

MIDDLE EAST CAUCUS
Topic B: Establishing Peace and Security in Iraq

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SALMUN 2014

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Background Information

Iraq is located in Western Asia, or the Middle East, and bordered by Syria, Iran, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Turkey. Iraq's capital is Baghdad, and it is one of the countries known for its religious conflicts. The country is 97% Muslim, 35% are Sunni, and 65% Shia (see Key Terms), all in proportion to a population of 31,234,000 people. Currently, the Shia are in control of the country, which is source of great dissatisfaction for the Sunnis, who believe they are not receiving the rights they deserve and are not being heard by the government. The Shia and Sunni branch of Islam have historically been at odds with each other and this enmity is utterly manifested within Iraq.



Persian Gulf War

The conflict that is still ongoing between the two Muslim groups began in 2011, when the United States of America left Iraq, resulting in a Shia against Sunni



struggle for power. However, the conflict has its roots in a more distant past, the First Persian Gulf War (also known as the Gulf War). It started in August 2, 1990, when Iraq invaded and annexed Kuwait as its own territory. The Iraqi president at the time, Saddam Hussein [see Key Terms], justified the Kuwaiti invasion by announcing it was

caused by the overproduction of oil in Kuwait, which had dropped Iraq's oil prices, making the country lose \$14 billion in a year; he also mentioned that Kuwait illegally extracted oil from the Rumaila oil field, which officially belongs to Iraq. The conflict extended between Iraq and an alliance of 39 nations, including United States, United Kingdom and France. The United Nation Security Council asked Iraq to peacefully withdraw its troops, the deadline being January 15, 1991. However, Saddam Hussein did not accept such agreement, leading to the US decision to launch Operation Desert Storm 3 [see Key Terms] days after the deadline. After that attack, the US, together with its allies, started to massively attack and destroy Iraq's military. Under retaliation, Iraq called for terrorist attacks and started launching missiles at Israel and Saudi Arabia. Later in that same year, US attacked Iraq and Kuwait, until US President George H. W. Bush declared a cease-fire 4 days later. By then, most of Iraqi force had left Kuwait. After the war, Kuwait and Iraq had suffered a huge damage in their territory, while the US coalition and its allies had a military victory.



Iraq War

Due to the World Trade Center attack [see Key Terms] on September 11, 2001, the US decided to preemptively attack and eliminate threats to national security. In 2002, President Bush accused Iraq, North Korea and Iran as being part of the "axis of evil". In March 2003, the Second Persian Gulf War, also known as the Iraq War,

began with the United States and United Kingdom invading Iraq, which was accused of owning Weapons of Mass Destruction and harboring al-Qaeda members (although

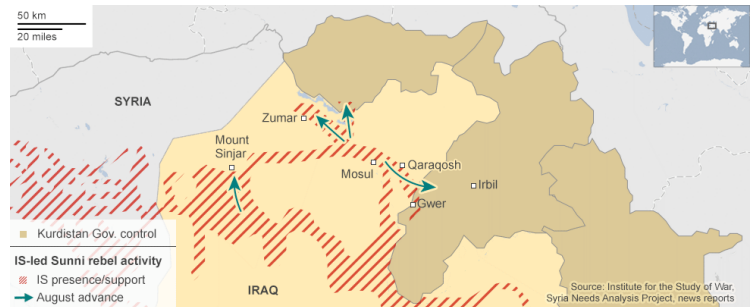
there was no tangible proof). Some people say that the Iraq War is merely a continuation of the Persian Gulf War of 1990. One of the reasons for the US and Britain invasion was the fact that Iraq would not allow the United Nations to inspect the country for weapons in the years following the Gulf War, as well as Saddam Hussein's alleged connection to terrorism through groups like al-Qaeda, which deeply worried both Western countries. Thus, the US attacked Iraq's capital, Baghdad. Iraq's goal to destroy US enemies was partially achieved, since in April 2003 Iraq's regime had been overthrown. In June 2004, a temporary government was instated in order to keep stability and peace. Later, in 2005, the temporary government was replaced by an Islamic Federal democracy, which the US supported. However, with this new government, the Shia and Kurds would have more power, while the Sunni, the minority, was excluded from the decisions. This exclusion made the Sunnis frustrated and angry towards the newly formed State, which led to protests and attacks towards Shia leaders and neighborhoods. Because of the chaos and violence happening in the country, the US sent troops to occupy the country and end the chaos, making Jalal Talabani, the Iraqi leader in 2005, step-down from power. After the US occupation, the population grew dissatisfied because of its political humiliation. US troops hence left Iraq in 2011 due to public pressure, allowing Iraq to reconstruct itself politically. However, after the US left Iraq, a war between the two Muslim groups, Shia and Sunni, began.

