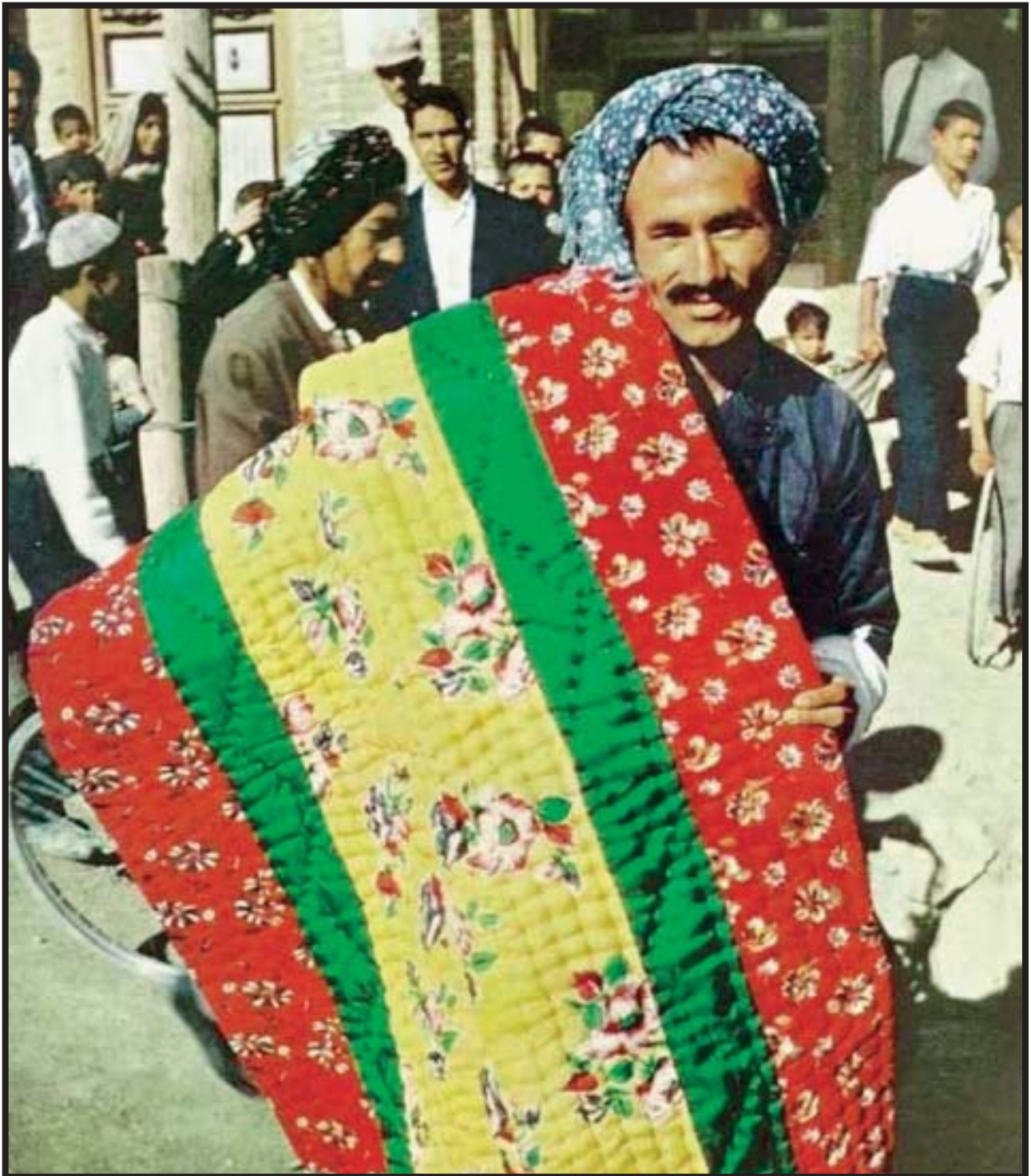


# Iraq and the West

*The politics of confrontation*



*Understanding* Global Issues

THE FACTS BEHIND THE NEWS

# Introduction

When Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, an intense struggle began between Iraq and the United States that continues to this day. The US President at the time, George Bush, denounced the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, as a second Hitler, and urged Iraq's military and people to rise up against him. Yet even though the US-led force had managed to drive Iraq's army out of Kuwait by February 1991, Saddam Hussein surprised the world by holding onto power.

Since then, the US has applied a policy of 'containment' to Iraq, officially on the grounds that it suspects Iraq of developing non-conventional weapons. Iraq made substantial use of chemical weapons in its war against Iran (1980-88), and United Nations efforts to destroy its chemical and biological weapons production facilities have had mixed results. Since 1991, the US has conducted repeated military raids against Iraq, and has declared that Iraqi planes will be shot down if they enter the 'no-fly zones' that cover about 60% of the country. It has upheld economic sanctions\*, which have been a major factor in bringing poverty and international isolation to a once prosperous and cosmopolitan people. President George W. Bush, following in his father's footsteps, has announced that Saddam Hussein must be forced from power, and has indicated that he is willing to use military means to achieve this objective.

Despite all these measures, the Iraqi leader's grip on power has rarely looked stronger. After years of systematic repression, there remain few people inside Iraq willing to challenge him openly. The Iraqi people are without the freedom to choose their own leaders through the ballot box, and have no legitimate channels to express their political opinions. In addition, the Iraqi regime has been able to point to

the suffering that US policy has undeniably caused in Iraq, as a consequence of on-going US bombing in the 'no-fly zones' and of economic sanctions, in order to rally its people around their leader in the face of external enemies.

