

Mechanisms of Western Domination: A Short History of Iraq and Kuwait

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In the United States of America, it is almost beyond the bounds of acceptable discourse to address the question, why did Saddam Hussein invade Kuwait in 1990? Even to ask the question, one risks the appearance of supporting a repressive dictatorship, and to the extent that the question is entertained at all, the simplistic answer proffered by political leaders is that Saddam Hussein is an aggressive tyrant, bent on territorial acquisition and the subjugation of other nations. He is a modern day Hitler. The same answer is utilized to explain why Iraq invaded Iran in 1980. This standard answer is easy to accept, in part, because of the well-documented brutality of Saddam's regime, including human rights violations committed by his government against the Iraqi people, and especially the Kurds.

In spite of partial truths imbedded in this standard explanation, it smacks of propaganda. Much more needs to be understood by the American public before it allows its government to wage war against Iraq. The history of Iraq, Kuwait, Britain, and the United States reveals that the reasons for the Iraqi invasions of Kuwait and Iran are far more complex and interesting than the standard answer allows. Over a period of decades, and especially in recent years, Britain and the U.S. have consciously manipulated tensions in the region and have masterfully set into motion sequences of events leading to the Iraqi invasions. The purpose of these manipulations was to increase power and control over middle eastern governments and their oil resources by elite U.S. and British interests.

This short historical outline is far from comprehensive, and even the references are sketchy. The main purpose of this essay is to offer student peace activists, and others who might be unfamiliar with Middle Eastern history, a few key talking points and an historical context from which to support their efforts to block the drive toward war. This outline is organized by historical chronology into sections. Much of the beginning of this essay relies heavily on a single reference, *Iraq and Kuwait: A History Suppressed*, by Ralph Schoenman [1]. Relevant web site addresses are sprinkled throughout and are provided for readers who seek a greater depth of understanding than this short outline alone provides.

Early History

The ancient civilizations of Sumer and Babylon originated in Mesopotamia (the Greek word for "between rivers"), near the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in what is now Iraq. Modern day Kuwait began in the eighteenth century as a small village on the Persian Gulf. "Kuwait," the word for "small human settlement," was so named by Iraqi rulers of that era. Throughout the nineteenth century and up to World War I, Kuwait was a "Qadha," a district within the Basra Province, and it was an integral part of Iraq under the administrative rule of the Ottoman Empire.

British Domination

As the victors of World War I, France and Britain dismantled the Ottoman Empire and the Arab nation for their own colonial purposes. The Iraq Petroleum Company was created in 1920 with 95% of the shares going to Britain, France, and the U.S. In order to weaken Arab nationalism, Britain blocked Iraqi access to the Persian Gulf by severing the territorial entity, "Kuwait" from the rest of Iraq in 1921 and 1922. This new British colony, Kuwait, was given artificial boundaries with no basis in history or geography. King Faisal I of the new Iraqi state ruled under British military oversight, but his administration never accepted the amputation of the Kuwait district and the denial of Iraqi access to the Persian Gulf. Attempts by Faisal to build a railway to Kuwait and port facilities on the Gulf were vetoed by Britain. These and other similar British colonial policies made Kuwait a focus of the Arab national movement in Iraq, and a symbol of Iraqi humiliation at the hands of the British.

Resistance to the British imposed separation of Kuwait from Iraq continued through the 1930s. In 1932, the British Agent in Baghdad forced the Iraqi leadership to enter into "correspondence" on the delimitation of boundaries for British Kuwait, but the Iraqi Chamber of Deputies repudiated these "correspondences." A mass movement of Kuwaiti youth called the "Free Kuwaiti Movement" defied British rule and submitted a petition requesting the Iraqi government to reunify Kuwait and Iraq. Fearing an uprising, the Kuwaiti Sheik agreed to the establishment of a legislative council to represent the "Free Kuwaitis." The first meeting of the council in 1938 resulted in an unanimous resolution demanding that Kuwait revert back to Iraq. That same year, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq informed the British Ambassador in Baghdad that:

"The Ottoman-British Agreement of 1913 recognizes Kuwait as a District under the jurisdiction of the Province of Basra. Since sovereignty over Basra has been transferred from the Ottoman state to the Iraqi state, that sovereignty has to include Kuwait under the terms of the 1913 Agreement. Iraq has not recognized any change in the status of Kuwait." (quoted in [1])

A popular uprising within Kuwait to reunify with Iraq erupted on March 10, 1939. The Kuwaiti Sheik, with British military support and "advisers," crushed the uprising, and killed or imprisoned its participants. King Ghazi of Iraq publicly demanded the release of the prisoners and warned the Sheik to end the repression of the Free Kuwaiti Movement. Ghazi ignored warnings by Britain to discontinue such public statements, and on April 5, 1939, he was found dead. It was widely assumed that he was assassinated by British agents. Faisal II was an infant at that time, and Nuri es-Said, a former officer of the Ottoman Army with British loyalties, became the de facto leader of Iraq.

U.S. Domination

Following World War II, British rule was gradually replaced by U.S. neo-colonial domination of the Middle East. The new state of Israel became an important instrument for U.S. control of Middle Eastern oil in the post war era. With the U.S./Israeli sponsored coup of 1953 that deposed Mossadegh, the popularly elected president of Iran, and installed the Shah in his place, the U.S. became the dominant imperial power in the region.

In 1955 the U.S. and Britain inaugurated the Baghdad Pact, an anti-Soviet security agreement for Middle Eastern nations, including Iraq. The Baghdad Pact was widely perceived in the Arab world as alliance of regimes subordinate to British and U.S. power, and it was greeted with popular protests and riots. Nuri es-Said responded to the protests by jailing opposition leaders who demanded that Iraq withdraw from the pact. However, he also began secret negotiations with the U.S. and Britain for the return of Kuwait to Iraq in order to placate Iraqi national sentiment.

For two years, appeals for the return of Kuwait to Iraq intensified. In January 1958, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri es-Said addressed a meeting of the Baghdad Pact and publicly urged the return of Kuwait to Iraq. All pact members agreed with the proposal, with the sole exception of Britain. Further diplomatic gestures from Iraq to Britain were rebuffed, and finally Iraq informed Britain that it was preparing documents and copies of secret understandings together with a formal memorandum, to be published before the world in July 1958. The British Ambassador responded to the Iraqi government that Great Britain had "approved in principle" the unification of Kuwait and Iraq, but requested a meeting in London with the Iraqi and British Prime Ministers and other government officials. But this meeting never took place, because the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown on July 14, 1958 in a revolution led by General Abdel Karim Qassim. King Faisal II and Nuri es-Said were executed, and Britain immediately thereafter abrogated the agreement to return Kuwait to Iraq.

News of the coup triggered an uprising of the poor and dispossessed in Baghdad. The crowds attacked the British embassy and other targets. The U.S. did not initially respond to the coup, but the political upheaval of the subsequent popular uprising pushed the new regime further to the left than it had originally intended. The new government lifted the ban on the Iraqi Communist Party, and that modest step toward democracy in turn mobilized the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. CIA director Alan Dulles assigned the job of incapacitating Qassim to the euphemistically named Technical Services Division (TDS) of the CIA. The head of the TDS in 1960, Stanley Gottlieb, initiated a program to assassinate Qassim. One failed assassination attempt in this context was made by Saddam Hussein.

Qassim continued to alienate the U.S. and Britain, and Britain further exacerbated relations by declaring its Kuwait colony free and independent in 1961. Qassim held a press conference on June 19, 1961 at which he declared that "Iraq regards Kuwait as an integral part of its territory." Following that press conference, Britain quickly massed troops in Kuwait with naval support in the Gulf. Kuwait gained admission to the United Nations in 1963, the same year that Qassim was killed and his government overthrown in a CIA supported coup led by the Baath Party.

