflected in the core approach: “to establish a culture that fosters prevention as well as early recognition and intervention.” This approach would include special attention to psychological support for servicemen and their families and “zero tolerance” policies regarding any discrimination against individuals with “emotional, psychological, relations, spiritual, and behavioral issues.” Special programs would be designed to train servicemen and officers to be aware of the issue and to address it responsibly.¹⁰¹ In November 2011, the Department of Defense Suicide Prevention

Figure 4.2. Losses among Iraqi Civilians, Iraqi Security Forces, and US Military Personnel, 2005–2011



Source: iCasualties.org (<http://icasualties.org/Iraq/IraqiDeaths.aspx>).

Office was created to oversee the development and implementation of suicide and risk reduction programs within the department.¹⁰²

According to data from iCasualties.org, there were 10,125 fatalities among Iraqi security forces and police and more than 50,000 civilian deaths from the start of warfare in 2003 to July 2011.¹⁰³ Iraqi civilian casualties significantly exceeded casualties among the military, though the exact figures are controversial and hard to establish. According to statistics provided by the Iraqi Healthcare Ministry, civilian casualties ranged between 104,000 and 223,000 people from 2003 to June 2006.¹⁰⁴ In November 2006, Iraqi minister of healthcare Al-Shemari publicly announced the figure of 150,000 civilian deaths and said that, in addition, there were three wounded per one dead in Iraq.¹⁰⁵ These figures gave rise to debates all over the world, for they exceeded any other estimates and came from a public official, based on a study supported by the World Health Organization. According to the data of the nongovernmental organization Iraq Body Count, the number of recorded deaths among Iraqis was 157,531 between January 2003 and December 31, 2011, including 114,212 civilian deaths, with the rest of the casualties accounted for by Iraqis fighting either for or against Western

countries.¹⁰⁶ According to a widely cited study published in October 2006, almost 655,000 Iraqis died, or 2.5 percent of the population, which makes this war the most deadly conflict of the twenty-first century.¹⁰⁷ The highest casualty count comes from the US nongovernmental organization Just Foreign Policy; according to its estimates, more than 1.2 million people died in Iraq between March 2003 and August 2007.¹⁰⁸

The proportional losses among Iraqi civilians, Iraqi security forces, and US soldiers can be compared using data from iCasualties.org. As figure 4.2 clearly shows, the war in Iraq resulted in a disproportionate number of civilian casualties. American public opinion and the citizens of European countries whose armed forces took part in the war were concerned about the number of dead troops, whereas the situation in Iraq could be called at least a humanitarian crisis and possibly a humanitarian disaster from the standpoint of the living conditions of the local population.

US expenses for the war in Iraq included spending on “military operations, base security, reconstruction, foreign aid, embassy costs, and veterans’ health care.” The total sum of these expenses approved by the US Congress for the war on terror from 2001 to June 30, 2008, amounted to US\$864 billion, of which \$657 billion, or 76 percent, went to the military operation in Iraq. According to the Congressional Budget Office, from \$1.3 trillion to \$1.7 trillion may additionally be allocated to the war on terror for the years 2009–2018,¹⁰⁹ which brings the total amount spent on the war on terror in the period 2001–2018 to more than \$2.4 trillion.¹¹⁰ The amount of \$49 billion was allocated to programs for Iraqi stabilization and reconstruction beginning in 2003.¹¹¹ As Stuart W. Bowen Jr., inspector general in Iraq, noted in his February 2009 report *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*, this represents “the largest relief and reconstruction effort for one country in U.S. history,”¹¹² though spending on the war has been vastly greater than spending on reconstruction.

The US budget deficit reached a record \$490 billion by 2009, much of it associated with the war on terror initiated by President George W. Bush.¹¹³ The world economic crisis doubled the budget deficit. The Obama administration had to deal with a budget deficit that grew to \$1.752 trillion in 2009, and sought to reduce the budget deficit to \$1.171 trillion in 2010 and to \$912 billion in 2011.¹¹⁴ Insofar as neither war was concluded, an increase in defense spending by 4 percent (\$20.4 billion) was planned for

2009; additional funds were included in the budget to cover the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq and an increased military presence in Afghanistan (\$75.5 billion for 2009, in addition to the \$40 billion already allocated for 2009 and the \$130 billion allocated for 2010). Policy-makers planned to increase the size of the army, raise the wages of servicemen and women, and increase spending on medical services to the military, including needed psychological assistance. The government fulfilled its pledges to the troops and veterans by increasing the budget for housing, providing compensation to the disabled, and increasing spending on health care and educational programs, all amounting to a total of \$25 billion.¹¹⁵ Payments to the military under medical programs increased almost three times on the budget line “Retiree Health Insurance Benefits,” from \$480 billion in 2000 to \$1,220 billion in 2005, and the amount budgeted for “Veterans Disability Compensation” almost doubled, from \$679 billion to \$1,218 billion during the same period.¹¹⁶

In summing up the price of war in Iraq, it is appropriate to conclude with some observations by Ali A. Allawi, minister of trade and minister of defense in the Iraqi Transitional Government in 2005–2006. His book, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*, was published in 2007, but the author’s assessments are still relevant:

The law of unintended consequences broke out in Iraq with a vengeance. The USA invasion and occupation of Iraq broke a thick crust that had accreted over the country and region as a whole, and released powerful subterranean forces. The emergence of the Shi’a after decades, if not centuries, of marginalization was perhaps the most profound outcome, closely followed by the massive spur given to the drive of a Kurdish nation. On another level, the division within the world of Islam became far more pronounced. They are about to move on to an altogether different plane of mutual antipathy and internecine warfare.... It was the Bush Administration that acted as the unwitting handmaiden to history and denied, ignored, belittled and misunderstood the effects of what it had created....

Iraq cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be seen as a model for anything worth emulating.

America's "civilizing mission" in Iraq stumbled, and then quickly vanished, leaving a trail of slogans and an incomplete reconstruction plan. The billions that America had spent went unrecognised, and therefore not appreciated. Iraqis heard about the billions, like some memorable banquet to which only a few are invited. But what they experienced was the daily chaos, confusion, shortages, and the stark terrors of life. Death squads now compounded vicious attacks of terrorists. Opinions and divisions were hardening. . . . The corroded and corrupt state of Saddam was replaced by the corroded, inefficient, incompetent and corrupt state of the new order.

Bush may well go down in history as presiding over one of America's great strategic blunders.... But it is Iraq and Iraqis who paid [for] most of the failed policies of their erstwhile liberators and their newly minted governors.¹¹⁷

DISCUSSION OF THE WAR'S OUTCOME IN THE UNITED STATES

Soon after the start of the war in Iraq it became clear that allegations about the presence of WMDs in Iraq were not confirmed, and the findings presented by the US intelligence agencies turned out not to correspond to reality. Claims that Iraq supported al-Qaeda and prepared terror attacks against the United States and the United Kingdom could not be confirmed. Thus, the tasks that the United States and its coalition partners set for themselves were not achieved, and the legitimacy of their actions was not affirmed. Moreover, policy-makers in both the United States and the United Kingdom faced the political consequences of the war in their own countries. George W. Bush and Tony Blair were accused of manipulating intelligence data and exaggerating the threat emanating from Iraq in order to win approval for military action, and of abusing their power and the trust of the members of Parliament or Congress and the general citizenry. In September 2003, the Committee on Intelligence of the House of Representatives completed its four-month-long examination of the data used by the Bush administration to secure congressional approval to go to war. The committee concluded that the materials used to support

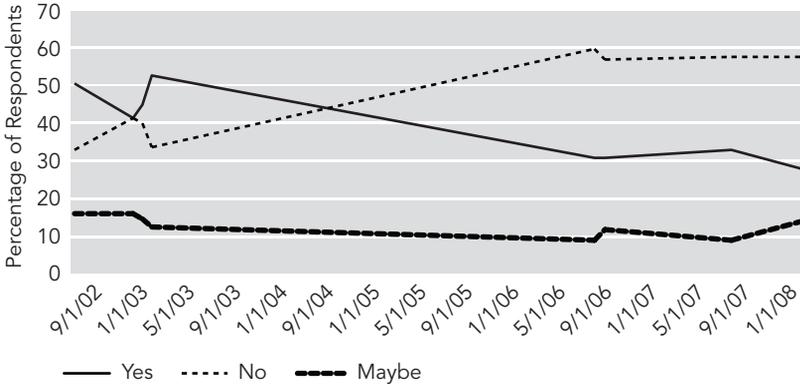
the war were “fragmentary,” “outdated,” and “circumstantial.”¹¹⁸ In May 2004, Secretary of State Powell acknowledged in his interview with ABC, an American news outlet, that the information the CIA claimed to have about the presence of WMDs in Iraq was “inaccurate and wrong and in some cases, deliberately misleading,” and that he was “disappointed” and regretted his involvement in conveying incorrect information. He added, however, that this was the “best information that the Central Intelligence Agency made available” and that there had been a collective judgment of the intelligence community about the presence of WMDs in Iraq.¹¹⁹ Thus, the main objective of the war, the disarmament of Iraq, turned out to be based on a fiction.