The effects of US policy on Iraqi civilians since 1991 have also been a factor in dissolving the coalition that the US had built up for the Gulf War. Thirty-four different countries from all parts of the world had contributed military personnel and facilities to the defence of Kuwait. Many of those countries, including all Iraq's fellow Arab states, have now voiced opposition to the continuation of sanctions and the no-fly zones, and counsel strongly against further attacks on Iraq. The UK is the only country likely to commit a sizeable force to aid US efforts to oust the Iraqi regime. Despite widespread acknowledgement of the brutality of Iraq's leaders, a more substantial coalition has now gathered to oppose military action rather than to participate in it.

To understand how a relationship of confrontation has developed between Iraq and the West, and why democracy has not developed in the country, both the long and the short histories of Iraq need to be appreciated. The long history is that of one of the oldest urban civilisations, which developed many of the ideas and techniques that have since become central to modern life across the world. Many of the greatest historical empires have been based in Sumer, Babylon, Assyria, Akkadia and Baghdad, all within the borders of modern Iraq. The deep roots of Iraq's people, and their awareness of their own historical role, have been used to engender national pride and a sense of the illegitimacy of Western attempts to transform their communal life.

Iraq's short history – from the creation of the modern state under British rule after the First World War – has

Western involvement in a central position. With the second largest proven oil reserves in the world, Iraq has engaged the intense interest of Western policy-makers. The borders that Britain drew for the new nation placed ethnic minorities within Iraq, primarily the Kurds, who did not accept rule from Baghdad, and were accustomed to living as an autonomous community. Britain recruited the first rulers of the new nation from the minority of the population who were Arab by ethnicity and were from the Sunni sect of Islam. To maintain control over the diverse population, a majority of whom are from the Shi'a sect of Islam, an extensive military was built up using the revenues from oil sales. Rebellions against the central authorities have always been put down ruthlessly. Saddam Hussein took levels of cruelty to new extremes with his crushing of dissident populations in the late 1980s and in the aftermath of the Gulf War, but massacres of insurgent minorities have occurred since the creation of modern Iraq.

Britain, and later the USA, retained considerable control over Iraq until the popular nationalist revolution of 1958, and have tried either to displace or to win over Iraqi governments since that date. Throughout the 1980s, Iraq was thought of as a bulwark against the radical Islamic doctrine preached by the new Iranian government, and received large-scale support from the US, UK and USSR, and pro-Western states in the Middle East for its war against Iran. Whilst Saddam Hussein remains in power in Baghdad, it is clear that the West will not provide such support again. What is much less clear, however, is how a stable new government could be created in Iraq that does not come into confrontation with the West.

**\* See notes on page 16**



# Cradle of Civilisation

*Iraq has an immensely rich history: many of the essential features of civilisation – agriculture, walled cities and writing – first emerged in Mesopotamia.*

## The beginnings of empire

*Two major rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, flow through Iraq and irrigate its central plain. In ancient times the fertile region which lies along and between them was called Mesopotamia, “the land between the rivers”. Here archaeology has uncovered the evidence of seasonal crop growing, animal rearing and fortified settlements dating back to between 3500 and 3000 BC.*

Under Assyrian rule, the massive city walls and celebrated “hanging gardens” were created at Babylon, and the first organised library was constructed at Nineveh. The period from 612 BC to 538 BC, after Babylonian rule was re-established, saw many of the finest developments of the ancient world, from astronomy and mathematics to architecture and irrigation.

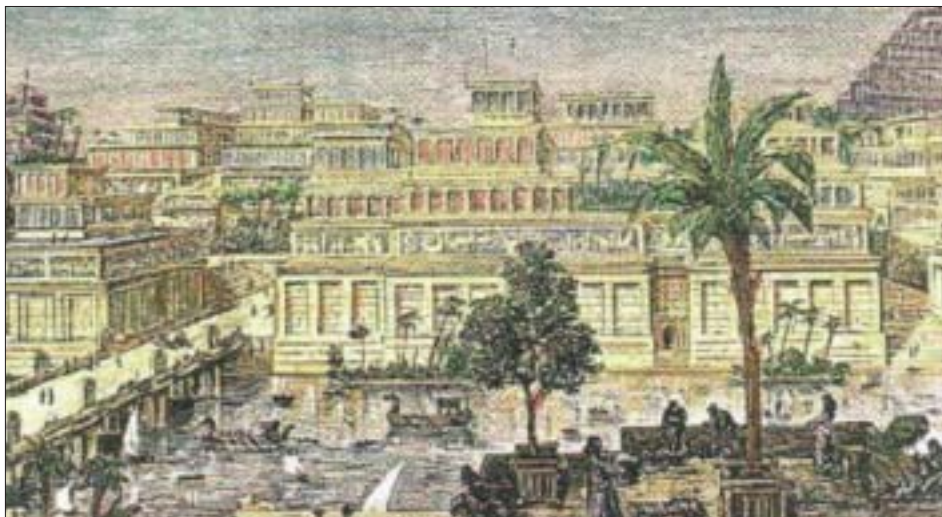
In Sumer, on the banks of the lower Euphrates, the first city-states were built some 5000 years ago. Eridu is thought to have been the oldest, but two other Sumerian cities have become more famous. Uruk is the site of the oldest writing ever found, and the home of the legendary king Gilgamesh. Ur was the original home of the great Biblical figure Abraham, whose journey to the Holy Land is the beginning of the historical narrative of Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

The Sumerians provided many of the religious, art and architectural forms found in two later empires. For more than 400 years from the 16th century BC, Mesopotamia was ruled by a dynasty based at Babylon, south of modern Baghdad. Then the rulers of Assyria, on the Tigris river in Upper Mesopotamia, came to dominate the region. Later Mesopotamia came under a succession of Persian and Macedonian rulers until the advent of Islam in the 7th century.