Saddam Hussein's Rise to Power

By 1965, Saddam Hussein's cousin became Secretary General of the Baathist Party. In 1968 Saddam Hussein was made Deputy Secretary General and Saddam and his Baathist supporters succeeded in seizing state power, all with CIA backing. What followed was a slaughter of the left, including the murder and torture of Iraqi Communist Party members and trade unionists.

Throughout the 1970s, Iraq offered compromises to Kuwait's rulers that would enable Iraq to gain access to its former islands in the Gulf. But no agreements were reached, and the floating border separating the two countries crept northward.

In mid-July, 1979, Saddam replaced Al Bakr as president of Iraq. He reportedly uncovered a conspiracy against his government with the result that twenty-one high government and Baath Party officials were executed. The armed forces and the Baath Party were purged and there were widespread arrests. A short time later, in August 1979 a general amnesty was announced that resulted in the release of Kurdish prisoners, members of the Iraqi Communist Party, and others. However, Amnesty International reported continual human rights abuses from that period.

That same year, Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Jimmy Carter's National Security Adviser, proposed to Saddam Hussein that he invade Iran and annex Khuzistan, thereby providing Iraq access to the Gulf through the narrow waterway, Shatt-al Arab. The U.S. hoped to use Iraq to counter the radicalism of the Khomeini regime in Iran from spreading to oppressed peoples of the Emirates and to Saudi Arabia. Saddam Hussein was guaranteed financial backing in the form of loans from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and other nations.

About half a million Iranians and Iraqis were killed in the Iran Iraq war, and unbeknownst to Hussein, the U.S. and Israel also secretly armed the Iranians so as to weaken both Iran and Iraq. President Ronald Reagan's special envoy, Donald Rumsfeld visited Saddam Hussein once in late December 1983 and again in March 1984. These visits paved the way for the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Iraq at a time when Saddam Hussein was using chemical weapons in his war against Iran. Iraq had been removed from the U.S. State Department's list of alleged sponsors of terrorism in 1982, and Iraq went on a buying spree to purchase weapons from U.S. and German companies. These weapons were used in 1988 for attacks against the Kurds. (see: <http://commondreams.org/views02/0802-01.htm> and the Democracy Now! piece at: <http://www.webactive.com/pacifica/demnow/dn20021114.html>)

Prelude to the 1991 Gulf War

The war with Iran left Iraq in ruins. When Saddam Hussein launched his eight-year war against Iran, Iraq had \$40 billion in hard currency reserves. But by the end of the war, his nation was \$80 billion in debt. Iraq was pressed to repay the \$80 billion to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, with interest. While Iraq was distracted by its war, Kuwait had accumulated 900 square miles of Iraqi territory by advancing its border with Iraq northward. This was presented to Iraq as a *fait accompli* and it gave Kuwait access to the Rumaila oil field. The Kuwaiti Sheik had purchased the Santa Fe Drilling Corporation of Alhambra, California, for \$2.3 billion and proceeded to use its slant drilling equipment to gain access to the Iraqi oil field.

The main source of earnings for Iraq was petroleum whose price fluctuated depending on international production levels. By 1990, Kuwait, under U.S. tutelage had increased its oil production to undermine OPEC quotas thereby driving the price of Iraqi oil down from \$28 per barrel to \$11 per barrel and further ruining the Iraqi economy. Appeals from Iraq, Iran, Libya, and other countries to the Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Egypt to stick to OPEC production levels were met with increased naval activity in the Persian Gulf by the United States. In February 1990, Saddam Hussein spoke at the Amman summit on the relationship between oil production and the U.S. navy buildup and warned that the Gulf people and the rest of the Arabs faced subordination to American interests.