The war in Iraq, according to many analysts, worsened the situation in the region and gave rise to the emergence of al-Qaeda terrorist groups in Iraqi territory. Already in September 2003, Madeleine Albright, former US secretary of state, in an interview with *Time* magazine answered the question, “Has the war made the problem of terrorism better or worse?” by saying “The Administration immediately tied Sept. 11 to Saddam. They said, basically, that Saddam and Iraq were a hotbed of terrorism. While I had many criticisms of Saddam, that’s not the way I saw it. But now Iraq is in fact a breeding ground for terrorists.”¹²⁰

The course of the US-led war and of the civil war in Iraq led to an even greater worsening of life for Iraqis compared to life under Saddam Hussein. The task of helping Iraqis in what the United States depicted as their struggle against tyranny and the creation of a free and prosperous society turned out to be not as simple as it had seemed to the war initiators. As was predicted, the war had extremely negative consequences for the political, economic, and humanitarian situation in the country and the region. In addition to the numerous human casualties, the war destroyed Iraq’s infrastructure, including vital communications systems, the water supply, the electrical grid, transportation, and the foundations of economic activity and employment, as well as systems providing the population with food and vital resources and services. Creating a democratic regime is a complex process beset by controversy. Iraq’s external debt, the state of its economy, and the life needs of its population make the future of the country dependent on international financial and political assistance. Stability, security, and democratic principles in domestic politics and peacefulness in foreign

Figure 4.3. Changing American Attitudes on Iraq’s Connection to September 11 Terrorist Attacks, 2002–2008

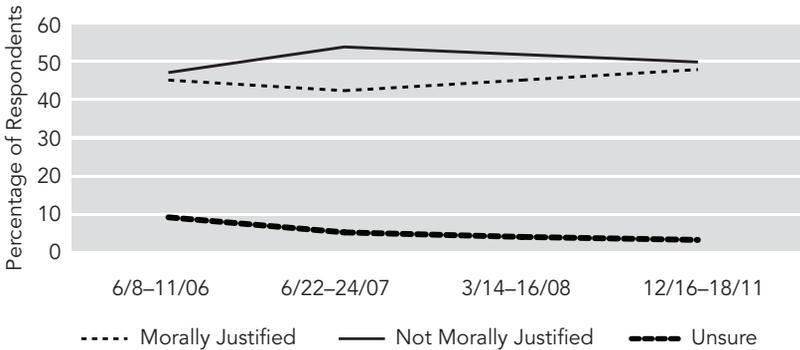
Answers to the Question, “Do you think Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the September 11th, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon?”



Source: CBS News poll, March 15–18, 2008 (<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq2.htm>).

Figure 4.4. Changing American Attitudes on the Moral Justification of the Iraq War, 2006–2011

Answers to the Question, “Do you think the United States’ action in Iraq has been morally justified, or not?”



Source: CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll, December 16–18, 2011 (<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq.htm>).

policy: that is what Western countries are hoping for, but such things are difficult to guarantee, especially if we consider the history, traditions, and current state of affairs of the country and of the region as a whole.

The war became possible because the Bush administration had created favorable domestic public opinion. Today, a decade later, it is possible to track the changing attitudes of Americans with regard to the key issues associated with the start of war and how the success of the campaign was generally assessed. Polls captured the change in opinion over time regarding the reasons for the start of the war and its legitimacy. Thus, answers to the question “Do you think Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the September 11th, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon?” reveal that in 2008, a minority of respondents believed that the former leader of Iraq had been involved in the terrorist attacks of 9/11 (figure 4.3).¹²¹

In 2003, 31 percent of respondents gave a positive response to the question, “Do you think the Bush administration deliberately misled the American public about whether Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, or not?,” while 67 percent did not support this view. In February 2008, 53 percent of respondents believed that this was deliberate misinformation and 42 percent that it was not. In 2011, 57 percent believed that this was deliberate misinformation and 41 percent that it was not. The question about the morality of starting the war demonstrates a polarization of public opinion, with an insignificant predominance of war opponents (figure 4.4).¹²²

The US success in achieving its stated objectives in going to war was evaluated by Americans increasingly negatively over the course of the polling period, though an almost equal division gradually emerged between those who believed that the war had contributed to an increase in US security and those who disagreed (figures 4.5 and 4.6).¹²³

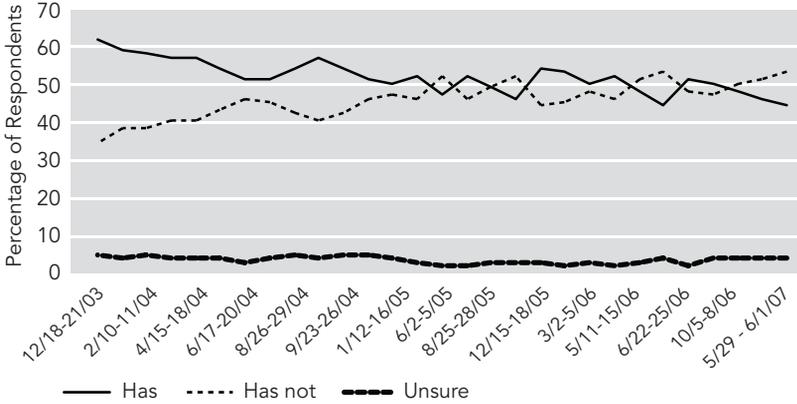
The most significant change in the American public’s assessment of the Bush administration’s policies in Iraq was observed between June 2003 and April 2008 (figure 4.7).

The party affiliation of respondents was evident in the responses to that question: the opinions of Republicans and Democrats were almost directly opposite. Table 4.15 illustrates this claim.

In April 2008, when asked, “Regardless of how you intend to vote, what would you prefer the next president do about the war in Iraq? Would you prefer the next president try to end the Iraq war within the next year or

Figure 4.5. Changing American Attitudes on the Iraq War and Long-Term US Security, 2003–2007

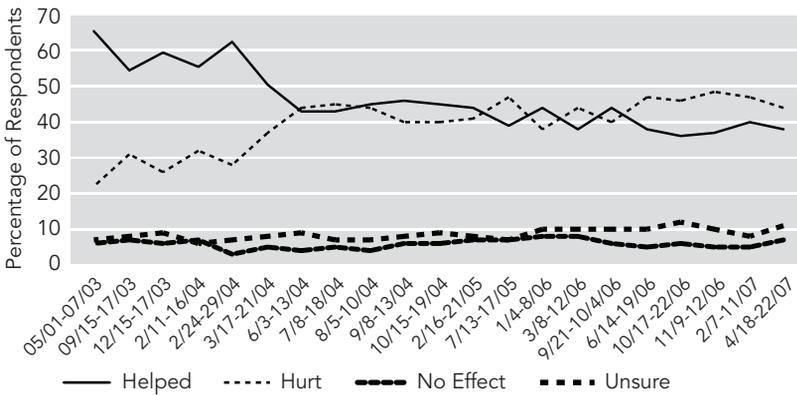
Answers to the Question, “Do you think the war with Iraq has or has not contributed to the long-term security of the United States?”



Source: ABC News/Washington Post poll, May 29–June 1, 2007 (<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq5.htm>).