After the Prophet Muhammad’s death, the Muslim community was led by a series of caliphs: Umar ibn

al-Khattab, the second caliph, captured most of Mesopotamia by 638 AD, and the region became a major centre of the new Islamic empire. The early caliphs founded the cities of Basra and Kufa as garrison towns. When Ali, the Prophet’s son-in-law, became the fourth caliph, he made his capital at Kufa. Another branch of the Prophet’s family based in Iraq went on to establish the Abbasid empire, which at its height in the 9th century stretched from Libya deep into central Asia. A new city of Baghdad was created as its capital in 762 AD. Baghdad stood at the heart of a network of overland trade routes, and became not only an economic but also an intellectual centre of the Muslim world.

In 1258 Baghdad was sacked by the Mongols. Al-Musta’sim, the last caliph to be recognised throughout the Islamic world, was killed, together with an estimated 800,000 inhabitants. Following prolonged wars throughout the region, in 1534 Baghdad fell to Turkish Ottoman\* rule and into obscurity. It was far from the centre of political power, and was replaced on the trade routes to the East by the newly explored sea passages. In the early 20th century, as opposition to Ottoman rule spread throughout the Arab world, many prominent Iraqis joined in the ‘Arab revolt’. This was the product of an alliance with Britain, which had promised that the Arab lands would be liberated from the Ottoman Empire if its leaders supported the Allied cause in the First World War. The Arab participants in the revolt had not imagined that Britain had other plans for the region.



# The Making of Iraq

*Britain invaded Mesopotamia early in World War I in order to secure its route through the Middle East to India. Later, oil changed Middle East politics for ever.*

## British rule

*In 1920, the San Remo Conference of Allied Powers granted Britain a mandate\* over Iraq, on the understanding that independence would be given in time. Despite Iraq's independence in 1932, Britain, and later the US, retained considerable control until the revolution of 1958.*

Emir Faisal, later King Faisal I, at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. To his right is Colonel T. E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia. Faisal's father, Sharif Hussein, was the leading figure in the Arab revolt from 1916. Faisal took control of Syria after World War I, but was ousted by the French in 1920. With strong protests throughout the region and fears for regional stability, Britain installed Faisal as king of Iraq, and his brother Abdullah as emir of Transjordan, in 1921. Faisal died in 1933, and was succeeded by his son Ghazi (d.1939), followed by his grandson, Faisal II, (executed in a coup, 1958).



Courtesy of IraqCD.com

Before World War I, ancient Mesopotamia was divided into the provinces of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul. Though part of the Ottoman Empire, in practice they were governed by local tribal leaders and semi-independent dynasties. In November 1914, British forces landed at Basra on the Persian Gulf coast to forestall a potential threat to British commercial and strategic routes to India from the Ottoman Empire (which was now allied with Germany). As the Ottoman Empire collapsed and eventually surrendered, British troops came to occupy the three provinces and by 1918 had consolidated them into a single country, Iraq.

Britain's pledge to grant independence to Iraq was widely distrusted by many Iraqis. Within two months of the declaration of the mandate, an armed revolt broke out. Hoping to pacify the rebels, Britain installed Faisal ibn Hussein as king. Faisal was a member of the Hashemite family, the historic guardians of the Islamic shrines at Mecca and Medina, and descendants from the Prophet Muhammad. Faisal turned to strongman Nuri al-Said to implement unpopular British policies. Nuri served as prime minister of Iraq several times between 1929 and 1958. Under his guidance a treaty was signed in 1930 granting formal independence, which was officially declared on 3 October 1932. However, the treaty also allowed Britain to keep substantial holdings and airforce bases in Iraq, and to retain an 'advisory' role to the Iraqi government.

Many people in Iraq considered that the 1930 treaty had replaced the

mandate in form only, and that the rights it accorded to Britain were humiliating for their country. In particular, an influential group of leading military officers – referred to at the time as 'The Seven' – set themselves up as an alternative centre of power in Iraq, independent of British patronage. From 1936, they began to take a significant role in Iraqi politics, and took part in a series of coups, the first of their kind in the Middle East. At first, these coups did not directly threaten the monarchy, but installed nationalist and socialist governments to direct social reforms. However, when representatives of the government led by Rashid Ali al-Gailani began to hold meetings with Italian and German officials in 1940, Britain took decisive measures. The king forced Rashid Ali from power and, when the military intervened to restore the nationalist government in 1941, Britain launched a large-scale invasion. 'The Seven' were captured and executed, and Nuri al-Said was re-installed as Prime Minister.

Over the following years, the Iraqi government remained firmly pro-Western, suppressing all dissent. It became deeply unpopular in an era of Arab nationalism, whose champion was Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. 'The Seven' came to be seen as martyrs and role models for subsequent generations. In 1955, Iraq joined with Turkey and the UK in the Baghdad Pact, a military cooperation arrangement which tied these countries to United States policy in the region. Despite this, Iraq tacitly supported the invasion of Egypt by British, French and Israeli forces in 1956.



## The republican revolution

*Arab nationalism, a movement that believed that the different Arab states should unify, was at its height in 1958. In a sudden move, Egypt and Syria merged into a single state, the United Arab Republic. Five months later, there were simultaneous nationalist insurrections in Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan, but only the Iraqi coup attempt succeeded immediately.*

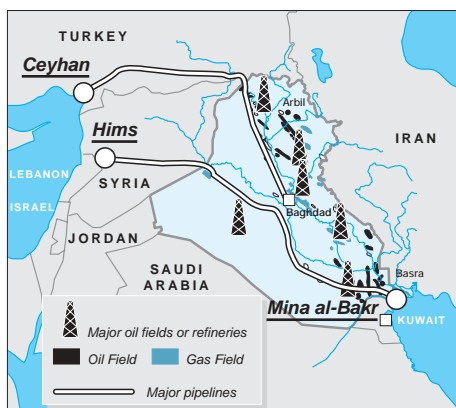
On 14 July 1958, al-Zuhoor royal palace was stormed by troops loyal to Brigadier Abdel Karim Qassem. The 23-year old king and the crown prince were murdered, together with two of their senior ministers. Qassem declared Iraq a republic and took the post of prime minister. At first, there was extensive support for Qassem, particularly among Arab nationalists, communists and many of Iraq's ethnic minorities. Qassem withdrew Iraq from the Baghdad Pact, and was the first leader to support the establishment of an army to liberate Palestine.

