

The US War against Iraq: The Destruction of a Civilization

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Introduction

The US seven-year war and occupation of Iraq is driven by several major political forces and informed by a variety of imperial interests. However these interests do not in themselves explain the depth and scope of the sustained, massive and continuing destruction of an entire society and its reduction to a permanent state of war. The range of political forces contributing to the making of the war and the subsequent US occupation include the following (in order of importance):

The most important political force was also the least openly discussed. The Zionist Power Configuration (ZPC), which includes the prominent role of long-time, hard-line unconditional Jewish supporters of the State of Israel appointed to top positions in the Bush Pentagon (Douglas Feith and Paul Wolfowitz), key operative in the Office of the Vice President (Irving (Scooter) Libby), the Treasury Department (Stuart Levey), the National Security Council (Elliot Abrams) and a phalanx of consultants, Presidential speechwriters (David Frum), secondary officials and policy advisers to the State Department. These committed Zionists ‘insiders’ were buttressed by thousands of full-time *Israel-First* functionaries in the 51 major American Jewish organizations, which form the President of the Major American Jewish Organizations (PMAJO). They openly stated that their top priority was to advance Israel’s agenda, which, in this case, was a US war against Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein, occupy the country, physically divide Iraq, destroy its military and industrial capability and impose a pro-Israel/pro-US puppet regime. If Iraq were ethnically cleansed and divided, as advocated by the ultra-right, Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu and the ‘Liberal’ President Emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations and militarist-Zionist, Leslie Gelb, there would be more than several ‘client regimes’.

Top Zionist policymakers who promoted the war did not initially directly pursue the policy of systematically destroying what, in effect, was the entire Iraqi civilization. But their support and design of an occupation policy included the total dismemberment of the Iraqi state apparatus and recruitment of Israeli advisers to provide their ‘expertise’ in interrogation techniques, repression of civilian resistance and counter-insurgency. Israeli expertise certainly played a role in fomenting the intra-Iraqi religious and ethnic strife, which Israel had mastered in Palestine. The Israeli ‘model’ of colonial war and occupation – the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 – and the practice of ‘total destruction’ using sectarian, ethno-religious division was evident in the notorious massacres at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut, which took place under Israeli military supervision.

The second powerful political force behind the Iraq War were civilian militarists (like Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Cheney) who sought to extend US imperial reach in the Persian Gulf and strengthen its geo-political position by eliminating a strong, secular, nationalist backer of Arab

anti-imperialist insurgency in the Middle East. The civilian militarists sought to extend the American military base encirclement of Russia and secure control over Iraqi oil reserves as a pressure point against China. The civilian militarists were less moved by Vice President Cheney's past ties with the oil industry and more interested in his role as CEO of Halliburton's giant military base contractor subsidiary Kellogg-Brown and Root, which was consolidating the US Empire through worldwide military base expansion. Major US oil companies, who feared losing out to European and Asian competitors, were already eager to deal with Saddam Hussein, and some of the Bush's supporters in the oil industry had already engaged in illegal trading with the embargoed Iraqi regime. The oil industry was not inclined to promote regional instability with a war.

The militarist strategy of conquest and occupation was designed to establish a long-term colonial military presence in the form of strategic military bases with a significant and sustained contingent of colonial military advisors and combat units. The brutal colonial occupation of an independent secular state with a strong nationalist history and an advanced infrastructure with a sophisticated military and police apparatus, extensive public services and wide-spread literacy naturally led to the growth of a wide array of militant and armed anti-occupation movements. In response, US colonial officials, the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agencies devised a 'divide and rule' strategy (the so-called 'El Salvador solution' associated with the former 'hot-spot' Ambassador and US Director of National Intelligence, John Negroponte) fomenting armed sectarian-based conflicts and promoting inter-religious assassinations to debilitate any effort at a united nationalist anti-imperialist movement. The dismantling of the secular civilian bureaucracy and military was designed by the Zionists in the Bush Administration to enhance Israel's power in the region and to encourage the rise of militant Islamic groups, which had been repressed by the deposed Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein. Israel had mastered this strategy earlier: It originally sponsored and financed sectarian Islamic militant groups, like Hamas, as an alternative to the secular Palestine Liberation Organization and set the stage for sectarian fighting among the Palestinians.

