

Us withdrawal from iraq: where to now essays example

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On the 15th of December 2011, American troops lowered the US flag from their base in Baghdad, signaling the end of the American military and peacekeeping mission in Iraq. After a year short of a decade of military missions in the country, the dismantling of the regime of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein as well as the explosion of sectarian violence and civil disturbances, the situation was further aggravated by the continuing involvement of the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization.

In this light, the official departure of American troops from Iraq, and the cessation of active US participation in keeping the peace in the country, has triggered the apprehensions of many in the country as whether the traditionally divisive political system in the country can withstand the significant challenges that the country will face in the future (Middle East Policy Council 1).

In the aftermath of the US departure from Iraq, the Al-Qaeda was utterly defeated and there was a power sharing arrangement between the Sunni and Shiite factions in the country. Two years onward, the Al-Qaeda held major urban areas where hundreds of American troops were killed while fighting alongside Iraqi troops. The population, once the witness to the destruction of the bondage that held them captive, was again witness to the extremists' " reimposition" of their will and take their streets, and their lives, from them (Dorell 1).

After more than two years after the American pullout from Iraq, faction disturbances and the revolution led by the Sunni sect in the country have revived an insurgency fueled by extremist Sunni Arab Muslims in attempt to

weaken the political foundations as well as the stability of the Iraqi government. The Sunnis in the country are extremely offended by the political influence of the Shiites and the belief of directed discrimination at the hands of the government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

In addition, Iraqi Kurds are in conflict with Baghdad over separate territorial and political issues. The various conflicts have led to a revolution by the Al-Qaeda, a Sunni led terrorist organization, in Iraq, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) beginning in December 2013 and has gained control of several cities in the Anbar region of the country (Katzman 1).

Civil war is again foisted upon the citizens of the country on reasons of subversion and resistance to a dictatorial government. Majority of the important achievements gained in the course of the almost decade long military action in the country have been lost or under severe threat owing to the activities of the extremists, and the only option to preserve the gains is to take swift and drastic options to remove the threat.

Critics of the war squarely place the blame at the feet of Prime Minister Maliki for his bigoted treatment against his Sunni rivals, who are in turn fueled by this treatment to support Sunni rebels who were recruited by the Sunnis in the course of the war. The setbacks have strengthened the resolve of Al-Qaeda, claiming that President Obama was “on his heels” and that the Al-Qaeda will not only regain its position in Iraq, but will be able to widen its grip in the entire Middle Eastern region (Dorell 1).

Prevailing events in the country inflame the tensions between Baghdad and the various sectors in the country in the belief that these are being rendered

impotent and defenseless from participating in the country's racial and political structures. With mounting calls from the country's Sunni and Kurd factions to sever ties with the central government in Baghdad, a political "time bomb" seems to be the next logical step in the deepening crisis in the country (Cordesman, Khazai 1).

However, it must not be said that the explosion of sectarian violence in the country was only an offshoot of the pullout of US troops; the violence was beginning to boil over in only what can be described as terrorist groups beginning to position themselves as the new power brokers in Iraq after the United States pulls out from the country.

For example, the Al-Qaeda organization based in Iraq launched a coordinate strike in seven Iraqi cities detonating 15 car bombs and assaults targeting military forces, civilian targets, as well as religious pilgrims. The nature of the attacks, as well as the efficiency of the coordination of the incidents, have led many to believe that the often dispersed elements of the group scattered across Iraq's central and northern regions can coordinate their efforts to maximize the devastation these groups can inflict upon their targets.

Following the dissolution of the national headquarters of the Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) in the wake of the deaths of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Ayub al-Masri, AQI leader and minister of war, respectively, groups such as the Jaish Rijal Tariqh al-Naqshabandi (JRTN) and other similar groups have filled the "breaches in the wall", so to speak. The group has coordinated different attacks for AQI and increasing the number of attacks in the country's northern and central regions. However, a closer look at the incidents of car

bombings carried out by groups such as JRTN are executing fewer but dramatic, headline grabbing attacks, and instead are centering their activities on a large number of smaller assaults to align themselves in the aftermath of the US pullout from Iraq (Knights 1).