Figure 4.6. Changing American Attitudes on the Iraq War and the War on Terrorism, 2003–2007

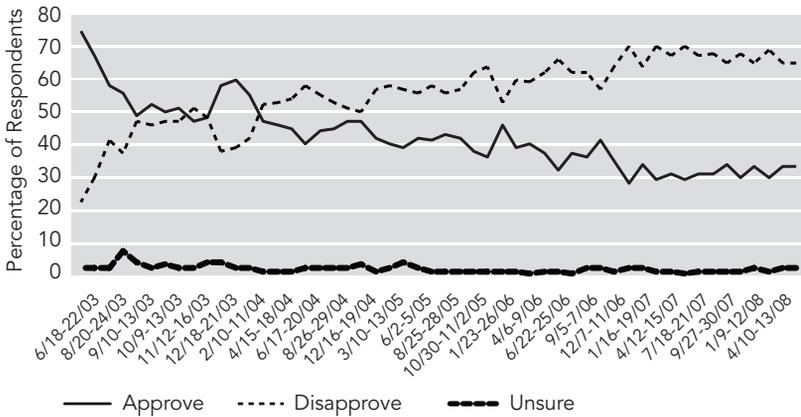
Answers to the Question, “Do you think the war in Iraq has helped the war on terrorism, or has it hurt the war on terrorism?”



Source: Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, April 18–22, 2007 (<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq6.htm>).

Figure 4.7. Changing Approval Ratings of the Bush Administration’s Handling of the Iraq War, 2003–2008

Answers to the Question, “Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bush is handling the situation in Iraq?”



Sources: ABC News/*Washington Post* poll, September 4–7, 2007 (<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq3.htm>); ABC News/*Washington Post* poll, April 10–13, 2008 (<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq2.htm>).

Table 4.15. Approval Ratings of the Bush Administration’s Handling of the Iraq War, by Party Affiliation, April 2008

Answers to the Question, “Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the situation with Iraq?”

	Approve (%)	Disapprove (%)	Unsure (%)
All adults	29	64	7
Republicans	66	26	8
Democrats	6	90	4
Independents	24	68	8

Source: CBS News/*New York Times* poll, April 25–29, 2008 (<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq2.htm>).

two, no matter what, or continue to fight the Iraq war as long as they felt it was necessary?,” 62 percent of all respondents spoke in favor of ending the war and 34 percent favored continuing it. Broken down by party affiliation, 89 percent of Democrats but only 26 percent of Republicans were in favor of ending the war, and 68 percent of Republicans but only 10 percent of Democrats favored continuing it (table 4.16).¹²⁴

A divisive partisanship was also evident in the assessment of the war, its necessity, its justifiability, and the possibility of victory. Against the backdrop of a Republican administration and a Republican majority in both houses of Congress, Republicans more so than Democrats supported military action, and Republicans assessed President Bush’s policies and plans for reconstructing Iraq more favorably than Democrats and independents did. As Charles A. Kupchan and Peter L. Trubowitz wrote in 2007, “The United States is in the midst of a polarized and bruising debate about the nature and scope of its engagement with the world. The current reassessment is only the latest of many; ever since the United States’ rise as a global power, its leaders and citizens have regularly scrutinized the costs and benefits of foreign ambition.”¹²⁵ The deep division in both American society and the political elite concerning the nature of the US engagement in Iraq grew as the war dragged on and its costs—both material costs and the cost in human lives—increased.

Over the course of the war, there was a significant change in the ratio of responses to the question concerning whether the decision to launch the war in Iraq had been a mistake (“In view of the developments since we first sent our troops to Iraq, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq, or not?”). In March 2003, 75 percent of respondents believed that the United States had made the right decision in going to war, whereas in March 2010 only 41 percent thought so. The proportion of those who considered the war a mistake increased over the same period from 23 percent to 55 percent. Negative attitudes toward the war peaked in July 2007 (62%), April 2008 (63%), and the summer of 2009.¹²⁶

The majority of Americans believed that the war had a generally negative effect on life in the United States, though from 2008 to 2011 the proportion of people thinking this way declined, from 63 percent in 2008 to 52 percent in 2011. The proportion of those who believed

that the war had a positive effect remained practically unchanged, being 15 percent in 2008 and 16 percent in 2011. There remained a stable opinion that spending on the war in Iraq was the main reason for the economic problems of the United States (71%), with only 28 percent believing that the war and the economic crisis were not interconnected. It is interesting that Americans more optimistically assessed the effect of the war on life in Iraq, though this clearly contradicted all objective indicators: in 2011, 48 percent believed that “U.S. involvement in the war in Iraq has had a positive effect on life in Iraq generally,” 28 percent responded that it “[has had] a negative effect,” and 21 percent responded that it “hasn’t had much effect.”¹²⁷

In September 2010, most Americans gave a negative response to the question, “Do you think the result of the war with Iraq was worth the loss of American lives and other costs of attacking Iraq, or not?” Seventy-one percent responded “not worth it,” 23 percent responded “worth it,” and 6 percent responded “unsure.” Answers to the same question in

Table 4.16. Opinions on Continuation of War into Next Presidential Administration, by Party Affiliation, April 2008

Responses by Party Affiliation to the Question, “Regardless of how you intend to vote, what would you prefer the next president do about the war in Iraq? Would you prefer the next president try to end the Iraq war within the next year or two, no matter what, or continue to fight the Iraq war as long as they felt it was necessary?”

	End war (%)	Continue (%)	Unsure (%)
All adults	62	34	4
Republicans	26	68	6
Democrats	89	10	1
Independents	63	31	6

Source: CBS News/*New York Times* poll, April 25–29, 2008 (<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq2.htm>).

August 2003 demonstrated the almost even split in society, with 46 percent responding “worth it,” 45 percent responding “not worth it,” and 9 percent responding “unsure.” In the same poll, the party affiliation of respondents was considered, and the answers demonstrated the strictly negative attitude of Democrats toward the war (81% against vs. 14% for). Among independent respondents the figures were 67 percent against and 21 percent in favor, and among Republicans 42 percent were in favor and 49 percent were against.¹²⁸

Answers to the direct question, “Do you favor or oppose the U.S. war in Iraq?” demonstrated a constant but not dramatic increase in the proportion of war opponents from 2006 to 2011. In June 2006, 38 percent of respondents supported the war and 54 percent were against it, but in November 2011, 31 percent of respondents supported the war and 68 percent were against it.¹²⁹ Americans’ assessment of the success of the military operation in Iraq, however, changed significantly. In general, answers to this question reflected the successes and failures of American troops in Iraq, the division in society, and increased optimism with regard to the possibility of victory in Iraq and stabilization of the country with the coming of the Obama administration (figures 4.8 to 4.10).

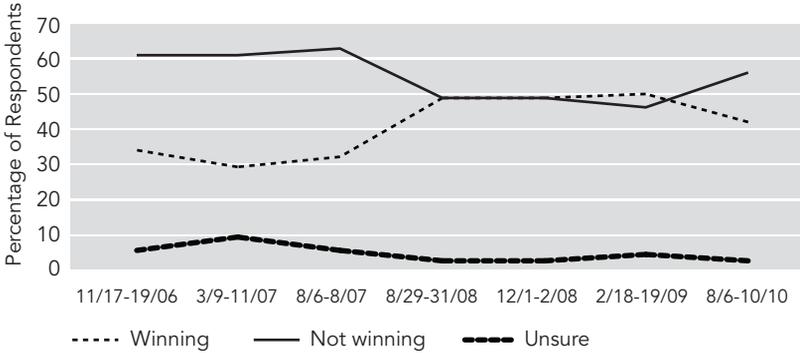
Assessments of whether the situation in Iraq constituted a victory or a defeat caused difficulties in responses after the withdrawal of troops. In December 2011, 31 percent of respondents answered that “the outcome for the United States in Iraq” was a victory, 11 percent said that it was a defeat, and 54 percent described it as a stalemate. It is interesting to note the high and almost completely unanimous assessment of the US Army in Iraq: 96 percent of respondents said they “are proud of the U.S. troops who were stationed in Iraq,” and only 3 percent said “no.”¹³⁰

Evaluating the outcome of the Iraq War from the standpoint of the objectives that the United States had set for itself, Americans negatively assessed the US success, though some polls demonstrated contradictory data. Thus, answering the question, “As a result of the United States’ military action against Iraq, do you think the United States is more safe from terrorism, less safe from terrorism, or hasn’t it made any difference?,” most respondents said the war did not have an effect (figure 4.9).¹³¹

Opinions on the extent to which the United States had achieved its war objectives differed markedly in polls carried out by different agencies.