The result of US colonial policies were to fund and multiply a wide range of internal conflicts as mullahs, tribal leaders, political gangsters, warlords, expatriates and death squads proliferated. The 'war of all against all' served the interests of the US occupation forces. Iraq became a pool of armed, unemployed young men, from which to recruit a new mercenary army. The 'civil war' and 'ethnic conflict' provided a pretext for the US and its Iraqi puppets to discharge hundreds of thousands of soldiers, police and functionaries from the previous regime (especially if they were from Sunni, mixed or secular families) and to undermine the basis for civilian employment. Under the cover of generalized 'war against terror', US Special Forces and CIA-directed death squads spread terror within Iraqi civil society, targeting anyone suspected of criticizing the puppet government – especially among the educated and professional classes, precisely the Iraqis most capable of re-constructing an independent secular republic.

The Iraq war was driven by an influential group of neo-conservative and neo-liberal ideologues with strong ties to Israel. They viewed the success of the Iraq war (by success they meant the total dismemberment of the country) as the first 'domino' in a series of war to 're-colonize' the Middle East (in their words: "to re-draw the map"). They disguised their imperial ideology with a thin veneer of rhetoric about 'promoting democracies' in the Middle East (excluding, of course, the un-democratic policies of their 'homeland' Israel over its subjugated Palestinians). Conflating Israeli regional hegemonic ambitions with the US imperial interests, the neo-conservatives and their neo-

liberal fellow travelers in the Democratic Party first backed President Bush and later President Obama in their escalation of the wars against Afghanistan and Pakistan. They unanimously supported Israel's savage bombing campaign against Lebanon, the land and air assault and massacre of thousands of civilians trapped in Gaza, the bombing of Syrian facilities and the big push (from Israel) for a pre-emptive, full-scale military attack against Iran.

The US advocates of sequential and multiple simultaneous wars in the Middle East and South Asia believed that they could only unleash the full strength of their mass destructive power after they had secured total control of their first victim, Iraq. They were confident that Iraqi resistance would collapse rapidly after 13 years of brutal starvation sanctions imposed on the republic by the US and United Nations. In order to consolidate imperial control, American policy-makers decided to permanently silence all independent Iraqi civilian dissidents. They turned to the financing of Shia clerics and Sunni tribal assassins, and contracting scores of thousands of private mercenaries among the Kurdish Peshmerga warlords to carry out selective assassinations of leaders of civil society movements.

The US created and trained a 200,000 member Iraqi colonial puppet army composed almost entirely of Shia gunmen, and excluded experienced Iraqi military men from secular, Sunni or Christian backgrounds. A little known result of this build up of American trained and financed death squads and its puppet 'Iraqi' army, was the virtual destruction of the ancient Iraqi Christian population, which was displaced, its churches bombed and its leaders, bishops and intellectuals, academics and scientists assassinated or driven into exile. The US and its Israeli advisers were well aware that Iraqi Christians had played a key role in the historic development of the secular, nationalist, anti-British/anti-monarchist movements and their elimination as an influential force during the first years of US occupation was no accident. The result of the US policies were to eliminate most secular democratic anti-imperialist leaders and movements and to present their murderous network of 'ethno-religious' collaborators as their uncontested 'partners' in sustaining the long-term US colonial presence in Iraq. With their puppets in power, Iraq would serve as a launching platform for its strategic pursuit of the other 'dominoes' (Syria, Iran, Central Asian Republics...).

