Iraq 2003 violence peace and social change argumentative essay example

Traditionally, wars were fought over land, wealth, feuds and women. However, this was a time when nations were not capable of triggering global. Industrialization and the development of weapons technology changed this drastically and the two great World Wars are testimonies to the impact that conflict in one part of the world can have on global politics.

Hence, war, post the World Wars, became increasingly about defense than offence. As the Cold War ended with the dissolution of the U. S. S. R., the U. S. foreign policy, that had for long been focused on containing communism, lost direction1. The new grand strategy that emerged, one that was acceptable by the American people, was homeland security and the prevention of future attacks. Hence, war became a weapon to maintain peace, a paradox that has been argued over for decades.

Despite the increasing number of wars being raged to maintain international peace, it has been noted that the overall impact has been quite the opposite. The ' enemy' now is not a nation or a tyrant who can be tracked down and brought to justice. The concept of international terrorism has come to the fore since the 9/11 attacks. Since the attacks, the U. S. has invaded Iraq and Afghanistan, in the name of finding weapons of mass destructions and Osama bin Laden, respectively. Yet, violence in these countries and terrorism across the globe has not abated.

Violence is not limited to casualties of war anymore. More civilian lives are lost in violence which results from wars that are over and done with. WHO defines violence as " the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or

community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation. 2" Hence, it can be said that most countries in the world today are constantly in a state of violence, either under attack or threatened with attack, by terrorists, extremists and/or governments seeking to battle them.

On the other hand, ' Peace' is defined as the following: a) A state of tranquility or quite, b) freedom from civil disturbance, c) a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom, d) a state or period of mutual concord between governments, and e) a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity3. The use of war or violence to attain peace should, hence, result in one, if not most, of the above conditions.

It has also been noted that, while the plight of civilians in war ravaged countries may have been dire before the war began, their condition did not improve much even after the war was over. However, when a war is waged with the uplifting of the people of the target nation in mind, then, the aforementioned uplifting becomes an expectation.

The case in point used in this paper is the invasion of Iraq by the U. S. in the year 2003. The reasoning behind the invasion, whether this reasoning was honest and justified, were the expected outcomes and objectives achieved, and what was the actual aftermath of the war for both the countries involved – these are some of the issues that will be discussed in details.

THE REASONING

Post the 9/11 attacks, America had declared a ' War on Terror', driving international support and collaboration towards ending the ownership of weapons of mass destruction or WMDs by countries considered to be hostile towards international peace and security. There were several doubts that were raised back in 1988 when Iraq had attacked Halabjah, a Kurdish Town, using chemical weapons. The U. S. was concerned that Iraq might be in possession of WMDs.

Saddam Hussein's government withdrew its cooperation from the United Nations Special Commission to Oversee the Destruction of Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction or UNSCOM. This triggered a bombing of possible Iraqi weapons sites by U. S. and British forces. Still, Iraq refused to cooperate with UNMOVIC, a body which replaced UNSCOM in 1999. President Bush named Iraq as part of his ' Axis of evil', and further bombings took place in 2001.

U. S. and Britain moved the Security Council in March 2003 to allow military action. However, they did not wait for the authorization and went ahead with the invasion despite firm disapprovals by Russia, Germany, France and most of the Arab world. While giving his reasons to invade Iraq, President Bush made the following quote " no more poison factories, no more executions of dissidents, no more torture chambers and rape rooms4". In short, the reasons behind invading Iraq were given as : a) Combating terrorism, b) Confiscating and destroying WMDs to keep the U. S. and the rest of the world safe, and c) to give the people of Iraq freedom from Saddam's tyrannical reign.

THE INVASION

The U. S. launched a full invasion of Iraq on 19th March 2003. Within three weeks, troops had reached Baghdad. On the heels of the invasion came the insurgency of the angered Sunni majority, ex-army officers as well those who supported Saddam's regime. Security forces as well as civilians became the target of brutal bomb attacks5. The civil unrest gained increasing footage in the international media and concerns raised by the Arab world before the invasion began to seem justified. On the 1st of May 2003, President Bush announced that combat operations in Iraq were now over. However, the insurgency grew worse and Iraq found itself embroiled in a bloody struggle for power.

THE EVIDENT AFTERMATH

With no single party gaining majority votes, forming a coalition government became a near impossible imperative. Finally, on 22 April 2006, President Talabani and Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki form a new government. In the mean time, regular bomb attacks led to several hundred being killed on a near daily basis6. The UN reported about 34000 civilian deaths in 2006 alone. Saddam Hussein was caught and executed in December 2006 for ' crimes against humanity7'. The WMDs were never found yet more U. S. troops are shipped off to Iraq. 2007 saw a drop in civilian as well as security forces casualties and the Iraqi parliament signed a security pact with the U. S. President Barack Obama announced in March 2009 that all American troops will be withdrawn from Iraq by the end of 2011.