Following this speech, the Western press carried stories of Saddam's missiles, chemical weapons and nuclear potential. The Israeli press speculated about pre-emptive strikes such as the Israeli attack on Iraq's nuclear power plant in 1981. In spite of Iraqi diplomatic appeals, Kuwait and the

Emirates increased oil production, harming their own economic interests, but damaging Iraq's even more so. Kuwait refused to relinquish Iraqi territory it had acquired during the Iran Iraq war which Kuwait had helped finance. Kuwait also rejected production quotas and rejected appeals to cease pumping oil from Iraq's Rumaila oil reserve. It refused to forgo any of Iraq's debt.

On September 18, 1990, the Iraqi Foreign Ministry published verbatim the transcripts of meetings between Saddam Hussein and high-level U.S. officials. Knight-Ridder columnist James McCartney acknowledged that the transcripts were not disputed by the U.S. State Department. U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie informed Hussein that, "We have no opinion on...conflicts like your border disagreement with Kuwait." She reiterated this position several times, and added, "Secretary of State James Baker has directed our official spokesman to emphasize this instruction." A week before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Baker's spokesperson, Margaret Tutwiler and Assistant Secretary of State John Kelly both stated publicly that "the United States was not obligated to come to Kuwait's aid if it were attacked." (Santa Barbara News-Press September 24, 1990 cited in [1]).

Two days before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Assistant Secretary of State John Kelly testified before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee that the United States has no defense treaty relationship with any Gulf country." The New York Daily News editorialized on September 29, 1990, "Small wonder Saddam concluded he could overrun Kuwait. Bush and Co. gave him no reason to believe otherwise." (quoted in [1]).

The 1991 Gulf War

On August 2, 1990, Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait and quickly gained control of the country. The United States, along with the United Nations, demanded the immediate withdrawal of Iraqi forces. Attempts by Iraq to negotiate withdrawal were rebuffed by the United States. U.S. military forces in the region had already rehearsed battle plans to repel an Iraqi invasion.

On January 16, 1991, U.S. and other allied forces launched a devastating attack of Iraq and its armed forces in Kuwait. The Allied bombing was intended to damage Iraq's infrastructure so as to hinder its ability to prosecute war by lowering both civilian and military morale. The United States led the allied forces, but 34 nations also provided troops and/or financial support for the military operations. Among these are: Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Britain, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Honduras, Italy, Kuwait, Morocco, The Netherlands, Niger, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Korea, Spain, Syria, Turkey, and The United Arab Emirates. (See: <http://www.historyguy.com/GulfWar.html#gulfwardates> or <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/gulf.war/facts/gulfwar/>)

U.S. media portrayed the Iraqi military as a global threat and as a formidable military opponent to the United States. Nevertheless, the military outcome of the war was one-sided in the extreme. Of the more than 500,000 U.S. troops engaged in the war, 148 died in battle, many from "friendly fire." Total allied losses were minimal. By contrast, in June 1991, the U.S. military reported more than 100,000 Iraqi soldiers killed, 300,000 wounded. Some human rights groups claimed a higher number of Iraqis killed in battle. According to Baghdad, civilian casualties numbered more than 35,000. However, after the war, some scholars report that the number of Iraqi soldiers killed was significantly less than 100,000. Whatever the numbers, the Iraqi army was completely routed, and all surviving Iraqi military units withdrew to Iraq. "Desert Storm," as

the war was called, destroyed 80% of Iraq's weaponry, and the international monitoring and inspections that followed the war (see the next section), resulted in at least 90% of Iraq's pre-invasion weaponry eliminated.

Former U.S. Attorney General, Ramsey Clark, and International Action Center have reported devastating effects of the U.S. and British bombing on the Iraqi civilian population, including the use of depleted uranium from U.S. bombs that have led to cancer and unprecedented levels of birth defects in Iraq. More than 600,000 pounds of depleted uranium was left in Iraq after the war (See the International Action Center web site: <http://www.iacenter.org/depleted/du.htm>).