The sustained bloody purge of Iraq under US occupation resulted in the killing 1.3 million Iraqi civilians during the first 7 years after Bush invaded in March 2003. Up to mid-2009, the invasion and occupation of Iraq has officially cost the American treasury over \$666 billion. This enormous expenditure attests to its centrality in the larger US imperial strategy for the entire Middle East/South and Central Asia region. Washington's policy of politicizing and militarizing ethno-religious differences, arming and encouraging rival tribal, religious and ethnic leaders to engage in mutual bloodletting served to destroy national unity and resistance. The 'divide and rule' tactics and reliance on retrograde social and religious organizations is the commonest and best-known practice in pursuing the conquest and subjugation of a unified, advanced nationalist state. Breaking up the national state, destroying nationalist consciousness and encouraging primitive ethno-religious, feudal and regional loyalties required the systematic destruction of the principal purveyors of nationalist consciousness, historical memory and secular, scientific thought. Provoking ethno-religious hatreds destroyed intermarriages, mixed communities and institutions with their long-standing personal friendships and professional ties among diverse backgrounds. The physical elimination of academics, writers, teachers, intellectuals, scientists and professionals, especially physicians, engineers, lawyers, jurists and journalists was decisive in imposing ethno-religious rule under a

colonial occupation. To establish long-term dominance and sustain ethno-religious client rulers, the entire pre-existing cultural edifice, which had sustained an independent secular nationalist state, was physically destroyed by the US and its Iraqi puppets. This included destroying the libraries, census bureaus, and repositories of all property and court records, health departments, laboratories, schools, cultural centers, medical facilities and above all the entire scientific-literary-humanistic social scientific class of professionals. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi professionals and family members were driven by terror into internal and external exile. All funding for national, secular, scientific and educational institutions were cut off. Death squads engaged in the systematic murder of thousands of academics and professionals suspected of the least dissent, the least nationalist sentiment; anyone with the least capacity to re-construct the republic was marked.

The Destruction of a Modern Arab Civilization

Independent, secular Iraq had the most advanced scientific-cultural order in the Arab world, despite the repressive nature of Saddam Hussein's police state. There was a system of national health care, universal public education and generous welfare services, combined with unprecedented levels of gender equality. This marked the advanced nature of Iraqi civilization in the late 20th century. Separation of church and state and strict protection of religious minorities (Christians, Assyrians and others) contrasts sharply with what has resulted from the US occupation and its destruction of the Iraqi civil and governmental structures. The harsh dictatorial rule of Saddam Hussein thus presided over a highly developed modern civilization in which advanced scientific work went hand in hand with a strong nationalist and anti-imperialist identity. This resulted especially in the Iraqi people and regime's expressions of solidarity for the plight of the Palestinian people under Israeli rule and occupation.

A mere 'regime change' could not extirpate this deeply embedded and advanced secular republican culture in Iraq. The US war planners and their Israeli advisers were well aware that colonial occupation would increase Iraqi nationalist consciousness unless the secular nation was destroyed and hence, the imperial imperative to uproot and destroy the carriers of nationalist consciousness by physically eliminating the educated, the talented, the scientific, indeed the most secular elements of Iraqi society. Retrogression became the principal instrument for the US to impose its colonial puppets, with their primitive, 'pre-national' loyalties, in power in a culturally purged Baghdad stripped of its most sophisticated and nationalistic social strata.

According to the Al-Ahram Studies Center in Cairo, more than 310 Iraqi scientists were eliminated during the first 18 months of the US occupation – a figure that the Iraqi education ministry did not dispute.

Another report listed the killings of more than 340 intellectuals and scientists between 2005 and 2007. Bombings of institutes of higher education had pushed enrollment down to 30% of the pre-invasion figures. In one bombing in January 2007, at Baghdad's Mustansiriyah University 70 students were killed with hundreds wounded. These figures compelled the UNESCO to warn that Iraq's university system was on the brink of collapse. The numbers of prominent Iraqi scientists and professionals who have fled the country have approached 20,000. Of the 6,700 Iraqi university professors who fled since 2003, the Los Angeles Times reported that only 150 had returned by October 2008. Despite the US claims of improved security, the situation in 2008 saw numerous

assassinations, including the only practicing neurosurgeon in Iraq's second largest city of Basra, whose body was dumped on the city streets.