However, Qassem's main priority was Iraq's social and economic development, not its international role. He did protest strongly when Kuwait, a British protectorate since 1899, declared its independence in 1961: Qassem threatened military action "to return Kuwait to the Iraqi homeland", even though there is no history of Iraqi rule over Kuwait. In general, though, he opposed moves for the unification of the Arab states. As a result, he came into conflict with supporters of Nasser and members of the Ba'ath party, who launched armed rebellions and coup attempts against him.

Qassem was overthrown in 1963 in a military coup and executed by firing squad. The regime that took

over at first included leaders of the Ba'ath party, providing them with experience of government, but later excluded them and engaged in widespread persecution. Among those working in secret to develop the Ba'ath organisation was Saddam Hussein, who in 1966 was promoted onto the party's 'regional command', its executive body in Iraq. There, he formed an alliance with Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr, who had been involved in planning the 1963 coup and who had served as prime minister in its immediate aftermath.

On 17 July 1968, an alliance of military groups took control of Baghdad. Bakr, leading one of the army units, installed himself as President, and excluded all other groups except the Ba'ath from participation in the 15-member ruling Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). By the end of the year, Saddam Hussein was vice-president of the RCC, and in charge of internal security. From this position, he strengthened the police force and ensured that they maintained public loyalty towards the new government. He also took on a primary role in organising the Ba'ath party. By the mid-1970s, he was in effective control of Iraq, and finally forced Bakr's resignation in July 1979.



## Oil

Iraq has the second largest proven oil reserves in the world. When British prospectors struck oil in the Kirkuk region in 1927, it was the largest find yet made. Other major oil fields have been developed at Jambur and Bay Hasan in northern Iraq and Basra in the south. By 1975, all foreign-owned oil companies had been nationalised. When Saddam Hussein became president, Iraq was the world's second largest oil exporter. However, whilst oil has provided Iraq's main

income – up to 95% of its export revenue was derived from oil in the 1980s – it has also left the regime in a position of vulnerability. Some 60% of Iraq's oil exports come from regions that are inhabited largely by Iraq's Kurdish population, who since 1919 have been engaged in persistent attempts to secure self-rule. The negotiations for Kurdish autonomy from the central government broke down in 1974 due to disputes over the status of the oil-rich areas.

Iraq's means of exporting oil have never been secure. The pipelines built in the 1930s, to Haifa (now in Israel) and to Tripoli in Lebanon, were both severed in the 1950s, in the latter case due to Iraq's support for the invasion of Egypt in 1956. In the Iran-Iraq war, oil facilities were attacked by both sides, and Iraq's major pipeline to its offshore terminal at Mina al-Bakr was destroyed. With the imposition of economic sanctions in 1990, all exports of oil were

prohibited (except for a semi-legal barter arrangement with Jordan), leaving Iraq in a perilous financial situation, particularly until limited oil exports were permitted once again in 1996. At present, the major routes for export are the pipelines from Kirkuk to the Turkish port of Dörtyol at Ceyhan and through the rebuilt Mina al-Bakr terminal. There is extensive oil smuggling by trucks overland to Jordan, Turkey and Syria, through the pipeline to Syria and by barges and small tankers in the Gulf.

# A Disunited Nation

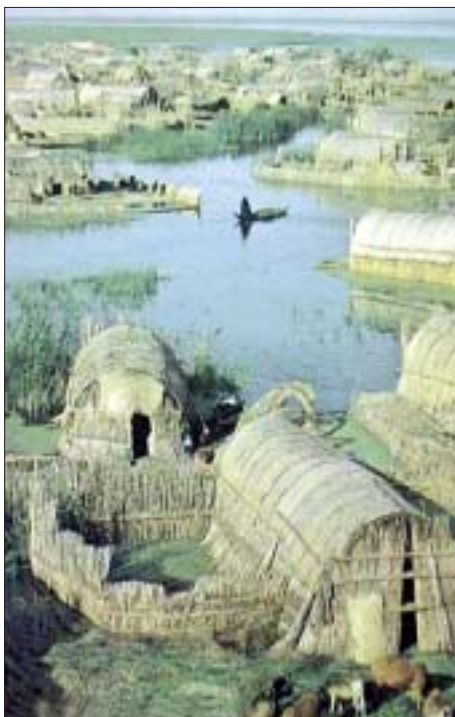
*The frontiers of Iraq were decided by the victors of World War I with little regard for geographic or ethnic realities, causing problems which persist to this day.*

## Shi'a and Sunni

*Since 1918, a consistent thread through Iraq's politics has been the attempts by groups that had previously been autonomous, but now were contained within the boundaries set by the colonial power, to grapple with the institutions of the new state. As the revenue available to those institutions increased with the influx of oil wealth, the problem of fitting the model of a single state to disparate groups, each with its own identity and interests, was exacerbated.*

## The Marsh Arabs

The Ma'dan are descended from the ancient Sumerian people, and live in the marshland areas of southern Iraq (hence they are often called 'Marsh Arabs'). They are nomadic, following buffalo herds and relying on canoes for transport. They also work as cultivators and reed collectors.



