

The U.S. Occupation of Iraq and the Arab World

Adnan M. Hayajneh* & Jamal A. Al-Shalabi

The aim of this paper is to discuss the affects of the US occupation of Iraq on the Arab world and on the United States. It will try to answer several questions including: will the failure of the US mean the continuation of conflict in Iraq. Will Iraq be left in a chaotic situation? How other Arab and non Arab-neighboring states will behave under the continuation of conflict in Iraq and in the possible chaos if the US decided to call its mission off in Iraq? What are the implications of failure on the US world image? Will the US succeed in bringing democracy and stability to Iraq and present it as model to the Arab world. What are the responses from the rest of the Arab World to the making of the New Iraq? More importantly, the paper will concentrate on the future security arrangement of the US namely the future relationship between the Arab States and the U.S. in terms of the security arrangement and scenarios of post-war Iraq and regional security and how this will influence Arab -US relations. These are so many important questions the paper will try to tackle.

Basic Assumptions:

This paper argues that Iraq has changed and it will change almost everything in the Middle East and in the world. The changes we have seen so far are only limited of what is expected to be seen in near and forward future. These changes include some unthinkable issues that will be of great interest to policy makers and researchers of the

region and in the U.S. especially those concerning internal and external security in the US and in the Arab world. A glimpse of views will show these important changes in the domestic, regional and international levels including the following:

- Iraq has divided the Arab public: the Arab public has changed after the US war on Iraq. Increasing criticisms of government's behavior, a state of carelessness regarding government's initiatives and explanations, a low level of trust and credibility in the governments. Moreover, a lack of view and vision of how to deal with the situation that is the US occupation of Iraq. Nonetheless, the U.S. occupation of Iraq is uniting the Arab public in terms of their refusal to US presence in the region. This is the base of how to deal with the US by the people. Thus, this poses a stand to deal with U.S. proposals for the region and how to deal with their own governments who have supported the American war against Iraq. In summary, all US proposals to improve the region are not well perceived in the region. However, governmental approaches of political changes are going to bring more opposition to the US. One may argue that potential political instability situation is in the making in most Arab states. This is will have devastating consequences on the U.S and on the regional and international security. It can be argued that the rise of militant attacks against U.S. interests in the Arab world have been a norm of the daily life of most Arab states especially the neighboring countries of Iraq.
- Iraq is dividing and uniting the official response in the Arab world. Governments in the Arab world are not sure of what to do regarding the US occupation of Iraq. Supporting the US has a high price and the opposite is true. This is creating lack of Arab vision of how to deal with the results of the US war on Iraq. Official public statements show support to US presence. On the other hand many states wish the

failure of the US in Iraq but do not declare this view. They argue that success in Iraq by the Americans will put them next on the list. They are already aggravated by U.S. demands to change their way of governing. It is threatening them. Thus, it is important to note that Iraq has created two policies by the Arab governments that will have negative impact on their relations on the US and on the regional security of the Middle East.

- Iraq is dividing the American public. The American public support of war has been divided before the beginning of the War and the division is become clear after the US occupation of Iraq. This is evident in many surveys conducted in the US, particularly when the American public started to find out that the rationales for the war were dubious. The objectives that were set forward turned out to be not only flawed and not accounted for but also deceiving. People ask where are the WMDs (Weapons of Mass Destruction's) that Iraq will use within hours of a U.S. attack? Where is the connection between the Iraqi regime and Al-Qaeda? Thus, many Americans and policy makers agree that war did not serve U.S. interests. Instead, it has brought more criticism on the U.S. It created more enemies to the US rather than making the American public more secure. Nonetheless, the neo-conservatives are exception to this case. They have a different view. However, many realized that these neocons have created false assumptions and grounded their policy on it. One may argue that the next presidential election (in November 2004) will have the decisive verdict on American views of war on Iraq and U.S. international policy. Thus, changes of attitudes are threatening continuation of US in Iraq if leadership change occurred after the presidential election.