The raw data on the Iraqi academics, scientists and professionals assassinated by the US and allied occupation forces and the militias and shadowy forces they control is drawn from a list published by the Pakistan Daily News (www.daily.pk) on November 26, 2008. This list makes for very uncomfortable reading into the reality of systematic elimination of intellectuals in Iraq under the meat-grinder of US occupation.

Assassinations

The physical elimination of an individual by assassination is an extreme form of terrorism, which has far-reaching effects rippling throughout the community from which the individual comes – in this case the world of Iraqi intellectuals, academics, professionals and creative leaders in the arts and sciences. For each Iraqi intellectual murdered, thousands of educated Iraqis fled the country or abandoned their work for safer, less vulnerable activity.

Baghdad was considered the 'Paris' of the Arab world, in terms of culture and art, science and education. In the 1970's and 80's, its universities were the envy of the Arab world. The US 'shock and awe' campaign that rained down on Baghdad evoked emotions akin to an aerial bombardment of the Louvre, the Sorbonne and the greatest libraries of Europe. Baghdad University was one of the most prestigious and productive universities in the Arab world. Many of its academics possessed doctoral degrees and engaged in post-doctoral studies abroad at prestigious institutions. It taught and graduated many of the top professionals and scientists in the Middle East. Even under the deadly grip of the US/UN-imposed economic sanctions that starved Iraq during the 13 years before the March 2003 invasion, thousands of graduate students and young professionals came to Iraq for post-graduate training. Young physicians from throughout the Arab world received advanced medical training in its institutions. Many of its academics presented scientific papers at major international conferences and published in prestigious journals. Most important, Baghdad University trained and maintained a highly respected scientific secular culture free of sectarian discrimination – with academics from all ethnic and religious backgrounds.

This world has been forever shattered: Under US occupation, up to November 2008, eighty-three academics and researchers teaching at Baghdad University had been murdered and several thousand of their colleagues, students and family members were forced to flee.

The Selection of Assassinated Academics by Discipline

The November 2008 article published by the Pakistan Daily News lists the names of a total of 154 top Baghdad-based academics, renowned in their fields, who were murdered. Altogether, a total of 281 well-known intellectuals teaching at the top universities in Iraq fell victim to the 'death squads' under US occupation.

Prior to the US occupation, Baghdad University possessed the premier research and teaching medical faculty in the entire Middle East attracting hundreds of young doctors for advanced training. That program has been devastated during the rise of the US-death squad regime, with few prospects of recovery. Of those murdered, 25% (21) were the most senior professors and lecturers in the medical faculty of Baghdad University, the highest percentage of any faculty. The second highest

percentage of butchered faculty were the professors and researchers from Baghdad University's renowned engineering faculty (12), followed by the top academics in the humanities (10), physical and social sciences (8 senior academics each), education (5). The remaining top academics murdered at Baghdad University spread out among the agronomy, business, physical education, communications and religious studies faculties.

At three other Baghdad universities, 53 senior academics were slaughtered, including 10 in the social sciences, 7 in the faculty of law, 6 each in medicine and the humanities, 9 in the physical sciences and 5 in engineering. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's August 20, 2002 pre-invasion joke, "...one has to assume they (scientists) have not been playing *'tiddlywinks'* (a child's game)" (justifying the bloody purge of Iraq's scientists in physics and chemistry. An ominous signal of the academic bloodletting that followed the invasion.

Similar bloody purges of academics occurred in all the provincial universities: 127 senior academics and scientists were assassinated at the various well-regarded universities in Mosul, Kirkuk, Basra and elsewhere. The provincial universities with the highest number of murdered senior faculty members were in cities where the US and British military and their Kurdish mercenary allies were most active: Basra (35), Mosul (35), Diyala (15) and Al-Anbar (11).