Courtesy of IraqCD.com

About 80% of the population of Iraq is Arab, and of these 75% are Shi'a Muslims (Shi'ites). They form the overwhelming majority of the population in southern Iraq, but live throughout the country. The Shi'a community has evolved its own distinct traditions and institutions. The Shi'a mujtahids (jurists), in particular, remained independent of the state, and an alternative source of authority. Under the Ottoman empire, they created their own system of law, which the Ottomans did not recognise. One result was that the Ottoman administration in Baghdad and Basra was recruited largely from Sunni Arabs, often brought in from outside the region. These were the people used by Britain to prepare the foundations for an independent Iraq. They dominated both the civil service and the military, diminishing the authority of the Shi'a mujtahids. The Sunni minority, while less than 20% of the population, has managed to retain its powerful position to the present day, although the Ba'ath government since 1968 has sought to downplay religious differences.

In general, Shi'ites have remained loyal to the Iraqi state. They did not respond to the call from their co-religionists who form the majority in Iran to rebel during the 1980-88 war. However, there have been persistent conflicts with the government. Many high-ranking Shi'a clergymen have been killed by the Iraqi government, particularly since 1968. There have been mass expulsions of Shi'a populations to Iran beginning in the mid-1970s, and severe restrictions have been placed on the conduct of Shi'a religious events. In response, Shi'a opposition groups have formed,

including the Islamic Da'wa who, in 1977, had a leading role in mass demonstrations against Ba'athist rule. In 1980, its members tried to assassinate the deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz. After the Gulf War, Shi'ites rose up against the Iraqi government: they were brutally crushed, but the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), a Shi'a group supported by Iran, remains the largest armed opposition group in Iraq today.

Christians are the largest religious minority in Iraq. They are mostly descended from those who did not convert to Islam after the 7th century, and are subdivided between Chaldeans (linked to Catholicism), Nestorians (also called Assyrians), Jacobites and Eastern Orthodox. They are allowed to practise their religion freely: Tariq Aziz, still deputy prime minister, is himself a Chaldean Christian. There are also some 100,000 Yazidis, based around Mosul, who incorporate peacock-worship into a highly heterodox religion.

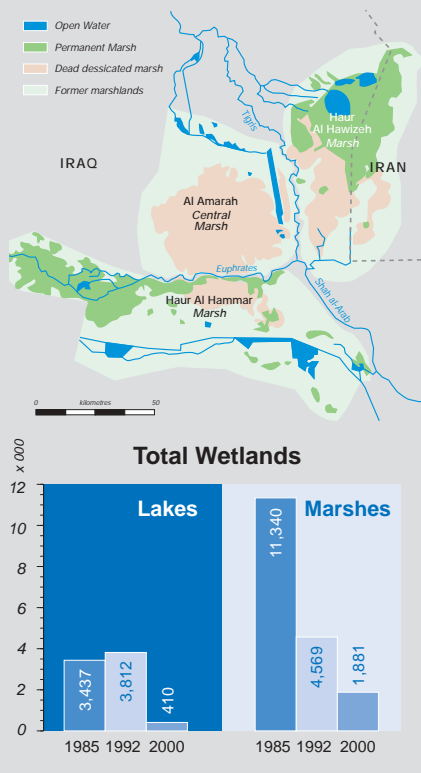
Iraq's Jews trace their history back to the Babylonian exile of 586 BC. In 1940, they numbered 150,000, about 2% of Iraq's population. But the British invasion force of 1941 included a prominent non-Iraqi Jewish regiment, and many Iraqis suspected Jews of being disloyal to the nationalist cause. The Jewish population of Baghdad was subjected to a pogrom in which at least 129 were killed and hundreds more injured. After further persecution, in 1951-52, when travel restrictions were eased, 120,000 Jews emigrated to Israel and 30,000 more to the US and Europe. Barely 100 remain in Baghdad today.

## The Kurds

*The Kurdish community is split between Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq. They number 20 million worldwide. In Iraq, they comprise approximately 15% of the total population, and live largely in the northern highlands of the country. Kurds have their own distinctive culture, speak a language related to Farsi (Persian), and have a strong clan structure to their society. They are mostly Sunni Muslims.*

### Draining the marshes

The Marsh Arabs are Shi'ites and have largely aligned themselves with opposition movements. Since the 1980s the government of Iraq has begun an extensive project to drain the marshes, supposedly for agricultural purposes, but with the effect of destroying the Ma'dan communities. As a result, over a fifth of the Ma'dan now live in refugee camps in Iran and many more are displaced within Iraq.



Under the Ottoman empire the Kurds had enjoyed a considerable degree of independence, and they resisted strongly their incorporation into the new state of Iraq. Sheikh Mahmud Berzendi, the Kurdish leader of Sulaymaniyya, proclaimed an independent Kurdistan in 1919, and began an insurrection against the British. The Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 formally dissolved the Ottoman empire and proposed the creation of an autonomous Kurdish region, but, after Turkish complaints, the prospect for autonomy was abandoned in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. More unrest was caused in 1925 when, against the acknowledged preference of its inhabitants, the League of Nations decreed that the Kurdish-dominated Mosul region should be part of Iraq, not Turkey, to keep the oil resources in territories mandated to the British.

A much larger Kurdish revolt, led by the powerful Barzani clan, was launched for independence in 1931. It was crushed four years later, but Mustafa Barzani later established the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP, renamed the Kurdistan Democratic Party) in exile. After intermittent negotiations from 1958, punctuated by fierce fighting, an agreement on Kurdish autonomy was eventually reached in 1970. However, the agreement did not define the borders of the Kurdish region, and it was on this point that negotiations eventually broke down. The Iraqi government was determined to ensure that oil-rich areas remained within its control, and established a Kurdistan Autonomous Region in 1974 over only half the territory claimed by the Kurds. Kurdish villages along the border with Iran were forcibly cleared and Arab Iraqis were settled in the northern oil towns in order to dilute their Kurdish population.