- Iraq is dividing the World: The dismissal of any role to the United Nations is one important indication which has negative affects on nations behavior and on the credibility of the UN institution which the US have used and abused. Many nations like France and Germany have tried to challenge the US. Their difference on Iraq is not likely to be left in Iraq. Moreover, division is expected between the so-called West. The call by the Foreign Minster of France for Europe to counter the Hyper-power is another indication of the affect of the war on Iraq on world politics. Many thinkers like Paul Kenndy (2003) and Kagan (2003) argue that Europe is not able to counter U.S. power. Because it lacks the power to do. It has fragmented foreign policy. In addition, the war on Iraq has widened the gab among European players. However, the war has put the seeds for more differences between Europe and the US. It was the first time since the Cold war that the US has found itself isolated with the United Kingdom.
- Iraq is bringing new -old issues to the scenes of international relations. Terrorism is one the most important international issues that the War on Iraq has encouraged. The potential rise of Terrorism is increasing due to US strategy of fighting terrorism. However, the soft security issues in the world and the region are of no interest to the US. More disasters that are humanitarian are in the making due to US behavior of Unilateralism.
- Changes in the concept of power. The War on Iraq has changed all measurement of power. Power indices are of no use in the post-Iraq war world order. All the high tech weapons cannot control resistance forces and they can beat any one with little or no technology at all. American policy makers really wondered how a rocket of \$5000 could take down a plane that cost \$50 million. Therefore, we are living in

interesting times that power has changed so dramatically in way that surprises US military planners.

In summary, this war has created a world of confusion. Thus, all scenarios are possible under such conditions. These conditions of not knowing what to do on behalf of Europe, UN, the Arab world against the American arrogance and ignorant attitudes regarding them. This is will have devastating outcomes on the security of the region and on the rest of the world.

The Situation on Iraq:

The situation in Iraq is of great interest to the Arab states, the neighboring states, and the other actors in world politics namely the new and old Europe, the United Nations and to the main actor in the scene that the US in Iraq and inside the US among democrats and neocons as the previous arguments suggested.

The US is faced with so many difficulties in Iraq. On the top of these, lack of vision, which is evident in the changes of pace and strategies over a short time. The deaths of American soldiers are steady and it is on the rise. According to the Washington Post Report "In all, 437 troops have died in Iraq since the war began, 2,094 have been listed as wounded in action and 2,464 have suffered noncombat-related injuries, ranging from accidental gunshots to broken bones and injuries in vehicle accidents. Since May 1, when President Bush declared the end of major combat operations in Iraq 298 troops have died." (The Washington Post, Nov. 29, 2003: A14). The rise of the resistance and the sharpening of its attacks against the American forces- average of (40) attacks per day during November according the Washington Post (Nov. 29, 2003), in the Sunni areas and central Iraq, is another indication of the failure of the

US to bring security to Iraq. The political situation in Iraq is a resemblance of failing state.

The promised freedom and prosperity for the Iraqi people are translated with economic hardship and 60-75% unemployment and the list can be added to. (Economist: 11/1/2003). A report by the Economist shows that some improvements in the life conditions of the Iraqi people. However, as it is noted about the result of survey in Iraq, many are doubtful of the US success in Iraq for example "while most endorse democracy and women's rights, many wonder whether democracy can work in Iraq." (Economist: 11/1/2003).

The US Occupation of Iraq:

The occupation of Iraq is becoming a major burden to the U.S. The continuation of the current decaying security situation is threatening to the Arab states. As the US, war on Iraq has proven that it will take more time than proposed by war planners (see Pei 2003, Dobbins, 2003). This means the unpredictable future for the US, Iraq and the Arab world. The emerging developments must be analyzed to help understand the current and future situations, which is bringing more threats for security in the Arab world and in the region. It suggests that these challenges cannot be solved by the current US approach:

- The continuation of the US presence in Iraq with nor real development in the ground suggests a long-term presence for the US forces in the region. It is worth noting that the US still maintains military bases in Germany and Japan and many other countries that did intervene in.

- An increase in number of resistant to the US forces. It might lead to unpopular moves by the US to put down these resistances that invite more internal conflict in Iraq that may spell over to the neighboring states.
- The higher number of US casualties is an evidence of not bringing stability to Iraq. It is an indication of the lack of the US ability to protect its own troops and it may cause less public support for the US role in Iraq and in the Middle East.
- Deteriorating situation in Iraq will give more support to the resistance by the Iraqis and by the Arab public opinion, which may lead to unwanted internal instability in the Arab world.