Figure 4.8. Changing American Attitudes on US Military Success in Iraq, 2006–2010

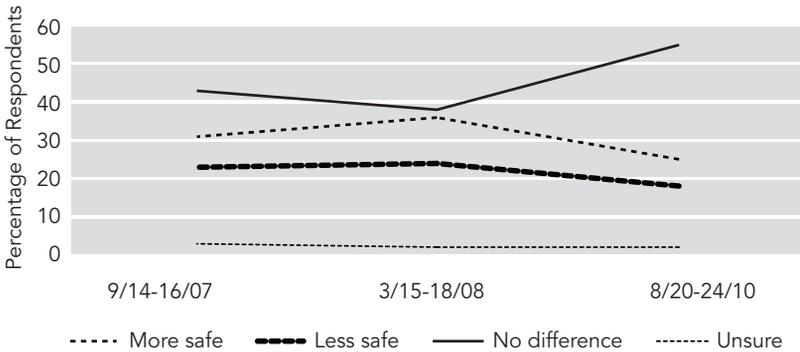
Answers to the Question, “Do you think the United States is winning or not winning the war in Iraq?”



Source: CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll, August 6–10, 2010 (<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq.htm>).

Figure 4.9. Changing American Attitudes on US Safety from Terrorism as a Result of the Iraq War, 2007–2010

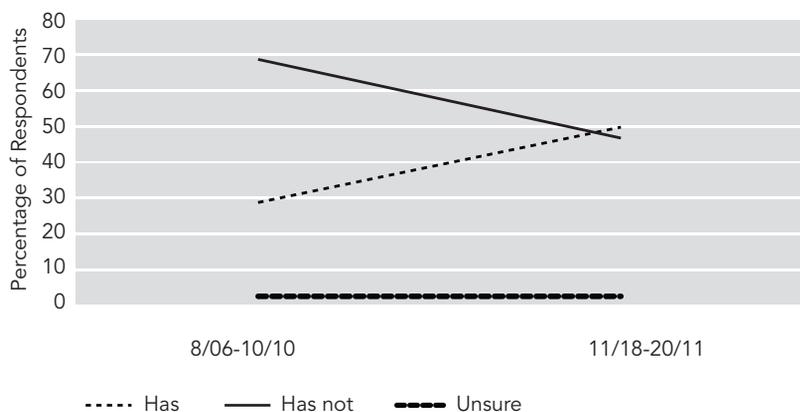
Answers to the Question, “As a result of the United States’ military action against Iraq, do you think the United States is more safe from terrorism, less safe from terrorism, or hasn’t it made any difference?”



Source: CBS News poll, August 20–24, 2010 (<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq.htm>).

Figure 4.10. Changing American Attitudes on US Goal Achievement in Iraq, 2010–2011

Answers to the Question, “Do you think the US has or has not achieved its goals in Iraq?”



Source: CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll, November 18–20, 2011 (<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq.htm>).

Thus, the poll conducted by CNN/Opinion Research Corporation in November 2011 showed greater optimism in 2011 than in 2010, though still a deeply divided society (figure 4.10).¹³²

However, the results of CBS News polls in August 2010 revealed a polarization of society rather than the large opinion gap noticeable in figure 4.10. The same poll also categorized responses according to the party affiliation of the respondents (table 4.17).¹³³

Assessments of the situation in Iraq from the standpoint of constructing an “open democratic society” reflected a skeptical attitude of Americans and divided opinion with regard to American troops’ responsibility for creating stability and security in Iraq. The polarization of opinion was evident in the assessment of whether “significant progress [has been made] toward restoring civil order in Iraq,” with growing optimism manifested during the presidency of Barack Obama (figure 4.11).¹³⁴

After the plan for US troop withdrawal was announced in early 2009, a majority of respondents believed that withdrawal of troops should be

Table 4.17. Opinions on US Military Success in Iraq, by Party Affiliation, August 2010

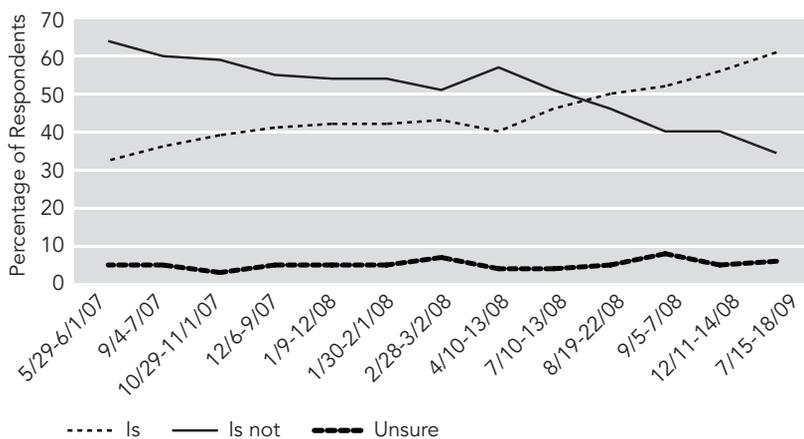
Answers to the Question, “Regardless of whether you think taking military action in Iraq was the right thing to do, would you say the United States has succeeded in accomplishing its objectives in Iraq, or has it not succeeded?”

	Has (%)	Has not (%)	Unsure (%)
All	41	51	8
Republicans	57	36	7
Democrats	36	57	7
Independent	34	56	10

Source: CBS News poll, August 20–24, 2010 (<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq.htm>).

Figure 4.11. Changing American Opinions on Civil Order in Iraq, 2007–2009

Answers to the Question, “Do you think the United States is or is not making significant progress toward restoring civil order in Iraq?”



Source: ABC News/ Washington Post poll, July 15–18, 2009 (<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq2.htm>).

carried out according to the schedule, regardless of whether the war objectives had been achieved. In June 2008, 52 percent of respondents believed that the troops should be withdrawn from Iraq as soon as possible, and 43 percent believed that the troops should stay until stability was established. This ratio almost mirrors the ratio between proponents (53%) and opponents (43%) of keeping the troops in Iraq registered in July 2004.¹³⁵

It is interesting that in August 2010, a majority of respondents did not agree with the statement, “The U.S. should keep its troops in Iraq beyond 2011 if Iraqi security forces are unable to contain insurgent attacks and maintain order in Iraq”: 53 percent responded “stick to timetable” and 43 percent responded “stay beyond 2011, if necessary.”¹³⁶ Answers to a similar question asked in 2008, “Do you think the United States does or does not have an obligation to establish a reasonable level of stability and security in Iraq before withdrawing all of its troops?,” showed that 65 percent of respondents believed the United States should stay and 32 percent did not.¹³⁷ Obviously, respondents understood that the problem was complex and could not be solved merely by withdrawing troops. After the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq, assessments of the future of Iraq with respect to constructing a democratic, peaceful, and stable society continued to be pessimistic.¹³⁸ Table 4.18 shows the breakdown of opinion.

One of the benchmarks for assessing Americans’ attitude to the Iraq War is the war in Vietnam. The term “Vietnam syndrome” is often used as shorthand for the state of American society and politics as it coalesced during the war in Vietnam. The main manifestations of the syndrome are a negative attitude of society toward military interventions (anti-interventionism), a low level of trust in the military and political institutions of the country, a nationwide political crisis brought on by the loss of legitimacy of the foreign policy course, and an unwillingness of the political elite to initiate wars that could result in the political leadership losing legitimacy.

US society is considered to have put the Vietnam syndrome behind it during the Reagan presidency. The signs of such a turn included the recovery of trust in the armed forces, an end to the army’s recruitment problem, and greater patriotism. The swift and successful war in Iraq in 1991 gave the United States confidence that the Vietnam syndrome had been overcome. Nevertheless, “Vietnam,” as a cluster of symptoms around loss of legitimacy of the political leadership and lack of faith in abiding

Table 4.18. American Predictions of Outcome after US Troop Withdrawal, December 2011

Answers to the Question, “Now, thinking about Iraq, looking ahead to a time after US troops have left Iraq, how likely do you believe each of the following things is to happen: very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely?”

	Very likely (%)	Somewhat likely (%)	Somewhat unlikely (%)	Very unlikely (%)	Unsure (%)
There will be all-out civil war	21	39	24	11	5
There will be more attempted terrorist attacks against the United States on our own soil as a result of our troops having left Iraq	12	33	30	22	3
The Iraqi government will achieve a stable democracy	4	34	32	28	2
Iraq will become more settled and less violent	7	28	30	32	3

Source: NBC News/ *Wall Street Journal* poll, December 7–11, 2011 (<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq.htm>).

institutions, has become ingrained in the political vocabulary and is often hauled out in discussions of US participation in military operations abroad. The motto “no more Vietnams” has a lasting anti-interventionist appeal.

