

TROOP WITHDRAW

Operation IRAQI FREEDOM: Effects of a Total Troop Withdraw

SGM William Rinehart

United States Sergeants Major Academy

Class 58

SWO E. T. Lim

13 November 2007

## Table of Contents

- I. Effect of Democratic process within Iraq after U.S. withdrawal
  - A. Current U.S. posture, which allows the democratic process to build
  - B. Establishment of a more Theocratic government
  - C. Iraqi civilians left within power/economic struggle
- II. Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds: Civil War
  - A. Kurdish state
  - B. Power base among Shiites
  - C. Sunni survival
  - D. Tribal engagement against al-Qaeda
    - 1. Reasons for cooperation
    - 2. Predicted outcome after withdraw
- III. External influence/interference
  - A. Iran's influence as Iraq's largest Shiite neighbor
  - B. Syria's exodus of exiled/hiding back to Iraq
    - 1. Former Iraqi Baath party leaders
    - 2. Financiers, Most Wanted, and Foreign Fighters
- IV. Loss of strategic foothold in the Middle East
  - A. Perceived defeat
    - 1. Domino effect in neighboring countries
    - 2. Foreign policy in region weakens
  - B. Oil reserves within Iraq and its management
  - C. Economic impact on US

### Abstract

With the U.S. military and State Department presence, Iraq has the opportunity to create a representative government supporting the ideals of freedom and democracy. Over watch is provided in a region historically known for dictator and monarchy type rule. A complete withdraw of U.S. and Coalition forces would definitely propel Iraq into internal civil war. To understand this one must look at the factors contributing to its development and certain initiation. Iraq is a homogenous country made up of three distinct groups of people. The first is the Kurds living in the northern region of the country. Another is the Shiite majority that was formerly oppressed within Iraq, but now enjoys representation and freedoms like never before. Sunnis are the third, and their survival within the country would diminish and most Sunni leaders would be forced to flee to countries like Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. This would likely lead to a proxy rebellion much like the one the Ayatollah Khomeini led from France during King Pahlavi's reign.

## Operation IRAQI FREEDOM I

## Effect of Democratic Process Within Iraq After U.S. Withdraw

With the U.S. military and State Department presence, Iraq has the opportunity to create a representative government supporting the ideals of freedom and democracy. Oversight is provided by military commanders and State Department officials in creating a government that is capable of representing its people in a region historically known for dictator and monarchy type rule. The military presence in each province allows a level of violence that is acceptable to the public in the creation of a new country. This is supported by the voter turnout in the first elections held since the fall of Saddam. Voters showed up to the polling stations in hope of casting their vote to make a difference. Without the military presence, opposition to the democratic way of life would certainly have taken the forefront and elections would not have taken place or they would not have been representative of the population's choices. Insurgents tried to subvert those running for offices within the government, but military presence at the voting polls ensured success. Until the government can effectively control its own military forces and ensure equality among the people will U.S. and Coalition forces be able to reduce its forces to a mere advisory role. Our current posture allows the democratic process to foster a struggling government in its formation and flourish in a region dominated by religious zealots.

Iraq's population is predominately Shiite much like its neighbor Iran. A full withdraw of U.S. and Coalition forces would open the door to Iranian influence in the shaping of Iraq's government. Iran would certainly draw on its successes as a theocratic government to influence Iraq's formation of its government institutions. Democratic ideals are in direct opposition to a theocracy. Its influence so close to the borders of Iran would be detrimental to Iran's government

and its survival. With the U.S. in Afghanistan and Iraq, democracy is being felt in Iran by its people. In the interest of survival, Iran would pressure the Iraqi government to form a more theocratic government using the faith of governmental personalities as fuel for change.