The Iraqi military and allied death squads carried out most of the killing of academics in the cities under US or 'allied' control. The systematic murder of academics was a nation-wide, cross-disciplinary drive to destroy the cultural and educational foundations of a modern Arab civilization. The death squads carrying out most of these assassinations were primitive, pre-modern, ethno-religious groups 'set loose' or *instrumentalized* by US military strategists to wipe out any politically conscious intellectuals and nationalist scientists who might pursue an agenda for re-building a modern, secular society and independent, unified republic.

In its panic to prevent the US invasion, the Iraqi National Monitoring Directorate provided a list, which identified over 500 key Iraqi scientists to the UN on December 7, 2002. There is little doubt that this list became a core element in the US military's *hit list* for eliminating Iraq's scientific elite. In his notorious pre-invasion speech to the United Nations, Secretary of State Colin Powell cited a list of over 3,500 Iraqi scientists and technicians who would have to be 'contained' to prevent their expertise from being used by other countries. The US had even created a 'budget' of hundreds of millions of dollars, drawn from the Iraqi 'Oil for Food' money held by the United Nations to set up 'civilian re-education' programs to re-train Iraqi scientists and engineers. These highly touted programs were never seriously implemented. Cheaper ways of containing what one American policy expert termed Iraq's 'excess scientists, engineers and technicians' in a Carnegie Endowment Paper (RANSAC Policy Update April 2004) became clear. The US had decided to adopt and expand the Israeli Mossad's covert operation of assassinating selected key Iraqi scientists on an industrial scale.

The US 'Surge' and 'Peak Assassination' Campaigns: 2006-2007

The high tide of terror against academics coincides with the renewal of the US military offensive in Baghdad and in the provinces. Of the total number of assassinations of Baghdad-based academics for which a date is recorded (110 known intellectuals slaughtered), almost 80% (87) occurred in 2006 and 2007. A similar pattern is found in the provinces with 77% of a total of 84 scholars murdered outside of capital during the same period. The pattern is clear: the murder rate of academics grows as the occupying US forces organize a mercenary Iraqi military and police force

and provide money for the training and recruitment of rival Shia and Sunni tribesmen and militia as a means of decreasing American casualties and of purging potential dissident critics of the occupation.

The terror campaign against academics intensified in mid-2005 and reached its peak in 2006-2007, leading to the mass flight of tens of thousands of Iraqi scholars, scientists, professionals and their families overseas. Entire university medical school faculties have become refugees in Syria and elsewhere. Those who could not afford to abandon elderly parents or relatives and remained in Iraq have taken extraordinary measures to hide their identities. Some have chosen to collaborate with the US occupation forces or the puppet regime in the hope of being protected or allowed to immigrate with their families to the US or Europe, although the Europeans, especially the British are disinclined to accept Iraqi scholars. After 2008, there has been a sharp decline in the murder of academics – with only 4 assassinated that year. This reflects the massive flight of Iraqi intellectuals living abroad or in hiding rather than any change of policy on the part of the US and its mercenary puppets. As a result, Iraq's research facilities have been decimated. The lives of those remaining support staff, including technicians, librarians and students have been devastated with few prospects for future employment.

The US war and occupation of Iraq, as Presidents Bush and Obama have declared, is a 'success' – an independent nation of 23 million citizens has been occupied by force, a puppet regime is ensconced, colonial mercenary troops obey American officers and the oil fields have been put up for sale. All of Iraq's nationalist laws protecting its patrimony, its cultural treasures and national resources, have been annulled. The occupiers have imposed a 'constitution' favoring the US Empire. Israel and its Zionist flunkies in the Administrations of both Bush and Obama celebrate the demise of a modern adversary...and the conversion of Iraq into a cultural-political desert. In line with an alleged agreement made by the US State Department and Pentagon officials to influential collectors from the American Council for Cultural Policy in January 2003, the looted treasures of ancient Mesopotamia have 'found' their way into the collections of the elite in London, New York and elsewhere. The collectors can now anticipate the pillage of Iran.