The lurking Vietnam syndrome as a backdrop to US involvement in foreign operations is shown in a remarkable cartoon by Daryl Cagle that was published on March 27, 2003 (figure 4.12), and appears in Donald Rumsfeld’s memoirs, in the chapter on the start of the military campaign in Afghanistan in 2002. The cartoon shows Rumsfeld, secretary of defense under President Bush during the first few years of the Iraq War, as the driver of a car full of journalists pelting him with the question, “Is it Vietnam yet?”¹³⁹

According to Henry Kissinger, secretary of state in the Nixon administration, “the experience of Vietnam remains deeply imprinted on the American psyche, while history has seemingly reserved for itself some of

Figure 4.12. Daryl Cagle, “Is It Vietnam Yet?” (March 27, 2003)



“Is it Vietnam Yet?” Cartoon by Daryl Cagle, March 27, 2003. Copyright 2003 by Daryl Cagle. Reproduced with permission.

its most telling lessons.”¹⁴⁰ Melvin Laird, defense secretary in the Nixon administration, who held a negative view of interpretations of the lessons of Vietnam in contemporary American politics, wrote in 2005 that the legacy of more than 30 years of misinformation about the Vietnam War “[has left] the United States timorous about war, deeply averse to intervening in even a just cause, and dubious of its ability to get out of war once it is in one.” Laird concluded this statement with a caustic remark: “All one need whisper is ‘another Vietnam,’ and palms begin to sweat.”¹⁴¹

Numerous publications in the United States have been devoted to the lessons of Vietnam, with new papers, monographs, and memoirs appearing every year. In 1981 the leading international journal *International Security* published portions of a debate on the impact of the Vietnam War experience on US foreign policy.¹⁴² The participants included such respected American analysts as Stanley Hoffman, Samuel Huntington, Thomas Schelling, Ernst May, and Richard Neustadt. They cited the following military and political lessons of Vietnam:

- The complexity of fighting a limited war, and the impossibility of achieving victory in such a war.
- “Democracies are not well equipped to fight lengthy limited wars” (Huntington).¹⁴³
- Weak opponents impose on strong developed countries forms of warfare that make it impossible for the strong countries to win (guerrilla and terrorist strategies).
- Conventional armies cannot successfully participate in liberation wars and fight guerrilla wars, for this has a strong demoralizing effect on them (Hoffman).¹⁴⁴
- Participating in limited wars in which one’s opponents use guerrilla tactics drives military servicemen to commit cruel acts out of frustration, and leads to other forms of dehumanizing behavior (Schelling).¹⁴⁵

- The fallacy of relying on split political forces with a simultaneous attempt to establish a new political system (state) (Hoffman, Huntington).¹⁴⁶
- With Vietnam, Americans witnessed “the end of the era in which one could believe that a great industrial power is bound to win when it fights a small, poor, backward country” (Schelling). Schelling also pointed to the paradoxical lesson of Vietnam, namely, that “lessons are never learned.”¹⁴⁷

An important title among the numerous books on the subject is Robert McNamara’s memoirs, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*. McNamara was defense secretary in the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson administrations. In later years, he concluded that the war damaged America terribly. He wrote, “We of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations who participated in the decisions on Vietnam acted according to what we thought were the principles and traditions of this nation. We made our decisions in light of those values. Yet we were wrong, terribly wrong.”¹⁴⁸ McNamara was one of the initiators of the US mass military involvement in Vietnam, which led to an increase in the US military presence from 16,000 “military advisers” in 1963 to an army of half a million by the mid-1960s, and he was no doubt responsible for the expansion of that war and for the tens of thousands of American servicemen’s lives lost. McNamara identified 11 reasons for US defeat in Vietnam. They can be generalized as follows:

- “Misjudgment of the geopolitical intentions of the US’s adversaries and exaggeration of the dangers to the United States of their actions”; profound ignorance of the history, culture, and politics of the people in the area, and of the personalities and habits of their (Vietnamese) leaders.¹⁴⁹
- Failure to recognize the limitations of modern, high-tech military equipment, forces, and doctrine in confronting an unconventional, highly motivated people’s movement; underestimation of the power of nationalism to motivate a people to fight and die for their beliefs and values; failure to retain the popular support of the American people.¹⁵⁰

McNamara also underscored the need to have the support of the international community when resorting to military actions and the importance of implementing such actions jointly with other countries, especially when there is no direct threat to the United States. Anticipating the trajectory of international relations in the twenty-first century, McNamara wrote that the United States should be cautious about participating in “limited wars,” and noted that “our leaders—and our people—must be prepared to cut our losses and withdraw if it appears our limited objectives cannot be achieved at acceptable risks and costs.”¹⁵¹

Analysts and politicians disagree on the reasons the United States went to war in Vietnam and Iraq. Most American analysts point out that in the first instance, the United States was motivated by the goal of combating communism in Southeast Asia and the expanding Soviet influence, which was an insufficiently well-defined task and did not correspond to the immediate national interests of the United States. In the case of Iraq, this was a fight against a real enemy, international terrorism, which had inflicted a tangible blow on the United States. Some analysts tend to lump the wars together, as if they were both started on the basis of false, untrue reasons that did not reflect the real national interests of the United States, and a substitution of reasons was discovered soon after the start of the war. In preparing for war, according to many analysts and public figures in the United States, the Bush administration successfully demonized the figure of Saddam Hussein and exploited the American fear of the dangers associated with international terrorism that had emerged after 9/11.

An exploration of American attitudes toward the Iraq War shows the differences of that period compared to the Vietnam War. During the Vietnam War, a significant share of the opposition was represented by young people, and for the war in Iraq, opposition was still high in the group less than 29 years old, according to polls taken in 2003 to 2005. However, a study by the Gallup organization in 2007 demonstrated that a sustained negative attitude toward the war in Iraq was observed only in the age group over 50 years. In senior age groups (more than 57 years old), up to 66 percent of respondents considered the deployment of American troops in Iraq a “mistake,” while in the age groups from 18 to 49 years this assessment was supported by only 45 percent to 51 percent. A particularly notable difference is the higher level of support for the war from Americans with higher

and postgraduate education, in contrast to the period of the 1960s to 1970s, when the highest support for the war was recorded among 30- to 39-year-olds.¹⁵² Probably one of the reasons for the more tolerant attitude of young people to the Iraq War was the absence of the draft, which had existed until 1973 and was abolished because of the negative public perception of the US engagement in Vietnam. Criticism of the Iraq War among senior Americans may be connected to their having witnessed or participated in the Vietnam War or having grown up under the influence of the Vietnam syndrome.

American analysts sometimes refer to a problem that emerged during the Vietnam War and manifested itself again with the Iraq War: the deepening division in American society and increasing isolationism. In the course of the Iraq War, more and more Americans expressed the desire that the United States pay more attention to its own problems and not try to solve all the world's problems. Charles A. Kupchan and Peter L. Trubowitz in their article, "Grand Strategy for a Divided America," cited Dean Acheson, former secretary of state, as saying that 80 percent of the job of foreign policy was the "management of your domestic ability to have a policy."¹⁵³

Comparisons with the Vietnam War were being made even before the start of the war, and after the war became protracted, analogies with the Vietnam War became constant. In 2004, the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College published a report by Jeffrey Record and Andrew W. Terrill titled *Iraq and Vietnam: Differences, Similarities, and Insights*. The authors believed that it was impossible to compare the two wars, as all historical events are unique. They also emphasized that these two wars had more differences than similarities. The only possible analogy, in their point of view, related to the process of nation-building in the context of a foreign culture, as well as the problem of gaining and retaining the support of American society for a protracted war against guerrilla fighters.¹⁵⁴

Some publications draw parallels between these wars. The first such work was published by the American historian Clark C. Smith in 2004 under the title *Vietnam ... in Iraq: Reflections on the New Quagmire*. Smith argued that the second war in Iraq was a concession to the pro-Israel lobby in the United States that sought to eliminate Saddam Hussein, who had rendered support to terrorist anti-Israeli groups. However, the start of the war went according to a scenario that American strategists had not

foreseen. The mission was not accomplished, the struggle dragged on, and the quagmire in Iraq, according to Smith, was poised to cost much blood and money to both the United States and Iraq. Smith thought that the war in Iraq would not end while George W. Bush was in power,¹⁵⁵ and his prediction proved true.