The war also had negative repercussions for U.S. soldiers. Some have reported the effects "Gulf War Syndrome" and other debilitating health consequences from exposure to harmful chemical and/or biological agents (see e.g. <http://mediafilter.org/MFF/CAQ/caq53.gws.html>)

U.S. Disinformation Campaigns

It is difficult to document or even estimate the extent of psychological operations, propaganda projects, and disinformation propagated by the U.S. government to enlist public support for military campaigns against Iraq. However, two examples have been documented and are well known: false reports of an Iraqi troop buildup threatening Saudi Arabia, and a manufactured story recited in congressional hearings about Iraqi soldiers killing newborn babies in a Kuwaiti hospital. The film "Hidden Wars" [2] and Pacifica National Radio have presented coverage of these stories.

Fabricated Report of Iraqi Troop buildup

The following description is taken from <http://www.swans.com/library/art8/ga138.html>

The U.S. administration made the claim that the Iraqis had amassed troops and tanks along the Saudi border and were poised to invade the kingdom. This claim was widely relayed by the main media. The only problem with these allegations was that they were utterly false. The former Soviet Union had provided satellite pictures, taken on September 11 and 13, 1990, of the border (actually, they were selling the pictures for \$1,500 each) that clearly indicated that no concentration of Iraqi troops and equipment was in sight. Major news organizations like ABC News (Sam Donaldson) or The Washington Post (Bob Woodward) sat on the pictures and never used them. The only U.S. news organization that indeed published them was a regional paper, The St. Petersburg Times (Florida). Those pictures clearly showed, however, the concentration of U.S. troops on the Saudi side of the border! John R. MacArthur (and Ben Haig Bagdikian) documented this falsity in their book, "Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the Gulf War," University of California Press; reprint edition 1993; ISBN: 0520083989. MacArthur also cited these facts in his above-mentioned speech, http://www.independent.org/tii/content/events/f_macarth.html. Brian Becker debunked this claim in detail in his report. Jean Heller, the Editor of The St. Petersburg Times hired a U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in the Reagan Administration, and a former image specialist for the Defense Intelligence Agency, Peter Zimmerman, to analyze the satellite photographs, to no avail. There simply were no Iraqi troops poised to invade Saudi Arabia.

The "Incubator Story"

The following description is taken from <http://www.swans.com/library/art8/ga138.html>

"The readers may recall the testimony before Congress on October 10, 1990 of a 15-year old Kuwaiti woman, Nayirah (her last name was kept confidential). She had witnessed a terrifying deed by the Iraqi invaders of Kuwait. In her own words: 'I volunteered at the al-Addan hospital. While I was there, I saw the Iraqi soldiers come into the hospital with guns, and go into the room where . . . babies were in incubators. They took the babies out of the incubators, took the incubators, and left the babies on the cold floor to die.' The story about the 312 babies made the news with a vengeance. President Bush (that would be George I) repeated it. The line in the sand was drawn. Like Racak, it turned public opinion and Congress on the path of war. Months later we learned that Nayirah was the daughter of a Kuwaiti prince, Saud Nasir al-Sabah, Kuwait's Ambassador to the U.S. She had left Kuwait before the Iraqi invasion. The story had been entirely fabricated by the PR firm Hill & Knowlton. Tom Lantos, the California Democrat who chaired the hearing was co-chair (with Republican Rep. John Porter) of the Congressional Human Rights Foundation that occupied free office space in Hill & Knowlton's Washington, DC office." One of the best documentation of this hoax can be found in a fascinating book, "Toxic Sludge Is Good for You, Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry" by John C. Stauber, Sheldon Rampton, 1995; (Common Courage Press; ISBN: 1-56751-060-4). Stauber and Rampton are Executive Director and Editor, respectively, of PR Watch, a newsletter published by the Center for Media and Democracy. An excerpt of the book on this PR issue was published in June 1996 by Claire W. Gilbert in her fine publication Blazing Tattles and can be read on line at <http://www.blazingtattles.com/info/mother1.htm> and <http://www.blazingtattles.com/info/mother2.htm>. It's an extraordinary read. PR Watch also recently posted these excerpts on their Web site, at <http://www.prwatch.org/books/tsigfy10.html>. Last May 2002, the former Hill & Knowlton staffer who was handling Nayirah made the claim that the story was true in O'Dwyer's PR Daily, an online access to the inside news of Public Relations but was forcefully rebuked by PR Watch Editor, Sheldon Rampton. See http://www.odwyerpr.com/archived_stories_2002/may/0528pegado.htm."