The ensuing Kurdish rebellion collapsed in 1975 when Iran abruptly ended its support for the KDP after Iraq conceded a boundary dispute between the two countries.

Jalal Talibani led a faction out of the KDP, which became the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). In the Iran-Iraq war, the Iranians equipped and trained the Kurdish guerrillas to fight on their behalf. In reprisal, the Iraqi government began a massive campaign to destroy the Kurdish infrastructure. The repression peaked in the 1988 Anfal campaign, in which government troops destroyed over 1,200 villages and killed somewhere between 50,000 and 186,000 Kurds; 300,000 Kurds were also deported during the war. Many human rights organisations consider these actions constituted genocide. The most notorious episode was the bombardment of the town of Halabja with a range of chemical weapons in March 1988, killing 5000 people, and causing severe and long-term health difficulties for the survivors and their descendants.

In 1991, when it became clear that Iraq was losing the Gulf War, many Kurds seized the opportunity to attempt the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's government. The rebellion failed, and over 1.5 million Kurds fled in fear, crossing into either Iran or Turkey in order to escape the military bombardment. In response to international concern, a ceasefire agreement was worked out under which Iraqi troops would leave the areas decreed as autonomous in 1974, and the United Nations would administer a humanitarian programme there. In a separate move some months later, the United States, France and United Kingdom declared a 'no-fly zone' for Iraqi aircraft in the north of the country, in a move they claimed would protect the Kurdish population.

Free but inconclusive elections were held in the Kurdish region in May 1992, but internecine fighting broke out in 1994. In 1996, the two main Kurdish groups agreed a ceasefire and set up a joint executive authority. Separate administrations were established for the reconstruction and development of the area.



# Saddam Hussein

*Since he became President in 1979, Saddam has revived old regional quarrels as a pretext for launching costly wars on two neighbouring states.*

## Stirring up trouble

*Iran and Iraq have been rivals in their competition to control the Gulf ever since they became independent nations. The Iranian revolution of 1979 was led by Shi'a clerics, and brought to power an Islamic regime deeply critical of the secular Iraqi government. Each country tried to foment rebellion within the other. Finally, Saddam Hussein revived a boundary dispute\* as a pretext for a full-scale invasion of Iran.*

Saddam Hussein records his date of birth in April 1937, but this is disputed. He is a Sunni Muslim from Tikrit. With his father dying when he was young, he was raised by an uncle. He joined the Ba'ath party in 1957, and was part of a team that launched a failed assassination attempt on Qassem in 1959. He managed to escape, and returned in 1963 to engage in clandestine party organisation until the 1968 coup which brought the Ba'ath, and himself, to power.



Courtesy of IraqCD.com

Iraq invaded Iran on 22 September 1980. Internal conflict had persisted in Iran after the revolution, and many people believed that the Iraqi forces would rapidly unseat the new Islamic regime. Instead, this was the start of the longest international war of the 20th century. When Iran started to counter-attack, after 1983, Iraq used chemical weapons on Iranian troops and civilians and launched indiscriminate rocket attacks on Iranian cities. It offered a ceasefire, but Iran made its acceptance conditional on Iraq's payment of reparations for the damage caused, and Iraq refused this. By 1988, the two sides had fought

themselves back to their original borders, and a ceasefire was finally agreed. Estimates of the death toll vary from one to two million.

During the war, Iraq received financial support from all Arab Gulf States, and a combination of military, political and financial support from Russia, France, the United Kingdom and the United States. Although it was spending up to 57% of its GDP on its military campaign, the loans Iraq was receiving, together with its high oil revenues, enabled it to sustain an extensive level of social spending that brought an impressive health

## The Ba'ath party

In 1943, Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar, two schoolteachers in French-ruled Syria, turned a cultural grouping named al-Ba'th al-Arabi (the Arab Renaissance) into a political party. Holding their first conference in 1947, they adopted a constitution that proclaimed their aim: to "struggle to gather all the Arabs in a single independent state". The Ba'ath are highly critical of communism and Western imperialism, instead portraying the development of the Arab world as dependent on the reinvigoration of Arab culture and Arab unity. After merging with a Syrian socialist party in 1952, they took on their current party name – the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party – and began to promote the nationalisation of resources and equalisation of wealth. Aflaq's many books on these themes have been influential throughout the Arab world since the 1950s.

The Ba'ath party has always had a highly centralised structure, with all major decisions taken by the 'regional command', a small group of leaders, in each country. Bitar led his followers into Syrian governments from 1955, and they have been dominant there since 1963. The Ba'ath party spread to Iraq in 1951, and took part in the 1958 and 1963 revolutions, but was quickly removed from the government on both occasions. They have held onto power since the 1968 coup. The ruling Ba'ath parties in Syria and Iraq have been intensely hostile to one another, with Syria even supporting Iran in the 1980-88 war. The Ba'ath party has been in decline elsewhere since the 1967 war against Israel.

Ba'athism is a non-religious movement, but does draw some of its ideas and language from Islam. Aflaq, himself a Christian, wrote of how Islam was the highest expression of Arab culture. These aspects have been drawn upon by Saddam Hussein since the 1980s, as he has largely abandoned the socialist elements of Ba'athism (for example, by selling off or leasing out the state farms that were created from 1968), and invoked Islamic history and symbols to legitimise his rule. In January 1991, on the eve of the Gulf War, Saddam altered the Iraqi flag to include the inscription, "God is great". From 1991, social conduct has been heavily regulated to be in accordance with recognised Islamic practices. This has particular consequences for Iraqi women, who had been encouraged to take up employment in the 1980s, but who are now facing new restrictions in their public lives.