The overwhelming vacuum that would be left within the country after a sudden and complete withdraw would leave many struggling for survival. The powerbase would shift to the Shiites trying to control the Kurds, external influences on the country vying for control of the vast natural resources, and pressure from Iran to create an Islamic Republic of Iraq. The country would be ripped apart, destroying infrastructure established by the current democratic process, effecting the global market and nations around the world that depend on the region for oil and natural gas. This turmoil would only be quelled by external aid, both military and economic, in order to stabilize their own markets. In essence, it would create a situation much worse than current conditions.

#### Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds: Civil War

A complete withdraw of U.S. and Coalition forces would definitely propel Iraq into internal civil war. To understand this one must look at the factors contributing to its development and certain initiation. Iraq is a homogenous country made up of three distinct groups of people. The first is the Kurds living in the northern region of the country. They fought against the former Iraqi ruler and his oppressive rule and in an attempt to destabilize the nation; the Kurds often undermined the regime through rhetoric, insurgency, and political manipulation. Saddam Hussein retaliated against the Kurds in an attempt to quell the uprising by ordering chemical weapons use against Kurdish villages in the north. In the current government of Iraq, Kurds hold influential offices such as Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari. Currently the Kurdistan's Workers Party, also known under its Turkish acronym of PKK, is under the scrutiny of the

government of Turkey. The Kurdish populations spread up into Turkey and over into Iran as well. There are significant oil and natural gas deposits in the region. The Kurds want a Kurdish state formed, even though they enjoy an autonomous existence in the northern Iraqi region. Turkish officials do not recognize the Kurds as a separate state and this causes conflict both politically and economically for Turkey. The natural resources in their area of influence make it difficult for any one of the three countries to simply release territory to form a new Kurdish state. The Kurdish party and autonomous nature of its population in northern Iraq has strong military resources available, a diversified territorial stronghold, and the economic power to survive on its own. It spent the last fifty years under oppression from a dictator that felt threatened by their mere existence. For the first time in a long time, the Kurds have an opportunity for representation. If the country were to fall into turmoil again, the Kurds stand a good chance of coming out on top.

The Shiite majority in Iraq is another oppressed group within Iraq that now enjoys representation and freedoms like never before. The largest issue at hand with this group is whether the democratic ideals infused in current Iraqi politics can stand the test of time within an Islamic nation. The Shiites were pressed into the minority by the previous regime even though they were the majority in the nation and had the backing of its Shiite neighbor Iran. Saddam Hussein used force to suppress his opponents. The Shiites and Kurds alike were forced to succumb to his rule to survive. With Saddam removed from power and his Sunni stronghold defeated, the majority populace of the country is in a position to turn the tables and establish a Shiite based government. During the de-Ba'athification of Iraq, Shiites cleansed its nation of individuals who were influential enough to cause a re-emergence of a Sunni powerbase. If U.S. and Coalition forces were to withdraw from the country, the Shiites would undoubtedly shift

from a democratically representative government, with influence from Iran, and establish a predominantly Islamic theocratic government. Sunni survival within the country would diminish and most Sunni leaders would be forced to flee to countries like Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. This would likely lead to a proxy rebellion much like the one the Ayatollah Khomeini led from France during King Pahlavi's reign.

Much effort has been placed upon the tribes of western Iraq. Many are influential in the political process without actually participating. These tribal sheiks have had the foresight to look several years ahead and predict a future Iraq; one without U.S. or Coalition forces stabilizing the country. They may not necessarily agree with the U.S. presence, but they certainly do not want a country controlled or influenced by fanatical Islamic terrorist groups. Initially, the western tribes saw the Coalition forces as an invading force. Now they see how the insurgency has turned the country into a battleground for every radical jihadist looking for a place to participate in their religious duty of jihad. Western tribal leaders have decided to support the U.S. forces in eradicating the western half of the country of terrorist groups. They understand when the U.S. and Coalition forces withdraw; the country will need to cleanse itself of those opposed to the formation of a free Islamic state. They do not want to trade one dictator for another. Western tribal leaders will exert their influence upon the government once the U.S. forces have either withdrawn or reduced its influence upon the government enough to allow their own agenda to be served.