Civil War

Now, the conflict was entirely inside the country, an "everlasting" civil war. While the struggle was happening, statistics show that only in 2013, more than 500 civilians were killed in the Iraqi capital, which generated even more tension amongst government leaders. Furthermore, the conflict in Syria was aggravating the civil war in Iraq because

most Syrians are Sunni; as Syrian refugees moved to Iraq, the amount of people defending the Sunni side increased. Additionally, many Sunni Syrians were sent to Iraq to help expel the American government during the occupation, and to harm the Shia group. The Arab Spring in Syria also made more Sunni Syrians move to Iraq, serving to undermine the Shia government.

On August of 2014, the fighters from ISIS, a former al-Qaeda branch [see in Key Terms], were trying to expand their territory



through the use of violence, with the intention to control northern Iraq. It invaded north-west cities and Zumar, a town that was under the control of the Kurds [see Key Terms]. It also began attacking large communities of smaller religious groups. The United Nations stated that over 200,000 people had to leave their homes because of the chaos. The ISIS is trying to control Iraq, not only the territory, but also Mosul's hydroelectric dam, which is one of the main sources of power and water in the country. They have used car-bomb attacks killing innocent people, attacked cities and declared a new capital of the Islamic caliphate: Mosul. They are also invading Iraq's Christian community of Qaraqosh. In addition, the US has begun to intervene in the conflict for the first time after it withdrew in 2011, by bringing food and water for the people who are kept captured in Mount Sinjar. The US also launched air strikes against the ISIS militants, and President Obama mentioned that the US will consider a broader use of the military strikes, however he has also been pressuring Iraq's leaders to try to work for a diplomatic solution.

Timeline

August 1990 → Iraq invades Kuwait.

January 1991 → Operation Desert Storm begins.

February 1991 → A ceasefire in the Gulf War is established.

March 1991 → The coalition expels Iraq from Kuwait

April 1991 → Under the terms of Security Council Resolution 687, Iraq gives a detailed account of its weapons inventory. It states that it has no biological weapons program.

December 1998 → Great Britain and the United States launch air strikes against Iraq. The attack, called Operation Desert Fox, is in response to Iraq's refusal to cooperate with U.N. weapons inspectors.

January 2002 → U.S. President George W. Bush says in his State of the Union address that Iraq, Iran and North Korea constitute an "axis of evil" that threatens the United States.

September 2002 → Facing the threat of U.S. air strikes, Iraq unconditionally agrees to the return of United Nations inspectors.

March 2003 → President George W. Bush announces that U.S. and coalition forces have begun military action against Iraq.

June 2004 → The handover of sovereignty to the interim Iraqi government takes place two days before the June 30th deadline previously announced by the U.S.-led coalition.

June 2009 → U.S. troops pull back from Iraq's cities and towns and Iraq's troops take over the responsibility for security operations. However, U.S. troops remain in the country to continue combat operations and patrols in rural areas.

August 2010 → The last U.S. combat brigade leaves Iraq. Approximately 52,000 U.S. troops remain in the country.

December 2011 → U.S. troops lower the flag of command that flies over Baghdad officially ending the U.S. military mission in Iraq.