The rapidly deteriorating security in the country, coupled with the massive US losses and subsequent departure, has many researchers and analysts comparing the Iraqi military action with another star-crossed military adventure, Vietnam. These sectors have posed the question whether the United States has again bumbled into another mistake across American shores that will prove costly to exit from.

Logical deduction derived from history is innately risky in that no events are completely alike and using history is often fraught with bias and political ignorance. Comparing Vietnam and Iraq, in the same manner, must be done in extreme caution. For one, a careful examination of the factors involved in the wars will evidence that the number of differences between the two greatly outnumber the similarities of the two.

In this light, advocates of the Iraqi action tend to jettison the Vietnam debacle as unrelated and deceiving if used to contend against the US action in Iraq. What can be used, however, is not the seeming defeat of the United States in Vietnam, but the annihilation of former US enemies such as Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan and the evolution of these countries from enemies into vital allies (Record, Terrill 1).

With the total pullout of the US armed component from Iraq, internal security within the country is rapidly disintegrating. Worse, the Al-Qaeda are not setting the stage, the group is burning it down. In the report of the United

Nations in mid 2013, more than 100, 000 Iraqis were killed in explosions and firefights, one of the deadliest months in the battle between Sunnis and Shiites since 2008. Cordesman, a defense researcher at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, states that Al-Qaeda is gaining power steadily in the country.

The same sentiment was shared by Jessica Lewis of the Institute for the Study of War, who avers that for the first time since 2006, Al-Qaeda was the primary agenda setter in the war against the government in Iraq. Shortly after the withdrawal of the US troops, the country in general has slid into turmoil owing to the fact that US troops were primarily holding terrorist elements from wreaking havoc in the country.

The threat of the Al-Qaeda as well as other terrorist groups in the region was “ recognized” by United States security and foreign affairs policy analysts with the decision to close the American embassy in Baghdad and its consulate offices in Basra and Erbil. The diplomatic outposts were part of the two dozen or so diplomatic offices that were shuttered owing to reports of an impending terrorist attack. The decline in the level of security in the country did not come as a surprise to the United States.

Retired General Michael Petraeus, once the commander of the United States military forces in Iraq, testified in Congress stating that an ill-prepared pullout of the US military forces from the country can have disastrous implications for Iraq. In his testimony, General Petraeus stated that a swift pullout of the American troops in the country will result in a rapid decline in the security level of Iraq.

With the sudden departure of American forces from Iraq, the AQI promptly

sought to regain the lost ground as well as the territories that were lost during the US military action in the country. The conflict in Iraq is expected to deteriorate further owing to the demographics of the Iraqi population. The universal factor in the growing tensions in Iraq is the rise in ethnic tensions in the country. Of the population, 60 percent come from the Shiite sectors and 32 percent from the Sunnis, with the rest practicing Christianity or other religious beliefs. With the removal of the stabilizing factor, that is the US troop, the competition between the factions will rise, with violent consequences (Sen 1).

A New Iraq after the War

Iraq, according to Cordesman and Khazai, is in a continuing struggle to find a new national identity, a struggle that spans the deep partisan divisions brewing between the Shiites and the Sunnis , as well as the conflicts between the Arabs and the Kurds and the various minorities in the country. As well as addressing the fractious nature of the Iraqi body politic, the country must endeavor to construct a new structure for government, economics, and social system, after long years being under a dictatorship, years of war, international sanctions, foreign occupations and internal strife that have persisted since 1979.

Aside from conflicts, Iraq must now also cope with more economic problems, such as a burgeoning population and an economy that is so heavily dependent on oil revenues that this comprises 95 percent of all government earnings. The conflicts may still result in the fueling of new civil conflicts and even the division of the country. However, Iraq does have enormous

possibilities and the political faction wars and the prevailing civil violence in the country cannot be taken to mean that the country will not be able to secure stability, a better standard of living for its population and improved national security (1).

However, there are factors that can negatively impact this positive assertion. One, the departure of the American military component in the country was done even before the US can verify that the Iraqi government can successfully compensate for the departure of the US troops. In addition, the transference of the authority in the country was also done prior to any conduct or investigation that Iraq can efficiently spend the massive amounts of US aid allocated to Anbar and integrates the “ Sons of Iraq” operating in the area.