#### External influence/interference

Following a withdrawal of U.S. forces from the country of Iraq would open this country up to intense influence and interference from its neighboring countries, specifically, Iran. Iran is the most powerful Shiite dominated country in the region (Timmerman, 2006). It has a

Theocratic based government established after the fall of the Pahlavi monarchy.

The economic, strategic, and domestic benefits outweigh any differences the country may have had before, during, and after the eight-year war between the two. With the removal of Saddam Hussein and the Baath Party to stabilize the region (Hough, 2006), the Sunni stronghold over the country is lifted. The Shiite majorities were oppressed under the Sunni leadership and kept from high-ranking government positions. The current government enjoys a Shiite majority and has spent considerable resources restructuring the government to ensure a Sunni elite cannot exist in the future. A de-Ba'athification took place immediately following Saddam's removal. Many Shiites returned to power and immediately took steps to remove those responsible for the oppression under Saddam. Key positions were filled by Shiite populists and the entire military was dismantled and reorganized.

The current Prime Minister of Iraq encourages a relationship with his large Shiite neighbor and envisions trade and a long lasting partnership. Prior to the fall of Saddam Hussein, many Shiites traveled to Iran to escape the tyranny of a ruthless leader. These individuals established strong ties with the Iranian people and formed armed groups to combat the Baath party. These groups were armed, trained, and given instruction from time to time to attempt to remove Saddam from power. Saddam took steps to destroy opposition to his party and often resorted to military action. The eight-year war between Iran and Iraq took a devastating toll on the both countries. Iran spent considerable effort to restore basic economic infrastructure and domestic programs to return the country to normalcy (U.S. State Department, 2007). Iraq rebuilt its military, executed individuals it felt did not support the fight, and had the support of U.S. advisors and its economic backing. Some experts believe after the U.S. inadvertently shot down an Iranian airliner the Iranian government believed the U.S. was supporting the Iraqi government

and it could not win a war in which the U.S. was willing to attack the civilians. In fact, the airliner was on a track out of Bandar Abbas, a military naval air station, on a heading low and fast and failed to reply to U.S. Naval directions for it to identify itself and divert.

Iran has a significant gain in the removal of U.S. forces from Iraq. It would allow it to engage freely in internal affairs of the country to influence it towards Iranian theocratic goals. In the last three years, Iranians have purchased a significant amount of property in the southern half of Iraq. This has allowed them to place influential persons in local and regional government positions. This allows influence at these levels to ensure a tighter grip on the ideals of Shia Islam within Iraq.

Many terrorist organizations operating within Iraq are funded and trained by Iranian IRGC-Qods forces. This training takes place both in Iran and Iraq. Money is funneled through hawallas (money exchange businesses much like Western Union, except without all the paper trails) to groups fighting U.S. forces and government officials that support the presence of U.S. forces. This allows Iran to fight a war with the United States via proxy. They can fulfill the requirements of their constitutional ideals, present a strong Muslim appearance in the region, and take the world stage as a successful Islamic theocratic government for all Muslim nations to follow.

Prior to the invasion of Iraq by U.S. forces many influential and leading members of Saddam's ruling party and military commanders fled to Syria. The Syrian government has been uncooperative in retrieving or locating those individuals for U.S. forces. From Syria, they have managed to direct operations within Iraq, provide money and resources, and establish a safe haven for those in need of one. U.S. attempts to thwart these efforts have been largely unsuccessful due to the uncooperative Syrian government. If the U.S. were to leave the country,

those exiled in Syria would certainly return to Iraq in an attempt to subjugate the current government and return to the political process. This return would undermine the very ideals the country has fought to gain.