Warning to Iran

The US invasion, occupation and destruction of a modern, scientific-cultural civilization, such as existed in Iraq, is a prelude of what the people of Iran can expect if and when a US-Israeli military attack occurs. The imperial threat to the cultural-scientific foundations of the Iranian nation has been totally absent from the narrative among the affluent Iranian student protesters and their US-funded NGO's during their post-election '*Lipstick Revolution*' protests. They should bear in mind that in 2004 educated, sophisticated Iraqis in Baghdad consoled themselves with a fatally misplaced optimism that 'at least we are not like Afghanistan'. The same elite are now in squalid refugee camps in Syria and Jordan and their country more closely resembles Afghanistan than anywhere else in the Middle East. The chilling promise of President Bush in April 2003 to transform Iraq in the image of 'our newly liberated Afghanistan' has been fulfilled. And reports that the US Administration advisers had reviewed the Israeli Mossad policy of selective assassination of Iranian scientists should cause the pro-Western liberal intellectuals of Teheran to seriously ponder the lesson of the murderous campaign that has virtually eliminated Iraqi scientists and academics during 2006-2007.

Conclusion

What does the United States (and Britain and Israel) gain from establishing a retrograde client regime, based on medieval ethno-clerical socio-political structures in Iraq? First and foremost, Iraq has become an outpost for empire. Secondly, it is a weak and backward regime incapable of challenging Israeli economic and military dominance in the region and unwilling to question the ongoing ethnic cleansing of the native Palestinian Arabs from Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. Thirdly, the destruction of the scientific, academic, cultural and legal foundations of an independent state means increasing reliance on the Western (and Chinese) multinational corporations and their technical infrastructure – facilitating imperial economic penetration and exploitation.

In the mid 19th Century, after the revolutions of 1848, the conservative French sociologist Emil Durkheim recognized that the European bourgeoisie was confronted with rising class conflict and an increasing anti-capitalist working class. Durkheim noted that, whatever its philosophical misgivings about religion and clericalism, the bourgeoisie would have to use the myths of traditional religion to ‘create’ social cohesion and undercut class polarization. He called on the educated and sophisticated Parisian capitalist class to forego its rejection of obscurantist religious dogma in favor of instrumentalizing religion as a tool to maintain its political dominance. In the same way, US strategists, including the Pentagon-Zionists, have instrumentalized the tribal-mullah, ethno-religious forces to destroy the secular national political leadership and advanced culture of Iraq in order to consolidate imperial rule – even if this strategy called for the killing off of the scientific and professional classes. Contemporary US imperial rule is based on supporting the socially and politically most backward sectors of society and applying the most advanced technology of warfare.

Israeli advisers have played a major role in instructing US occupation forces in Iraq on the practices of urban counter-insurgency and repression of civilians, drawing on their 60 years of experience. The infamous massacre of hundreds of Palestinian families at Deir Yasin in 1948 was emblematic of Zionist elimination of hundreds of productive farming villages, which had been settled for centuries by a native people with their endogenous civilization and cultural ties to the soil, in order to impose a new colonial order. The policy of the total deracination of the Palestinians is central to Israel’s advise to the US policymakers in Iraq. Their message has been carried out by their Zionist acolytes in the Bush and Obama Administrations, ordering the dismemberment of the entire modern Iraqi civil and state bureaucracy and using pre-modern tribal death squads made up of Kurds and Shia extremists to purge the modern universities and research institutions of that shattered nation.

The US imperial conquest of Iraq is built on the destruction of a modern secular republic. The cultural desert that remains (a Biblical ‘howling wilderness’ soaked in the blood of Iraq’s precious scholars) is controlled by mega-swindlers, mercenary thugs posing as ‘Iraqi officers’, tribal and ethnic cultural illiterates and medieval religious figures. They operate under the guidance and direction of West Point graduates holding ‘blue-prints for empire’, formulated by graduates of Princeton, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Yale and Chicago, eager to serve the interests of American and European multi-national corporations.

This is called ‘combined and uneven development’: The marriage of fundamentalist mullahs with Ivy League Zionists at the service of the US.