The Devastating Effects of Sanctions

Four days after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, on August 6, 1990, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 661, imposing comprehensive sanctions on Iraq and creating a committee to monitor them.

The U.S. agreed to a cease fire with Iraq in February 1991. The cease-fire agreement required Iraq to eliminate its chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and missiles with a range over 150 kilometers. Set forth in U.N. security resolution 687, the agreement tied the lifting of U.N. sanctions to the destruction of Iraq's "Weapons of Mass Destruction" arsenal. The no-fly zones over two-thirds of Iraq (north and south) were imposed by the U.S., France, and Britain a year and a half after the Gulf War. *The United Nations never sanctioned them*, and France has since withdrawn from participation. The no-fly zones violate international law. According to Article

51 of the U.N. Charter, Iraq has the right to defend itself, including from U.S. and British overflights of the no-fly zones.

The United Nations "Oil for Food" program became operational in 1996 and was instituted by the Iraq Sanctions Committee. All contracts for aid (emergency supplies as well as infrastructure equipment) requested by Iraq had to be approved by the Sanctions Committee. Each member country could place a hold on any contract it considered to have "dual use," that is, both civilian and military use. The U.S. repeatedly exercised its prerogative to withhold supplies to Iraq, vital to the civilian population.

In an article, "Throttling Iraq," published in the Sept-Oct 2000 New Left Review, Tariq Ali described the circumstances confronting the civilian population of Iraq as follows:

A land that once had high levels of literacy and an advanced system of health-care has been devastated by the West. Its social structure is in ruins, its people are denied the basic necessities of existence, its soil is polluted by uranium-tipped warheads. According to UN figures of last year, some 60 per cent of the population have no regular access to clean water, and over 80 per cent of schools need substantial repairs. In 1997 the FAO reckoned that 27 per cent of Iraqis were suffering from chronic malnutrition, and 70 per cent of all women were anaemic. UNICEF reports that in the southern and central regions which contain 85 per cent of the country's population, infant mortality has doubled compared to the pre-Gulf war period. The death-toll caused by deliberate strangulation of economic life cannot yet be estimated with full accuracy--that will be a task for historians. According to the most careful authority, Richard Garfield, 'a conservative estimate of "excess deaths" among under five-year-olds since 1991 would be 300,000', while UNICEF--reporting in 1997 that '4,500 children under the age of five are dying each month from hunger and disease'- reckons the number of small children killed by the blockade at 500,000. Other deaths are more difficult to quantify, but as Garfield points out, 'UNICEF's mortality rates represent only the tip of the iceberg as to the enormous damage done to the four out of five Iraqis who do survive beyond their fifth birthday'. In late 1998 the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, former Assistant Secretary General Denis Halliday, an Irishman, resigned from his post in protest against the blockade, declaring that total deaths that it had caused could be upwards of a million. When his successor Hans von Sponeck had the temerity to include civilian casualties from Anglo-American bombing raids in his brief, the Clinton and Blair regimes demanded his dismissal. He too resigned, in late 1999, explaining that his duty had been to the people of Iraq, and that 'every month Iraq's social fabric shows bigger holes'. These holes have continued to tear under the Oil-For-Food sanctions in place since 1996, which allow Iraq \$4 billion of petroleum exports a year, when a minimum of \$7 billion is needed even for greatly reduced services. After a decade, the throttling of Iraq by the US and UK has achieved a result without parallel in modern history. This is now a country that, in Garfield's words, 'is the only instance of a sustained, large increase in mortality in a stable population of more than two million in the last two hundred years'.