This scenario will put more pressure on the US and on the Arab states. The US may think of real alternative but costly one that is the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq and a more pressure by the Arab governments on their public. This situation will shatter the US world image and it will give more support to the resistance groups.

It is important to note that the numbers of US loose are in the increase. The implication will have devastating results not only on the US commitment and the future of the Bush administration but it also it is scarring the other nations from committing its own troops to help bringing security and stability to Iraq. Recent events in Iraq are discouraging nations from participating on the efforts of rebuilding Iraq. Most nations involved in Iraq have been attacked. This explained the secrecy of the Bush administration on the number of Casualties and the disappearance of the president in any funeral. Elisabeth Bumiller wrote on the New York Times "Republicans also acknowledge that White House officials, mindful of history, do not want Mr. Bush to become hostage to daily body counts, much as President Lyndon B. Johnson was during the Vietnam War. Concern about being consumed by the headlines, administration

officials say, is another reason the President did not specifically address the downed Chinook on Sunday." (Bumiller: New York Times, November 5, 2003).

The role of other players in the Iraqi case is not helping. No nation yet has decided to commit it is force on the ground. It implies the worsening condition in Iraq. Thus, Iraq will not be a quick fix. Yet moving in other directions in the region toward Iran and Syria and democracy in Arab world shows the failure of US to show any success story in Iraq.

The Foreign Affairs publishing some old documents about the US involvement in Germany and try to shed some light in lesson that can be learned from the Germany case to be implement or to convince critics of US policy in Iraq. One of the indications is that the US is running out of ideas of how deal with Iraq namely because failing in Iraq means more negative consequences in the region and the future security of the region. The ideas from Allen Dulles are interesting but they are not comparable with the Iraq situations for many reasons. Time has changes, world politics and Cold war competitions have changed, and the source of legitimacy in intervention for the US in Germany is not exciting in the Iraqi case. (Dulles, 2003).

Post -Iraq World and the Arab World:

It can be argued that the behavior of the US has changed namely after the September 11 events (Powell, 2004). The Iraqi war was only the beginning of these changes that will follow. This is what the paper has argued that the Arab world is faced with new old strategy of reshaping the Middle East (see Abrahms, 2003). However, the implementation of US new Middle East depends heavily in its success in Iraq. The U.S. management of Iraq is the factor that plays heavily in its world image as well as in its policy for the Middle East in terms of oil and economy Islam and terrorism democracy

and political change in the region. No body can take the US officials declarations of the good that the US is bringing to the Middle East. When U.S. policy makers were faced by Arab thinkers regarding the question: who is next? Syria, Saudi Arabia or Iran? They refuted these criticisms. The US denied such accusations. Thus, following the deeds of the US Administration toward Syria and Saudi Arabia and Iran and many other countries who are now on the top list of the US at the current time, show that the US is doing what it intended to do if it succeed in Iraq. However, U.S. policy in Iraq is the main issue that is delaying its endeavors in the Arab world, Talking about security arrangement in the Gulf, and future threats by policy makers in the US is a "joke". The US is the one who has created such conditions and it will create the tools to deal with it at the point of doing nothing by the Arab World.

Henderson (2003), in his Book "The New Pillar: Conservative Arab Gulf and U.S. Strategy", made it clear with regard to US intentions in the Arab world and the need for change in US policy toward the Gulf states. He offered some suggestions, which the Bush the Administration seemed too obvious to implement. In his executive summary he wrote "In the months following the terrorist attacks of September, it became increasingly clear that Saudi Arabia was no longer fulfilling its U.S.-backed leadership role in the Persian Gulf. Troubled by apparently widespread domestic sympathy for Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda terrorist network, the Saudi royal family began to withdraw much of its support for U.S. diplomatic and military moves, first against Afghanistan and then against Iraq. The U.S. response has to develop relationships with the other conservative Arab Gulf states while officially claiming continued excellent relations with Riyadh."(Henderson, 2003).

It can be argued that most Arab states are in the US list. It is not a conspiracy theory. It is real time, direct occupation. Other important developments will follow.

The Arab World Situation:

What we see right now in the Arab world is interesting: the Arab leaders are face to face with the U.S. The Arab masses are watching an indirect wrestling. No matter what happened they think they will be the gainers at all ends.