The problem of Iraq occupied the leading place in the party struggle, while the problem of confrontation of parties and the role of the Congress in terminating wars drew the special interest of American researchers. William G. Howell and Jon C. Pevehouse, authors of the book *While Dangers Gather: Congressional Checks on Presidential War Powers* and the article “When Congress Stops Wars,” considered cases in postwar US history in which Congress entered into a confrontation with the president and suspended the funding of military operations abroad, authorized the withdrawal of troops, or banned the use of troops, even contrary to international agreements. As an example, they cited the period of war in Vietnam from 1964, when Congress adopted the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution to allow the start of full-scale involvement of American troops in Vietnam, to the annulment of this resolution in 1970. After the Paris Peace Accords were signed between North and South Vietnam, Congress took additional measures that put an end to funding of a US military presence in Southeast Asia, including Cambodia, Laos, and North and South Vietnam. Howell and Pevehouse also referred to the extraordinary measures taken by Congress when, after the defeat of South Vietnam in 1975, a ban was imposed on using American troops pursuant to the Paris Peace Accords but contrary to the position of President Ford. Emphasizing the crucial role of Congress in the start and termination of wars, the authors said that “reports of Congress’ death have been greatly exaggerated.”¹⁵⁶ However, the problem of party consistency in initiating or terminating wars no doubt is intricate and should be considered in the context of checks and balances, rather than serving as proof of the peacefulness or aggressiveness of one party or another.

One of the constantly discussed questions with regard to Iraq has to do with losses among American servicemen, or the “cost of war.” Contrary to the simplified idea that antimilitary feelings are generated by the fear of loss of lives of American soldiers, there are authoritative opinions that the experience of Vietnam demonstrated the presence of another interconnection, one that is confirmed by contemporary public opinion studies.

Melvin Laird has observed that “the American public will tolerate loss of life, if the conflict has worthy, achievable goals that are clearly espoused by the administration and if their leadership deals honestly with them.”¹⁵⁷ This opinion is shared by Christopher Gelpi, professor of political science at Duke University, and Peter Feaver. They relied on public opinion studies to prove that the need and importance of the objectives set for the war are more important to Americans, and that Americans are ready to tolerate losses for the sake of achieving certain objectives.¹⁵⁸

John Mueller has put forward the idea that the number of casualties in wars has a significant influence on Americans’ approval of continuing or terminating military actions. He used the wars in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq to argue his point. It seems likely that the level of military technology development leads to reduced “tolerance to losses.” According to his estimates, by early 2005, when casualties among American troops in Iraq reached 1,500 people, the degree of approval or condemnation of war was similar to that of 1968, when around 20,000 American soldiers died in Vietnam. Mueller believes that the war in Iraq was considered by many Americans as “something of a humanitarian venture,” and quotes the words of Francis Fukuyama that “a request to spend several hundred billion dollars and several thousand American lives in order to bring democracy to ... Iraq” would “have been laughed out of court.”¹⁵⁹ Mueller believes that an “Iraq syndrome” had already developed by the end of 2005, that is, a negative attitude on the part of Americans toward an ongoing war whose objectives are unclear or seem difficult to achieve by military force.

More than 57,000 Americans died in Vietnam, and almost 4,500 Americans died in Iraq, so it is possible that the critical threshold has not been achieved. The desire of politicians to make the war as “international” as possible and to obtain the approval and assistance of the United Nations in the course of reconstruction was taken into consideration. However, for Americans, any military actions revolve around the question of tax money spending. Americans are concerned about budget deficits, the redistribution of budget monies in favor of war at the expense of social programs, inflation, crisis, the possibility of an increased tax burden, and a weakening of the dollar exchange rate, and all these concerns became decisive arguments in favor of electing the “peace party.” Only the Democrats could claim to be such a party during the 2008 elections.

Another obvious aspect for comparison is the active participation of the United States in “nation-building” in Iraq. As for the lessons of the Vietnam War, Kissinger, McNamara, and others warned about the danger and low productivity of US involvement in nation-building. They noted that democracy is the result of internal development and that the involvement of US troops in maintaining the stability of such regimes is not productive. McNamara’s book presents two main lessons of the Vietnam War: “We do not have the God-given right to shape every nation in our own image or as we choose,” and “External military force cannot substitute for the political order and stability that must be forged by a people for themselves.”¹⁶⁰

By mid-2006 it had become clear that there was a stalemate in Iraq. Whatever was done would not lead to a quick improvement and stabilization of the situation. Moreover, the withdrawal of US troops could result in an even greater worsening of the situation than maintaining a US presence in a situation where a positive outcome is not guaranteed. In 2005–2006, many articles and books devoted to Iraq were published. In *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, Larry Diamond stated that the greatest sin of the United States was not that it had launched that war, but that it had entered the war unprepared, with limited knowledge of the language and culture of the nations it had come to free from dictatorship.¹⁶¹ In *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco*, David Phillips provided a negative assessment of the success of postwar nation-building in Iraq and stated that the main problem consisted of numerous mistakes made in the very process of postwar nation-building by American military and policy-makers, which turned a “decisive and potentially historic victory” into a defeat.¹⁶² Both Diamond and Phillips were involved in the development of programs for postwar reconstruction and democratization in Iraq.

James Dobbins, director of the RAND International Security and Defense Policy Center, wrote in his paper “Who Lost Iraq?” that the American public’s perception of the war in Iraq was to a large extent predefined by the Vietnam syndrome and a negative attitude toward military actions against guerrilla movements. In his view, there were attempts in the United States to find who was guilty of the war, and accusations were primarily directed against President Bush and his administration,

as well as against Congress, which had approved the start of war; the intelligence services; the Department of Defense; and the Department of State. According to Dobbins, “above all, Americans should accept that the entire nation has, to one degree or another, failed in Iraq. Facing up to this fact and drawing the necessary lessons is the only way to ensure that it does not similarly fail again.”¹⁶³ The military analyst Anthony Cordesman noted in his 2003 book *The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics, and Military Lessons* that many problems were associated with excessive politicization of the activities of the intelligence services, insufficient readiness for war, and lack of coordination of coalition actions.¹⁶⁴

Debates demonstrated the division of American society with regard to the war in Iraq and an urgent need to find a way out. A crucial problem that occupied the minds of many US analysts and policy-makers in 2005–2006 was a search for an answer to the question, what to do in Iraq? A roundtable discussion involving leading analysts, those who had taken part in elaborating the strategy at the start of war and Iraqi reconstruction, was published under this title. The main task, in their point of view, was to search for specific steps, in order to prevent Iraq slipping into a full-scale civil war. The main task for the United States was to prevent Iraq from turning into a foreign policy fiasco.¹⁶⁵

The recommendations in the 2006 Baker-Hamilton Report echoed the debates about an “Iraqization” of the war, analogous to “Vietnamization” of the earlier war, which implied shifting the burden of fighting from American troops to Iraqi forces. Many American authors pointed out that such wars should not be fought by the American army and that protecting the new regime should become the task of Iraqis themselves. However, the problem of training local forces and transferring power to them became complex. One of the main tools used to reduce the number of attacks against the coalition forces was engaging former Sunni fighters to serve in Iraqi security forces in the Sons of Iraq program.

Stephen Biddle, senior fellow for defense policy of the Council on Foreign Relations, in his paper “Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon” regarded the policy of Iraqization from the standpoint of its relation to the lessons of the Vietnam War and efficiency. He thought that the premature withdrawal of American troops could lead to the start of genocide, and so US troop withdrawal from Iraq should be postponed until a sustainable

compromise was found between the domestic factions competing for power and resources. However, the US desire to prepare the local armed forces as quickly as possible may have contributed to the growing antagonism between these groups. The only solution to the problem, Biddle thought, was to retain a US military presence in Iraq until Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds reached a compromise and managed to ensure their security on their own. This understanding of the problem meant that accelerated Iraqization of the war was a counterproductive and dangerous strategy.¹⁶⁶

Melvin Laird assessed the situation in Iraq and expressed a similar judgment on the basis of his experience dealing with the end of war in Vietnam. Contrary to the opinion of those who believed that the presence of US troops in Iraq only strengthened the civil war, Laird wrote that the United States had not lost the war in Vietnam, but had failed—partly because of party disagreements—to preserve a continuity of policies with regard to the regime in South Vietnam. The United States ceased to render necessary assistance, and in the end this resulted in the victory of the communists, and then in thousands of casualties in Vietnam and a worsening of the US image in the world. This outcome, Laird thought, was the key lesson of Vietnam that the United States should pay close attention to in its new war. He thought that the United States could not withdraw from Iraq without having ensured permanent support for local forces that strived for democracy and that the United States should render assistance to the new regime, if it did not want Islamists to celebrate victory, which would happen once American troops were withdrawn. Withdrawal of troops would mean a US defeat in Iraq and a betrayal of the interests of US allies and adherents of democracy in Iraq and the region. If the United States withdrew its troops and under the pressure of interparty disagreements ceased to support Iraq, then an “Iraq syndrome” would likely emerge, to become part of national narrative, along with the Vietnam syndrome.¹⁶⁷