### The invasion of Kuwait

Kuwait became independent in 1961. It had been a British protectorate since 1899. Britain had been responsible for its external affairs, including its relations with Iraq, and it kept up close links with the new state. Kuwait's relations with a Western power, coupled with its strategic stranglehold over Iraq's access to the Gulf, and over the shared Rumailah oilfield, had made it a thorn in the side of Iraqi governments long before Saddam Hussein. Using the spurious claim that Kuwait had once been part of Mesopotamia, on 2 August 1990 Iraqi forces marched in, and six days later Saddam announced the merger of the two countries.

Around 1,000 civilians were killed during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The number of Iraqi deaths in the Desert Storm operation is unclear. The most infamous incident was the bombing of the Amiriyya air raid shelter in Baghdad, which killed at least 300 civilians inside. Estimates of total Iraqi civilian fatalities range from 2,200 to 15,000. Estimates of Iraqi military deaths range even more, from 10,000 to 100,000. In one widely reported episode a retreating convoy of 1000 Iraqi vehicles was bombarded on the road to Basra, killing almost all their occupants.

The coalition targeted Iraqi electricity supplies, bridges and roads. These air strikes caused knock-on deaths as people were unable to access or operate medical facilities. The coalition also used missiles tipped with depleted uranium (DU). Since the war, many scientists have claimed that DU has long-term toxic effects and can be carcinogenic. The high incidence of leukaemia and birth defects in southern Iraq since 1991 may be a result of the use of DU. However, not all scientists accept that DU has harmful consequences, and the US and UK armed forces continue to use it in warfare.

Iraq dumped large amounts of Kuwaiti oil into the Gulf, creating an oil slick covering 240 square miles. It also set on fire oil fields, wells and storage facilities as its forces retreated from Kuwait. A total of 240 personnel from the coalition armed forces were killed during Operation Desert Storm, a third of whom died when hit by their own side's fire.

and educational system to the Iraqi people.

The Iraqi government came out of the war with Iran claiming victory. It had the fourth or fifth largest army in the world, and was the predominant military force in the Arab world. It believed it had fought this ruinously expensive war on behalf of all Arabs. But from early 1990, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates – perhaps fearful of Iraq's continued power – stepped up their oil production, thus depressing the oil price, and lowering Iraq's vital revenues. Kuwait also requested Iraq to repay loans it had provided during the war. Iraq alleged that Kuwait was pumping oil out from the large Rumailah field that straddled their mutual frontier.

Few people foresaw that the Iraqi government would try to resolve its predicament by invading Kuwait. Just before the invasion, Saddam Hussein had been encouraged by a comment by the US ambassador in Baghdad that: "We have no opinion on your Arab - Arab conflicts, such as your dispute with Kuwait. Secretary Baker has directed me to emphasize the instruction, first given to Iraq in the 1960s, that the Kuwait issue is not associated with America." The Iraqi government, too, seems not to have predicted the international outrage that the invasion would cause. The Security Council promptly condemned the invasion and called for Iraq's immediate withdrawal. On 6 August, it imposed comprehensive economic sanctions. Claiming that there was an imminent danger from Iraq to Saudi Arabia, the United States began to assemble a military force to surround Iraq. This was 'Operation Desert Shield'. An international coalition was created, with troops from other Arab and Muslim states, as well as European countries.

In negotiations, Iraq made various offers to withdraw from Kuwait, but tied these offers to demands for sole control of the Rumailah oil field and

cancellation of its international debt. It also tried to link occupation of Kuwait to the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Although these diplomatic efforts won Saddam Hussein some public support in the Arab world, the United Nations deemed them insufficient. On 29 November, the Security Council authorised the use of force to oust the Iraqi army from Kuwait. The air campaign – 'Operation Desert Storm' – began on 17 January 1991. Saddam Hussein had promised the "mother of all battles", but his forces suffered heavy losses from the start. Iraq fired missiles at Israel and at US military bases in Saudi Arabia.

When the ground offensive began on 24 February, Iraq ordered its forces to withdraw, and Kuwait was fully retaken within 100 hours. The war ended with a ceasefire agreement. Iraq agreed to pay reparations, eliminate its non-conventional weapons and accept a border with Kuwait to be demarcated by the UN.

With the Iraqi army in disarray, and 15% of Iraq under coalition control, the coalition could have moved its troops to Baghdad and overthrown the Ba'athist government. However, a tactical – and controversial – decision was taken to not press the war into Iraq. President Bush urged the Iraqi military and people to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Widespread revolts broke out, and the Iraqi government was left with control over only three of its 18 governorates. However, the revolt collapsed as Iraq's forces regrouped, and it became clear that the coalition forces were not to going to help.

The US did keep troops in northern Iraq, and, together with the European Union, declared the region a 'safe haven' to protect the Kurdish population. The US, UK and France established 'no-fly zones' in the north of Iraq, and later in the south. But the Ba'athist government survived the war, and Saddam Hussein remained in power.

# Defying the West

*Since 1991, the US has portrayed Iraq as a threat to global security, and has sought variously to disarm it, to 'contain' it, and to overthrow its government.*

## Weapons of mass destruction

*In the ceasefire arrangement with the UN in April 1991, Iraq agreed to destroy all its nuclear, chemical and biological stocks, and missiles with a range longer than 150 km. It also agreed to allow a new body, the United Nations Special Commission (Unscm), to oversee the destruction of these weapons, and to monitor its facilities to check they were not being re-developed.*

Saddam Hussein has defied all expectations by managing to stay in power since 1991, despite a number of attempted coups, and the defection of some of his top officials. Successive US administrations have labelled Iraq a "rogue state", and, backed by the UK, have spoken of the need for Saddam to be overthrown before Iraq can be reintegrated into the community of nations. This approach was endorsed by the US Congress in 1998 when it approved the 'Iraq Liberation Act', which provided \$97 million in military assistance and facilities to Iraqi opposition groups.