IRAQ 2003 – THE FAILURE

Let us revisit the reasoning given by the Bush administration for invading Iraq in 2003 and evaluate how far these objectives were met:

A. Finding & Destroying Weapons of Mass Destruction

" We know where the weapons of mass destruction are. They are around Tikrit and Baghdad and east, west, south and north somewhat" – Donald Rumsfeld8. This was the statement made by the then Secretary of Defense, two weeks into the invasion of Iraq. The WMDs were never found. Further, in an interview given on May 9 2003, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz divulged " The truth is that, for reasons that have a lot to do with the U. S. government bureaucracy, we settled on the one issue that everyone could agree on which was weapons of mass destruction as the core reason to go to war9". This led to severe concerns being raised not only in the Arab world but also among other members of the Security Council over the true reason and intention behind the invasion of Iraq by the U. S.

B. Combating Terrorism

" Stuff happens! Freedom's untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things. They're also free to live their lives and do wonderful things, and that's what's going to happen here" Donald Rumsfeld10. This was the response given by the Secretary of Defense when quizzed about the escalating insurgency and violence in Iraq post the toppling of the government. Reports of terror attacks on U. S., British, and U. N. as well as civilian targets during and after the invasion resulted in thousands of civilian casualties every year since 2003. While

President Bush claimed that the invasion would make the world a safer place, a 2007 study revealed a 600% jump in terrorist activities around the globe11. While the tyrannical reign of Saddam Hussein may have been a potential terror threat, the effect of preventing this potential threat actually triggered an onslaught of terrorism.

C. Freedom for the Iraqi People

On the 24th of August 2004, President Bush acknowledged for the first that ''miscalculation of what the conditions would be'' in postwar Iraq had been made12. However, conflicting reports soon emerged. The CIA warned the President of the prospects of civil war in Iraq, however, he dismissed it saying it was mere guessing13. Another report showed that President had been warned as far back as January 2003, two months before the invasion began, about the consequences of waging a war14. The grim predictions turned out to be correct as the U. S. forces failed to form a stable government several years after Saddam's regime had been toppled. The people of Iraq, although freed from Saddam's rule, were in turn enslaved by terrorists and warring factions, torn apart by civil unrest.

CONSEQUENCES FOR THE IRAQI PEOPLE

On 1st of May 2004, President Bush claimed that daily life was improving for the Iraqi people." Despite many challenges, life for the Iraqi people is a world away from the cruelty and corruption" of the regime of former president Saddam Hussein, Bush said15. However, even 5 years after this claim was made, the lives of the Iraqi people had far from improved. Statistics showed that they lagged behind in several areas such as:

a) Standard of Living: Figure 1 illustrates some common durable goods that mark a reasonable standard of living and the access that Iraqi households have to them.

Figure 1

According to the report only 7. 4% of Iraqi households owned a personal computer and 43% a washing machine16. Comparatively, in the same year, 67% British households had a computer and 96% had a washing machine.

b) Electricity & Water: While electricity production in Iraq had increased, so had its demand. As a result, only half of the 209, 000 MWH a day demand is met, with many households receiving electricity for less than 12 hours. Figure 2 illustrates the different areas of Iraq and the amount of power they receive

Figure 2

Many homes in Iraq still rely on traditional water sources like wells and are not linked to the general water network. According to the UN, about 32% of the populace has access to hygienic drinking water.

c) Violence

Finally, while civilian deaths caused due to violence has decreased since the invasion in 2003, the figures are far from normal. Table 1 illustrates data taken from various authorities highlighting the total number of deaths due to violence in Iraq17 .

As is evident from the above, there is no accurate estimate of the total number of civilian casualties resulting from the war.

CONCLUSION

War for peace is a concept that has proven to be impractical and unrealistic time and again. The invasion of Iraq 2003 is a testament to this fact. Despite fair sounding justifications given by the U. S. government before the war, it because evident that none of these objectives were met. The peace that the war should have brought to the Iraqi people was never achieved and instead of controlling the rise of global terrorism, the invasion only aggravated the situation. In the words of Arundhati Roy, " People rarely win wars, governments rarely lose them. People get killed. Governments molt and regroup, hydra-headed. They first use flags to shrink-wrap peoples' minds and suffocate real thought, and then as ceremonial shrouds to cloak the mangled corpses of the willing dead18" .

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