The issue of which strategies to use to combat insurgents also attracted significant attention. Andrew F. Krepinevich in “How to Win in Iraq?” proposed that a prerequisite of success was ensuring the safety of Iraqis rather than hunting down insurgents. He also pointed to the need to have a clear war strategy and explicitly defined objectives, and sarcastically cited the words of George W. Bush: “As the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down.” In his view, this was “a withdrawal plan rather than a strategy.”¹⁶⁸ Colin

Kahl, in “How We Fight?,” discussed the need for the American military to strictly follow the laws of war in Iraq, in order to maintain a high morale level among the troops and win the trust of the Iraqis. It was especially important, he thought, to observe the immunity of noncombatants, that is, to protect civilians from possible assault during warfare or nonselective attacks. He wrote, “Tracking how U.S. operations affect Iraqi civilians is not simply a moral and legal imperative; it is vital to the United States’ national interest.”¹⁶⁹ To appreciate the importance of this issue, we need only recall an extremely negative experience of the Vietnam War, when the United States violated international law, and the scandal in Abu Ghraib prison in the summer of 2004, caused by the cruel treatment of Iraqi prisoners of war, as well as the Bush administration’s rejection of the International Criminal Court. In 2006, several long articles were aggregated and published in book form as *Vietnam in Iraq: Tactics, Lessons, Legacies, and Ghosts*,¹⁷⁰ which continued the discussion about what lessons the United States had learned in the Vietnam War and whether Iraq would be another Vietnam.

Debates in the United States about whether the war in Iraq was a “new Vietnam” elicited a wide range of opinions, from unequivocal agreement to appeals not to turn Iraq into “another Vietnam.” Some of the disagreement no doubt owed to different understandings of what is meant by “the lessons of Vietnam.” For some analysts, the key lesson of Vietnam was the need to limit US attempts to transform the life of other nations in its own image, while for others the key lessons were mistakes, unmet promises, inconsistency, and the betrayal of allies’ interests. War strategies were widely discussed, especially in the cities, including strategies to be used against insurgents that rely on terrorist tactics. Based on these discussions, it seems that the memory of Vietnam as an unsuccessful US attempt to bring freedom to Southeast Asia and stop the spread of communism is the most crucial measure for assessing American military actions abroad. The war in Iraq gave American policy-makers, analysts, and society an opportunity to once again dredge up the memory of one the most painful periods in US history and try to answer the question, how well were the lessons of Vietnam learned?

Toward the end of the Iraq War, analysts tried to summarize the results of the war and the reconstruction efforts. Some of them noted the emergence of a spillover effect¹⁷¹ of the war across the region. Andrew W.

Terrill, professor at the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, identified the following signs of a spillover effect: (1) refugees and displaced persons fleeing Iraq in large numbers for neighboring countries, (2) cross-border terrorism, (3) an intensification of separatism and sectarian discord among Iraq's neighbors, fueled by the conflict in Iraq, and (4) transnational crime. These problems are impossible to resolve quickly, and their resolution inevitably depends on the willingness and ability of Iraqi authorities to tackle them. As Terrill notes, some of the problems are direct consequences of the war in Iraq, and these consequences will last. For instance, the problem of refugees was not reduced to quantitative parameters; it also included the need to give these people an opportunity to return to their homeland and to provide them with the things needed for them to resume a normal life.¹⁷²

The war in Iraq is an example of a war initiated by the United States in pursuit of the lofty goal of “liberating the nation from tyranny and building a democratic society” but in the course of which the United States once again faced the “ingratitude” of the local population; its leaders stood accused of imperial ambition and misunderstanding the traditions and values of the nation they strived to liberate. The comparison with the outcome of the Vietnam War stems from the negative outcome of the warfare (the lack of a victory), the large number of fatalities, the considerable political and material costs, and the decline in US prestige in the world. All these are components of political defeat in an armed conflict.

As Thomas E. Ricks, *Washington Post* reporter and author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*,¹⁷³ noted in a March 7, 2009, interview with CNN, that the decision to launch the war in 2003 was “the worst foreign policy decision in U.S. history.” In his view, Iraq in the nearest future would be able to become neither a stable and democratic state nor a reliable regional ally of the United States.¹⁷⁴ Ricks wrote that 2009 would be the most difficult year in this long war. He cited the words of Shawn Brimley, a former Canadian infantry officer who worked as a defense analyst at the Center for a New American Security: “In many ways the entire war was a huge gamble, risking America’s future power and prestige on a war that, at best, is likely to be inconclusive.” “Bush’s gamble,” as Ricks dubbed it in another book, would “force Obama into a series of his own gambles and trade-offs—between war and domestic

needs, between Iraq and Afghanistan, between his political base and his military.”¹⁷⁵ In May 2009, CNN broadcast an interview of the British correspondent Nic Robertson with Zabiullah Mujahid, a representative of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. Mujahid observed that the war in Afghanistan could turn out to be “Vietnam” for Americans who shifted the center of gravity of the struggle against al-Qaeda from Iraq to Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹⁷⁶ This prediction was fully confirmed, and for the Obama administration, ending the war in Iraq and setting a deadline for the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan became the most important and costly tasks from the financial and political standpoints.

The start of troop withdrawal from Iraq prompted an active discussion of the similarities and differences between the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as between both wars in Iraq. Such comparisons were thoughtfully articulated in the book *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars*, by Richard N. Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations, who took part in decision making with regard to the first and second wars in Iraq and served as a consultant for the reconstruction effort in Afghanistan.¹⁷⁷ At a Brookings Institution gathering celebrating the book’s release, Haass formulated its main thesis as follows: “I would argue that this [the Iraq War] was not simply a war of choice, it was not simply a preventive war, but ultimately it was a bad choice, and it was a bad choice badly implemented, adding insult to injury. It was a bad choice, again, because not only did the United States have many other options, but also options that I thought were preferable and far less costly. And I’m thinking about both the direct costs of this war and the indirect costs of this war, the distraction cost, and the opportunity cost.”¹⁷⁸ Haass called the war in Vietnam a “war of choice,” thus provoking the military personnel present in the room to ask about treaty obligations between the United States and South Vietnam that had required the United States to help its allies.¹⁷⁹ Meanwhile, President Obama in a statement on June 4, 2009, in Cairo called the war on terror a war “of necessity” rather than a war “by choice.”¹⁸⁰

Zbigniew Brzezinski, national security adviser under President Jimmy Carter, published a review of Haass’ book in the journal *Foreign Affairs*. Titled “A Tale of Two Wars,” the review was timed to accompany the book’s release. Brzezinski gave a generally positive review, noting ironically that “once a war’s outcome is known, the difference between

necessity and choice is brutally simple. The ex post facto verdict of history is inevitably derived from a simple maxim: nothing fails like failure, and nothing succeeds like success.” However, he noted, “until the outcome of a war becomes known, the difference between necessity and choice is rather ambiguous.”¹⁸¹

CONCLUSIONS

The asymmetric conflict model turns a spotlight on the defeat of the stronger party in an armed conflict and the various asymmetric relations obtaining between the belligerent parties that could explain such an outcome. If we consider the Iraq War to have ended in political defeat for the United States, a superpower, we will also want to know the grounds for deeming it a defeat. The main measure of success or failure in any war is whether the war objectives were achieved. Failure to accomplish the war goals through military means and the subsequent termination of military operations can be considered indications of defeat. The deterioration of the situation as a result of war can also be laid to the failure of the military campaign.

Evaluating the outcome of the war from the standpoint of established objectives leads to several conclusions. For example, we may conclude that Iraq was not disarmed because no WMDs were found on its territory. Similarly, links between Saddam Hussein’s regime and al-Qaeda were not destroyed because such links were never found. In the meantime, however, the war contributed to al-Qaeda’s penetration into Iraq—a development counter to the US war goals. Tyranny was not transformed into a free and prosperous civic society because the war, the occupation regime, and the presence of foreign troops in the country exacerbated the divisions and tensions within Iraqi society. Protracted warfare and the activities of terrorist groups aggravated the economic crisis in the country and the overall state of Iraqi society. This conclusion is supported by statistical data and public opinion polls conducted in Iraq.