#### Loss of strategic foothold in the Middle East

The loss of Iraq as a strategic foothold in the heart of the Middle East would affect our ability to influence nations handling the vast oil reserves most of the industrialized nations depend upon for oil. This would also affect the U.S.'s ability to influence specific nations in the region in regards to our own foreign policies. Our ability to project combat power rapidly in the region depends upon strategic alliances with several nations including, Turkey, Jordan, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. The rhetoric espoused by militant Islamic clergy would amplify the fulfillment of the Prophet Muhammad's message of removing all non-Muslim influence from Muslim lands. This undoubtedly would strengthen the call to Jihad signifying a small battlefield defeat in the overall war against the infidel. This is shown in the Iranian constitution; which lays out the goals of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, "They have responsibility not only for the safeguarding of the frontiers, but also for a religious mission, which is Holy War (JIHAD) along the way of God, and the struggle to extend the supremacy of God's Law in the world" (Tschentscher, LL.M., 2004). In the Muslim nations around the world the fulfillment of Jihad in a single battle, whether it is a swift victory or long-term struggle, the effects would be the same. Through patience, struggle, and sacrifice the enemies of Islam can be defeated.

This would open the door for neighboring countries to vie for control or controlling influence over Iraq's vast oil reserves (Hopfe & Woodward, 2007). The country cannot protect nor manage its resources at the current U.S. troop levels supporting this endeavor. A withdraw would leave it open to external and internal corruption, violence, and abuse of power. Many Americans see the

region's oil as a catalyst in U.S. involvement in Iraq. A complete withdraw would signify an abandonment on the principles that have kept us in the region for the past twenty-five years. Iran stands to gain the most influence at this time. With its largely Shiite population and Theocratic government controlling the largest combat ready fighting force in the region capable of swift military action, the most pessimistic approach clearly shows viable intervention in the newly Shiite majority Iraqi economic and political affairs. Many Iraqi government officials currently in office spent significant time in Iran during Saddam Hussein's reign.

A complete withdraw of U.S. forces from Iraq would send the message Osama Bin Laden has been preaching around the world. In effect, we would be supporting the very thing he has fought since the eighties; the removal of Western nations from the Middle East. You may say we still have forces in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, etc. Sure, we do, but once we withdraw from Iraq after five years of struggling to gain control over basic concepts of society you empower every single fundamentalist to continue their cause and as long as you push forward with the patience of the prophet Muhammad Allah will reward you and grant your wish. This would create a domino effect in other Muslim nations wishing to avoid internal strife that has religious basis and a struggle involving a Sunna (the path of Muhammad) theme.

Our economy would definitely feel the impact as well, whether it was a perceived or actual truth. In recent weeks the United Nations, United States, and other world powers imposed additional economic sanctions upon the country of Iran. This resulted in an increase of \$15.00 dollars per barrel of crude oil on the world market. This price increase will be felt at the pump, in the cost of heating oil, and shipping costs around the world. With colder months coming in the United States, an increase in oil prices will significantly effect the public's perception of the war in Iraq. Higher prices in the U.S. and the increasing national debt to the war on terrorism will

force politicians to make decisions based on current polls and not the ground truth in Iraq.

## References

- Bentley & Ziegler, J.H., H.F. (2003). *Traditions and encounters: a global perspective on the past*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Hopfe & Woodward, L.M., M.R. (2007). *Religions of the world*, 10 ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Hough, P. (2006). *Understanding global security*. New York City, NY: Routledge.
- State Department, U.S. (2007, April). Iran - Places in the News (Library of Congress). Retrieved November 18, 2007, from Library of Congress Web site:  
[http://www.loc.gov/today/placesinthenews/archive/2007arch/20070403\\_iran.html](http://www.loc.gov/today/placesinthenews/archive/2007arch/20070403_iran.html)
- Timmerman, K. R. (2006). *Countdown to crisis: the coming nuclear showdown with iran*. New York City, NY: Three Rivers Press.
- Tschentscher, LL.M., Dr. A. (2004). Iran-Constitution. Retrieved November 18, 2007, from International Constitutional Law Web site: [http://www.servat.unibe.ch/law/icl/ir00t\\_.html](http://www.servat.unibe.ch/law/icl/ir00t_.html)