<http://www.zmag.org/aliiraq.htm>

In an interview for Zmagazine, Phyliss Bennis similarly explained the U.S. sanctions strategy as follows (<http://www.zmag.org/ZMag/articles/barsamian.htm>):

"...the targets included water treatment plants, sewage treatment plants, electrical generating plants, communications centers, on the theory, I suppose, of dual use, that the Iraqi military also needs clean water, sewage treatment, communications, etc. and therefore the fact that the 23 million people of Iraq might be denied clean water was considered an acceptable consequence of that. So there were very direct efforts made by the U.S., and they were very successful efforts, to destroy these kinds of infrastructure centers. The result has been absolute devastation for the civilian population at enormous cost in the future to be repaired. As they erode further, the cost of rebuilding them of course will climb even higher. During this last set of military strikes, Operation Desert Fox, last December, at least one oil refinery was deliberately targeted on the grounds that that particular refinery's output was being used for smuggling. Whether it was or not, I don't know. But whether it was or not, it is a violation of international law to deliberately target an economic target, as was chosen here, meaning that everyone in the Pentagon involved in that decision is guilty of a war crime. The inability of Iraq to make those repairs means that the continuation of malnutrition, of inadequate water supplies, and most importantly, perhaps, the largest number of casualties today, is the result of dirty, contaminated water because of inadequate sewage treatment and water treatment facilities. What that means is that children are dying in Iraq of eminently treatable diseases: diarrhea, typhoid, and other contaminated-water-borne diseases, in a country whose advanced health care system was so developed before the sanctions regime and before the bombings that the most important problem faced by Iraqi pediatricians was childhood obesity."

That the U.S. intentionally targeted civilian infrastructure, including water treatment plants and that this would result in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis (mostly children under the age of five), is not in dispute.

"Several United States Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) documents clearly and thoroughly prove, in the words of one author, "beyond a doubt that, contrary to the Geneva Convention, the U.S. government intentionally used sanctions against Iraq to degrade the country's water supply after the Gulf War. The United States knew the cost that civilian Iraqis, mostly children, would pay, and it went ahead anyway" (The Progressive, August 2001)."
(<http://www.geocities.com/iraqinfo/sanctions/sarticles9/mandf.htm>)

High ranking U.S. Government officials were openly sanguine about the deaths of Iraqi children resulting from U.S. bombings and sanctions, as in this excerpt from an interview by Leslie Stahl of Madeleine Albright, broadcast on *60 Minutes* on 5/12/96 (<http://www.fair.org/extra/0111/iraq.html>):

Lesley Stahl on U.S. sanctions against Iraq: "We have heard that a half million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?"

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright: "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price--we think the price is worth it."

The inescapable lesson is that a United States Secretary of State, on the one hand, and some groups that the U.S. government condemns as terrorist, on the other hand, share a common rationale--a belief that the death of innocents, even children, is an acceptable price to pay for one's political goals. Reporters and editors for the mainstream media are well trained not to make such elementary observations, and as an exercise in patriotism find them inconceivable.

United Nations weapons inspectors were ordered out of Iraq in 1998, not by the Iraqi government, but by the United States. In the words of Scott Ritter, a former U.N. Chief Weapons Inspector in Iraq:

"The U.S. ordered the inspectors out 48 hours before they initiated Operation Desert Fox military action that didn't have the support of the U.N. Security Council and which used information gathered by the inspectors, to target Iraq."
<http://www.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/meast/07/17/saddam.ritter.cna/>

U.S. Foreign Policy Objectives

A Los Angeles Times article dated October 27 2002 appearing on the first page of the Business Section provided a possible agenda for the Bush administration for the Middle East. The article, "Iraq Regime Change Could Weaken OPEC" included the byline, "Restoring the country's oil production capacity might be enough to break the cartel's grip on world markets," and included this explanation:

Some industry analysts say the restoration of Iraq's production capability over the next decade might be enough to break OPEC's grip on world oil markets, even if Iraq remained a nominal member.