Though “ official” American press statements disclosed that only 4, 000 men were still on their payrolls, many reports stated that as much as seven times the number were still being paid by American funds. Also, there was no mention as to the fate of the remaining Sol operatives once the \$300 monthly allocations were removed (Cordesman, Mausner 50).

A great number of Sunnis in the country have stayed greatly apprehensive of the Maliki government for its deficiency in supporting the Sol. In addition, there is a prevailing belief that only a handful of Sol operatives will be taken into the ISF, with many of these filling in mainly support positions. Some of the fighters were calling for their comrades to reignite the revolution, and a number of Sol operatives were holed up in a location in close proximity to a US military detachment since the US wanted to arrest them.

In addition, intra Sunni tensions have generated additional problems for the

Iraqi government owing to the distrust of some regional governments with the new government in Baghdad. For example, the Anbar government in 2008 asked the US forces to delay the transfer of the government to the central government by at least a year owing to their belief that Iraqi military and police forces were not in full form to take over from the US forces.

However, even with these calls coming from other regional jurisdictions, the ceding of the responsibility of maintaining security in the cities continued across the country. The transfers finally resulted in the departure of the main force of the American military component from Iraqi urban areas in 2009. By that time, the impacts of the pullout was vague at best; even though there were a number of bombings, no significant rise was registered during the period.

In the report of General Raymond Odierno, majority of the troops has been pulled from major Iraqi areas save for Baghdad and Mosul. However, the rate of transfer from the US forces to the provincial governments was hindered by the rising number of violent attacks being launched by Al-Qaeda and the perceived inability of Iraqi forces to effectively secure the areas resulted in an erratic rate of transfer from the US and allied forces to the Iraqi government removed (Cordesman, Mausner 51).

Nevertheless, the US, even though it has officially pulled out its remaining troops from the country, has begun a policy of aiding the government in countering the threat of insurgents battling the recognized Iraqi authorities. Recently, a C-17 cargo plane, one of the largest aircraft in the fleet of the United States military, landed in Baghdad to deliver approximately 2, 000 rockets for Iraqi military helicopters, as the Iraqi military braces itself for a

massive assault in Anbar against a revived Al-Qaeda in the region (ABC News 1).

The military aid comes in the aftermath of the fall of Fallujah, a vital city located along the Euphrates River. US Secretary of State John Kerry averred that even though America is not strongly inclined to send new troop reinforcements against the Al-Qaeda in Iraq, the United States government believed that the Iraqi as well as the tribal leaderships in Fallujah and Ramadi City would be able to successfully fend off the attacks of the terrorist groups and their allies. The capture of Ramadi, as well as large swaths of Fallujah, was the first time that Sunni rebels had been able to occupy portions of the region's urban areas and successfully hold on these positions for any period of time (Channel 4 1).

American military forces in Fallujah then fought a savage, door-to-door battle against Iraqi extremists in 2004. During that conflict, an estimated 100 Marines perished to retake and restore order in the city, not to mention the hundreds that were injured during the battle. In the context of Fallujah, it can be said that during the time, AQI was the one with the upper hand against the government. US Ambassador Robert Beecroft urged the Iraqi leadership to coordinate their efforts with Sunni tribesmen in the region to do the bulk of the work in defending the area with the use of aerial bombardment as a last option (ABC News 1).

However, save for these military actions launched by the extremist group, the attacks conducted by the group was not meant to gain any territory, but to gain international attention. The severity of the attacks was slowly becoming secondary to this objective; the primary objective now among

these groups was that there is a great motivation for these groups to demonstrate that these are still relevant.

In effect, the extremist groups operating in Iraq was to prove that these deserve critical recognition as factor in the discussions regarding the future of Iraq. With these successful attacks, these groups will be able to achieve another objective, and that is attracting sources of funding for them to continue their operations (Knights 1).

The US government must be involved in the transition of the country owing to the fact that it was the one who started the process in the first place. The factor of the US once again sending troops is irrelevant; what is important that the United States take full responsibility for its actions in beginning the process, and must ensure that the end of this process must be one that will benefit not only the United States and its allies, but to the Iraqi people first and foremost.

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