June 2014 → Al-Qaeda splinter group ISIS seizes the province of Nineveh and its capital Mosul.

June 2014 → ISIS takes control of Tikrit.

August 2014 → Two U.S. F/A-18 jet fighters bomb Sunni Islamic extremists in Iraq. President Barack Obama has authorized "targeted airstrikes" if needed to protect U.S. personnel from ISIS militants. The U.S. military also could use airstrikes to prevent what officials warn could be genocide of minority groups by the ISIS fighters.

Key Terms

Operation Desert Storm: The name for the military operation where international armed forces attacked Iraq in the Gulf War.

Sunni Muslim: A more pragmatic Muslim group that makes up 35% of the Iraq's Muslim population; however it is majority in Syria. After the Prophet Mohammed died, the Sunnis believed that the caliphate should go to whoever would be the best equipped politically to maintain the burgeoning Muslim empire. The Sunnis have a tendency to respect more how power actually works rather than the way it should work in the world. They pray 5 times a day.

Shia Muslim: A more idealistic Muslim group that makes up 65% of the Iraq's Muslim population. The Shia movement within Islam political origins began after the death of the Prophet Mohammed, and they believed that the power would pass to the Prophet Ali, which was his son-in-law and cousin, and from there, to his male successors. Shia still believe and acknowledge Ali as the divinely appointed ruler of the nation of Islam, Caliph, and that his successors are Imams, and that they are all blessed with divine knowledge. Shia Muslims consider the Ayatollah or Imam as the mediator between Allah and his believers, and that they own possession of spiritual authority. They pray to three times a day.

Persian Gulf War: War between the US coalition and Iraq caused when Iraq invaded Kuwait.

Saddam Hussein: President of Iraq from 1979 until 2003.

World Trade Center attack: The well-known 9/11 attack, in which a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks launched by the al-Qaeda in New York, crashing into the Twin Towers and killing almost 3,000 people.

Kurds: An ethnic group composed of Iranian people. They number about 30 million and are, in present days, are in diaspora communities in western Turkish cities, Armenia, Georgia, Israel, Azerbaijan, Russia, Lebanon, in some European countries, and the United States.

ISIS: Formal name for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and it is a Sunni jihadist group in the Middle East. It names itself a caliphate, and because of that it claims to have full authority over Muslims all around the world. It has been active since 2004, with the ideology of Sunni Islamism Salafist Jihadism worldwide caliphate anti-Shiaism. It has participated mainly in the Iraq War, Iraqi Insurgency, Northern Iraq offensive, and the Syrian Civil War.

Guiding Questions

- How does the US invasion affect the Shia and Sunni conflict?
- To what extent does the US invasion effects Iraq's politics regarding who will take control?
- How will the other Middle Eastern countries react with the US invasion?
- How do United Nations and the groups involved in the war plan to keep innocent people safe?
- How will the ISIS attacks affect Sunni and Shia relationships?
- What are some viable solutions to the current conflict and how can one ensure lasting stability?
- What have the effects of prolonged US presence in Iraq been?
- Is the US to blame for the current conflict?

Further Research

Provide information on humanitarian consequences of the conflict:

<http://costsofwar.org/article/civilians-killed-and-wounded>

<https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/15/iraq-death-toll_n_4102855.html

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28761383>

Links to recent news on the topic:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/08/world/middleeast/iraq.html?module=Search&mab>

[Reward=relbias%3Aw%2C%7B%22%22%3A%22RI%3A18%22%7D&_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/08/world/middleeast/iraq.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Aw%2C%7B%22%22%3A%22RI%3A18%22%7D&_r=0)

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/09/why-americas-pursuing-isis-to-the-gates-of-hell/379622/>

Nice video on the topic:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmfzZ3-_5w4

Always helpful news websites:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/iraq>

<http://edition.cnn.com/MIDDLEEAST>

<http://bbc.com.uk>