The Arab states cannot defend their national security. In addition, they cannot keep control on the internal political developments forever. However, they are not pleasing the U.S. administration. The U.S. has its own demands. The Arab regimes are trying to balance those demands with the public demands. Moreover, most Arab regimes have put all their eggs in the American basket or would like to think so. As they say, the Arab world is living in interesting times. No one wants to know what is happening. Even they want to know they would like to think of it as a nightmare. Hoping to go away. However, the Americans are here to stay. So many issues, real threats, a state of confusions and limited strategies to zigzag the results of the Iraq war.

Henderson argues that while referring to Iran as the major threat to the Arab Gulf states which is not correct or forcing for his own reasons which are well know to many, namely to keep the pressure on Iran, because Iran did not do any thing against any Arab state, He Said " Despite the fall of Saddam's regime in Iraq, the conservative Arab Gulf states remain fearful of Iran, Although these states often spend vast sums on the most modern military hardware, the effectiveness of their armies remains dubious at best; on their own, these forces would have little hope of deterring, let alone countering, the military might of Iran, which has the largest conventional force of any state in the region." (Henderson, 2003).

Nevertheless, Henderson is not telling the truth and he insults the intelligence of thinkers in the Arab world and need to be reminded of the rationales for U.S. arms sales to the Arab Gulf states. Can he cite the following reasons? U.S. arms sales are conducted to recycle the petrodollars. They are done to keep the U.S. military factories going. They are done to help the economy of the US. They are done to allow regimes protect their own reins. Can he answer the following question? Is the F16 that were sold to the United Arab Emirates, with the lobbying of the most influential decision makers in the US, are the same quality of the F 16 that were sold or given to Israel? The commission politics and corruption is a mere fact of U.S. arms sales to the Gulf States. It is not security arrangements. Because the US does not want these states to have the ability to protect themselves. Which Henderson said. It shows conflict of ideas on his behalf? He said, "...with the exception of Saudi Arabia, the states have been pleased to accept a continuing U.S. security presence. The gratitude of these governments is marked by caution, however, due to the implications of maintaining links with the United States and the potential consequences if Washington were to decide to scale down its commitment."

The Arab states are on the wait and see stand. No action policy is noticed upon the behavior of the Arab states regarding the U.S. policies. Worsening internal situation and regional environment. All of their eggs are in the American basket. However, they are fearful of the US if they take US verbal actions toward democratization seriously. They have been trying to do the over due things with short time. However, lack of any vision of how to do it mark Arab politics. They have helped removing out Saddam of power but they brought upon themselves so many problems. The political and economic agenda has been changed and they do not know how to implement it. Most Arab states

have double positions. One in the public, which is support of the US in its policy in Iraq. In addition, the other hopes the US will fail in its endeavor in Iraq. Most of them lean to the latter approach because they know Iraq is not the end. It is the beginning of re-mapping the Middle East with regard to the Arab world and Iran to the best interest of the US and Israel.

Policy Recommendations:

A Marshall Plan is required not only for Iraq but also for the rest of the Arab world. Yes many call on Germany as a success story but it was not without US Marshall plan. Many former military officials in the US share this view. Marine Corps Gen. Anthony Zinni, former commander in chief of the U.S. Central Commander and now special advisor to Secretary of State Colin Powell called in a meeting to improve US-Arab relations for a new Marshall Plan for the Middle East. He said, "We can't patchwork policies in the Middle East...We need a strategic vision. We can't have a separate policy for each issue-the Middle East Peace Process, a policy and approach for Iraq, or Afghanistan, or how we build our relationships in the region, or how we deal with the energy issue. We need to step back and have something like President Truman and Secretary Marshall had, that strategic vision." (Hanely, 2003).

Wesley Clark, a democratic presidential candidate shares this vision. He said criticizing the Bush administration approach and lack of vision to deal with foreign policy. "I'm afraid we're headed in the wrong direction internationally-making more enemies than friends...Iraq has turned out to be a really bad deal, and I was not in favor of it without U.N. support. We've got to learn to line with our neighbors." He added "we're not a you're with us or against us' kind of a people... We're a come and join us

kind of people... Americans know in our hearts you don't make us safer by building walls, but by building bridges..." (Conniff, 2003).

However, many others have different suggestion that need to be investigated. For example, Henderson (2003) suggested the following.