"It's tough to see Iraq under any circumstances really participating closely with OPEC in the next five years," said analyst Raad Alkadiri of Petroleum Finance Co. in Washington. "If you have a government in Iraq that is closely tied to the United States and dependent on the United States for its continued power, it is conceivable that it will feel pressure to leave OPEC."

U.S. Undersecretary of State Grant Aldonas cited the potential economic payoff during a recent trip to Poland. A regime change, he said in Warsaw, would "open up the spigot on Iraqi oil, which would have a profound effect in terms of the performance of the world economy."

The Washington Post offered a similar analysis in its September 15th, 2002 article entitled, "In Iraqi War Scenario, Oil Is Key Issue" [16] (<http://www.targetoil.com/article.php?id=6>). The lead paragraph explains that:

A U.S.-led ouster of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein could open a bonanza for American oil companies long banished from Iraq, scuttling oil deals between Baghdad and Russia, France and other countries, and reshuffling world petroleum markets, according to industry officials and

leaders of the Iraqi opposition.

The article also includes some insights into the mechanisms employed by the Bush Administration to leverage international support for an invasion of Iraq:

The importance of Iraq's oil has made it potentially one of the administration's biggest bargaining chips in negotiations to win backing from the U.N. Security Council and Western allies for President Bush's call for tough international action against Hussein. All five permanent members of the Security Council -- the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China -- have international oil companies with major stakes in a change of leadership in Baghdad.

"It's pretty straightforward," said former CIA director R. James Woolsey, who has been one of the leading advocates of forcing Hussein from power. "France and Russia have oil companies and interests in Iraq. They should be told that if they are of assistance in moving Iraq toward decent government, we'll do the best we can to ensure that the new government and American companies work closely with them."

But he added: "If they throw in their lot with Saddam, it will be difficult to the point of impossible to persuade the new Iraqi government to work with them."

Concluding Remarks

Saddam Hussein does not deserve support from the progressive community, but Saddam Hussein is not Iraq. It is the people of Iraq who will do most of the dying when and if the U.S. attacks them, and the people of Iraq deserve our support.

The claim that Iraq poses a grave danger to the rest of the world, and to the United States in particular, is so ridiculous that it would not even merit the attention of a rebuttal except for the fact that U.S. government propaganda has been so successful in fabricating that threat. Part of the propaganda success stems from completely unsupported claims that Saddam Hussein is in league with al Qaeda. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency has found no credible connection between Saddam Hussein and bin Laden and/or al Qaeda. Moreover, such an alliance is implausible. Iraq is a secular state whereas al Qaeda is fundamentalist, and the two do not mix well.

Militarily, Iraq is far weaker in 2003 than it was in 1990 when the United States defeated Iraq's armies in a matter of hours. With at least 90% of its pre-Gulf War weaponry destroyed, Iraq is completely vulnerable to outside attack and poses no realistic threat to the United States, or to other countries. The U.S. accusation that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction (whether they actually exist or not) is subterfuge for the Bush administration's real agenda: control of the oil resources of the Middle East.

The hypocrisy of U.S. policy toward Iraq may be seen by comparing it to U.S. policy toward other countries. For example, Israel possesses nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. Israel has violated United Nations resolutions; it has threatened and attacked neighboring countries; and Israel is guilty of extensive human rights violations. Yet, there is no talk from Washington of weapons inspections in Israel, much less of an invasion of that country. Indeed, the U.S. arms Israel and provides it with massive economic and political support.

The ultimate hypocrisy in Washington's focus on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction is that the U.S. itself leads the world in the possession and production of weapons of mass destruction. The U.S. has weapons of every imaginable variety, including a nuclear arsenal sufficient to obliterate human life on this planet. If weapons of mass destruction were a real concern to Washington, weapons inspections and disarmament would begin at home.

References

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