The war in Iraq started with declarations about its just cause; however, during the war it became evident that the principles of entry into a war (*jus ad bellum*) had been violated, as had the principles of the just conduct of war (*jus in bello*). International humanitarian law regulating the

treatment of prisoners of war was violated. The civilian population was unprotected from combat operation; that is, the principle of discrimination between combatants and noncombatants was violated. The war continued for years and was terminated without a clearly achieved, positive outcome. Violations of international humanitarian law by American servicemen (including the cruel treatment of prisoners of war, the murders of civilians, and the torture of prisoners) drew the attention of the US national justice system. Individuals found guilty of perpetrating abuse in Abu Ghraib prison have been convicted, and other cases of war crimes are being investigated. These investigations have been accompanied by public debate over the context in which the incidents took place, which negatively affected the moral standing of the United States globally. In May 2009, President Obama banned the publication of photographs of abuse of Iraqi prisoners by American servicemen as evidence in court, which caused a heated national debate. Many analysts and representatives of the military expressed the opinion that this was the right decision, for publishing the photographs could have cost the lives of American soldiers who served outside the United States.¹⁸²

The manifest war objectives aimed to achieve a strategic goal, that of enhancing US security and protecting the country from possible terrorist attacks. Indeed, after 9/11 there have been no comparable attacks on US territory, and this fact is perhaps the only argument of any weight put forward by the war's proponents. However, the war in Iraq contributed to the rise of terrorist groups in other regions and the execution of major terrorist attacks against US allies from among the coalition of the willing. Most Americans—ordinary citizens, analysts, and politicians—do not support the attempts of Bush administration representatives¹⁸³ to prove that the war strengthened US security. Summarizing the range of opinions, we can state that the majority believes that this war should not have been started. The war failed to ensure US security and to improve the image of the country in the world and in the Middle East. As American politicians and analysts have noted on numerous occasions, the war led to an increase in anti-American sentiment in the world, stimulated the rise of terrorist groups in the Middle East and Greater Middle East, in Asia and in Europe, and had spillover effects.

The reasons for the US political defeat in Iraq may be attributed chiefly to strategic, domestic, and international factors. Strategic factors included the

difficulty of waging a victorious war with a fortiori false objectives; the difficulty of winning guerrilla warfare under occupation conditions; an insufficient understanding of the region and the country, which led to poor prewar planning; and underestimation of the potential for resistance of the local forces and overestimation of the regime's unpopularity. The main forms of struggle against the occupation forces in Iraq were guerrilla warfare and terrorist strategies. American military and political analysts widely apply the term "asymmetric warfare" to the war in Iraq. Though today the US strategy in Iraq tends to be considered successful, it is a relative success. The coalition forces managed to avoid an unequivocal military defeat at the hands of local insurgents after almost a decade of war, but they also failed to ensure an explicit victory. The situation is regarded as stable, but it can hardly be called secure. Nevertheless, a relative success allowed the coalition forces and the United States to withdraw their combat units and leave only military specialists, who are training Iraqi security forces and police units.

Public opinion and the war's effect on the economy and the political life of the United States are the domestic factors that led to the perception of a US defeat in this war. The war in Iraq, unlike the Vietnam War, did not cause massive and open protests of Americans, but the description of the state of society given in a Gallup report seems apt here—"cornered." Americans realized that the war could not be lost, as that would mean acknowledging the victory of the radical ideologies and movements against which it had been launched. Neither could the war be won by military means, as it proceeded from the combat phase to the stage of winning the hearts and minds of a nation liberated from a dictator. The withdrawal of American troops was predetermined, though security in Iraq was the most serious problem that the coalition forces tried to resolve. Few doubted that the withdrawal of US troops would further aggravate the political struggle in Iraq and possibly the resumption of the civil war. The events of 2012 and 2013 in Iraq confirmed these fears.

A protracted war without clear positive results activated the mechanism of checks and balances built into the US political system. The Democratic Party, which had consistently opposed going to war, won the midterm congressional elections in 2006 and the presidential election in 2008. Debate over the impossibility of withdrawing American troops ended, and deadlines for troop withdrawal were established. This meant that even if the

United States failed to achieve its reconstruction objectives by the time of complete troop withdrawal, the troops were still to leave Iraq. After troop withdrawal, the United States has had limited levers with which to influence the situation in Iraq, other than its political and economic ones. It is hard to predict to what extent the United States will manage to retain the commitment of Iraqi leaders to a bilateral partnership. Anti-American sentiments are strong in Iraq and in the region in general.

Funding the Iraq War siphoned large amounts from the federal budget. The war led to the highest level of national debt in US history—more than a trillion US dollars. The global economic recession of 2008–2009 focused attention on the state of the US economy, which defines the degree of US influence in the world no less than its military power does. In a situation of economic crisis, the government had to cut spending, and thoroughly checked how the money of taxpayers allocated to war and reconstruction was spent. Audits demonstrated that significant funds had been spent in vain, and that control over contractual obligations in Iraq to acquire supplies and execute recovery projects had been unsatisfactory. As a result of the audits, dozens of legal proceedings were initiated, and plans were developed to modify how the allocation and spending of funds from the federal budget were determined and controlled. The economic effects of the war for the United States also will be long-lasting, for the withdrawal of fighting forces does not end the expenses associated with war. The government must ensure the removal of troops and equipment from Iraq and fulfill its obligations to the half-million American servicemen and women who served in Iraq. In addition, to stabilize the situation in Iraq and the region after troop withdrawal, the United States must allocate significant development funds for Iraq and other countries in the region. During President Obama's term in office, the volume of international assistance doubled.

Among the international factors that contributed to the political failure of the United States in Iraq was the international community's ambiguous assessment of the war's objectives. The United States failed to convince UN members of the need to go to war before the start of the war. After the war began, criticism of US actions only became stronger. The coalition of the willing gradually broke down. The most consistent US partner, the United Kingdom, withdrew its troops in late April 2009, one month before the deadline. Few shared the opinion of

Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who claimed that the war in Iraq was a success. Opposition groups in the United Kingdom noted that the losses outweighed what had been achieved in Iraq.¹⁸⁴ The BBC report on the withdrawal of British troops from Basra cited British politicians who said that “the effects of the operation through the invasion were not high enough to earn respect.” According to British politician and diplomat Lord Ashdown, “the Army is broken as a result of Iraq and Afghanistan.” Sir Jeremy Greenstock, Britain’s ambassador to the UN at the time of the start of the Iraq War, noted that the United Kingdom would in the future be unlikely to join military actions that were not authorized by the United Nations and lacked broad international support.¹⁸⁵

The regional factors that negatively affected the probability of US success in the Iraq War included the influence of other countries in the region that directly or indirectly rendered moral, military, technical, and financial support to anti-American forces. The course of the war was significantly shaped by international terrorist groups that had a direct interest in the war and in a US defeat. In this way, the global war on terror initiated by the United States turned into a global war of terrorist groups against the United States and its allies. The outcome of this global war has not yet been determined, but a victory for the developed countries enmeshed in it is not obvious. Aggravation of the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan demonstrates that the war on terror is far from over and its outcome is not certain. According to the nongovernmental organization NationMaster, Iraq ranks first in the world in fatalities sustained as a result of terrorist attacks for the period 1968–2006. It is followed by the United States, India, Pakistan, Israel, Colombia, Russia, Lebanon, Algeria, and Afghanistan.¹⁸⁶

Thus, the war in Iraq of 2003–2011 will make it into the history books as yet another confirmation of the asymmetric conflict theory. In the early 1990s, American military analysts talked about asymmetry in terms of the global military power superiority of the United States, which could not be undermined in a big or conventional war. Today, the war in Iraq is often regarded as a repetition of the mistakes made in the Vietnam War, the conflict that provided the foundation for the development of asymmetric conflict theory. The Iraq War proved once again that military superiority does not guarantee military victory. The absence of victory, a protracted engagement, and the use of guerrilla and terrorist

strategies by the militarily weaker adversary made terminating the war difficult, especially under the conditions of occupation of or maintaining a military presence in the foreign territory. Numerous factors that determine the political defeat of a great power in a war against an incommensurately weaker adversary were evident in this conflict.