"The United States must adopt an approach that is both clear and sensitive-- a difficult goal at a time when immediate military requirements might sit uncomfortably with longer-term diplomatic objectives. In particular, Washington should encourage the dissolution of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the quasi-diplomatic club with, military undertones that comprises all six conservative Arab Gulf states. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (of which Saudi Arabi, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE are all members) should be dissolved as well. They way forward for Washington is to approach the individual conservative Arab Gulf States on a one-to-one basis. The U.S. position would then be less vulnerable to intra-Gulf rivalries and more effective at playing on the dependency of individual states. The changes in the Persian Gulf set off by the collapse of Saddam Husayn's regime offer too important a range of opportunities to be constrained by petty regional rivalries."

It is amazing that going back to the history and the rational for establishing the GCC one find out that it was an American idea to contain Iran. Iran still as suggested by the author a major threat to the Gulf States and now he is calling for an end to the GCC and a dependency on the US for its security needs. The question is can the US do it while it brags about democracy and internal reform. It is absurd to make the suggestions that harm US long-term interests. It is not clear where Israel fits in this formula. Can Israel play an important role in the security of the Gulf or is Israel position is diminishing because of US military presence in the Gulf and more importantly it cannot

be used against Arab states due the sensitivity it will bring with it as known in the US military interventions experience in the Arab worlds namely in the First Gulf War in 1991 and the current war.

However, as suggested earlier in paper the implementation of any strategy in the Arab world will have to wait results in Iraq. Moreover, the Iraqi case will take more time than expected and now admitted by US war planners. It is important to note that the Iraq case will make or break regarding US strategy in the Arab world and namely on the Arab Gulf.

Conclusion:

Iraq is a determining factor in the future security of the Arab world and in the U.S. success or failure of the US in this war has its affects on both the Arab states and on the U.S. A rethinking of US policy and strategies is over due. The secret visit of the U.S. president to Iraq speaks very clearly on the security situation in Iraq. It shows that the success is far away from the reaching of the U.S. It gives a clear message to the Arab world of the challenges ahead. The U.S. current administration is hard headed in its strategy in Iraq and in the Arab world. However, Iraq is going to make or break an early lesson need to be thought of before making any further suggestions regarding how the Arab states perceive or deal with its security needs. All are waiting the US and only the US can decide at this time. However, a start of mass peaceful demonstrations in Iraq might change all calculations.

* Associate Professor of International Relations, International Relations and Strategic Studies Program, Hashemite University, Amman.

** Assistant Professor, International Relations and Strategic Studies Program,
Hashemite University, Amman.

References

- Abrahms, Max. 2003. "When Rogues Defy Reason: Bashar's Syria." Middle East Quarterly. Fall: 45-55.
- Bumiller, Elisabeth. 2003. Issue for Bush: How to Speak of Casualties? The New York Times: November 5, 2003.
- Conniff, Ruth. 2003. "The General Jumps In. The Progressive. (November, Internet Ed.)
- Dobbins, James and others. 2003. America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq. Rand.
- Dulles, Allen W. 2003. That Was Then: Allen W. Dulles on the Occupation of Germany. Foreign Affairs, November/December. Internet Ed.
- Economist. 11/1/2003. "Amid the bombs and the rubble, the country is still slowly on the mend. 369 (8348): 1c.
- Hanley, Delinda C. 2003. "Strengthening Arab-U.S. Relations: What is required? Washington Report on Middle East Affairs. 12(9): 78-81. Internet Ed.
- Henderson, Simon. 2003. The New Pillar: Conservative Arab Gulf States and U.S. Strategy. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.
- Kagan, Robert. 2003. "Looking for Legitimacy in all the Wrong Places." Foreign Policy & Carnegie Endowment Special Report: From Victory To Success: Afterwar Policy in Iraq. Pp: 70-72.
- Kennedy, Paul. 2003. Old Europe Cannot Be a Counterweight to the American Imperium. NPQ. Summer: 18-23.
- Pei, Minxin. 2003. "Lessons of the Past." Foreign Policy & Carnegie Endowment Special Report: From Victory To Success: Afterwar Policy in Iraq. Pp: 52-55
- Powell, Colin L. 2004. "A Strategy of Partnerships." Foreign Affairs. (January/February, Internet Ed).
- Washington Post. 2003. "November Deadliest Month in Iraq. (Article by Bradley Graham, Nov. 29, p. A14).