The headline controversy between Iraq and the West has been over Iraq's non-conventional weapons. Iraq agreed that inspectors from Unscm and the IAEA (the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is responsible for disarming Iraq's nuclear capabilities) would

have unfettered access to all its sites and facilities in order to check that Iraq was destroying these weapons. Their inspectors set about making unannounced visits to buildings and installations throughout Iraq, asking to see documents and checking the contents of military facilities. In 1993, Iraq agreed to the long-term monitoring of its facilities, and video cameras, and chemical and temperature sensors were installed at 250 sensitive sites.

Yet from only their second visit, the inspectors faced obstructions from Iraqi officials. They were either delayed before being given access to premises (allowing relevant items to be removed), or they were prevented from taking documents away for analysis. Even so, the inspectors reported that they had received compliance in the majority of their inspections and were able to complete a number of their tasks successfully. However, relations between Iraq and Unscm deteriorated from 1996 when it became clear that a number of Unscm's staff were passing information onto the US government, and that this information was being used in plans to topple Saddam Hussein from power.

In December 1998 the Unscm inspectors were withdrawn from Iraq, on the advice of the US, so that the US and UK could start bombing. They have not been allowed to return since. In the meantime the US and UK allege that Iraq has been rebuilding its non-conventional weapons, though they have not so far provided any evidence for this. Unscm has been disbanded and replaced with the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commis-

UN inspectors examining weapons destroyed by Iraq.





## Iraqi casualties

*The US and UK have launched substantial attacks on Iraq a number of times since 1991, and civilian casualties have resulted from many of these. There have also been frequent attacks within the 'no-fly zones'. The Iraqi government claims that in the two years after December 1998, 323 civilians were killed and 960 injured in these attacks, but these figures cannot be independently confirmed.*

### Weapons of mass destruction - what Iraq is obliged to destroy

**Nuclear:** Iraq tried and failed to develop a nuclear bomb before 1990. The IAEA recorded in 1998 that there was no indication that Iraq had attempted to re-start a nuclear weapons programme.

**Chemical weapons:** Iraq destroyed large quantities of nerve gas, mustard gas and sarin under international supervision, but Unscm recorded that it was unable to account for large quantities of chemical agents that Iraq is known to have produced. Some inspectors believe that Iraq used these weapons against Iran before 1988, and has destroyed records of this use.

**Biological weapons:** Iraq denied producing biological weapons until Hussein Kamil, Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, defected in 1995. Kamil explained how he had commanded an extensive biological programme, but he was subsequently killed when he returned to Iraq. One major production facility was destroyed by Unscm in 1996, but the further extent of the programme remains unknown.

**Missiles:** Unscm inspectors oversaw the destruction of 817 out of Iraq's known 819 long and medium range missiles. The US has claimed that since 1998 Iraq has converted some of its short range missiles to give them a longer range.

Unscm and IAEA inspections yielded inconclusive results in some respects, owing to Iraq's obstruction of the inspectors. However inspectors did manage to destroy a substantial number of weapons, and to produce an overall picture of the state of Iraq's weapons programmes.

sion (Unmovic), which has a similar brief, but is intended to be more rigorously independent of the member states. However, Unmovic inspectors have not yet been allowed into Iraq. Furthermore, it is unclear if it has the political support of the Bush administration, which has disputed its likely effectiveness. US officials have pointed out that its leader, Hans Blix, was head of the IAEA in the 1980s, while Iraq was building its nuclear capability under its inspectors' noses.

The dispute over weapons inspections has been one part of a wider conflict between Iraq and the US-led coalition. In 1991, Iraq accepted a number of other obligations, and the US has claimed that it has violated many of them. It agreed to respect Kuwait's sovereignty, to accept a boundary demarcated by a UN team between itself and Kuwait, and not to move any weapons within ten miles of the border. Although it formally recognised Kuwait's independence in 1994, Iraqi leaders still occasionally make statements that cast doubt on their commitment to refrain from any future military action against Iraq's neighbours.

Iraq agreed to repatriate Kuwaitis taken to Iraq at the end of the Gulf War. However, it claims that it has no record of the whereabouts of 605 individuals, who are presumed to have died during the chaotic retreat from Kuwait. This issue continues to have a strong resonance in Kuwait, which alleges that Iraq is still holding them as potential 'human shields' to use if Iraq is subjected to another major attack.

Iraq agreed to cease its support for terrorism. However, the US alleged that there was an assassination attempt on former US President George H. Bush when he visited Kuwait in April 1993, and that Iraq was behind this attempt, and fired 23 missiles at Baghdad. Iraq's involvement in this episode is still disputed.

The most persistent confrontation has arisen not from the obligations of the ceasefire agreement, but from the measures that are supposed to prevent Iraq from violating the human rights of its citizens. The Iraqi government routinely resorts to the murder of its political opponents, and the persecution of their relatives. A large number of crimes are punished by execution or bodily mutilation, and torture and intimidation are widely practised by the police. There is no independent judiciary, and basic freedoms – such as freedom of speech or association – are not respected. The Shi'a clergy and the Kurdish and Turkoman minorities face regular persecution. In 1993, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights said that the scale of human rights violations in Iraq was "so grave that it has few parallels in the years that have passed since the Second World War".

In response to the repression of the Kurdish population at the end of the Gulf War, in June 1991 the US, UK and France declared a 'no-fly zone' (NFZ) for Iraqi aircraft in Northern Iraq, designed to prevent aerial bombardment of the Kurds. A southern NFZ was added in August 1992, and extended as far north as the southern suburbs of Baghdad in September 1996.

France has since rejected the policy, but US and UK planes continue to patrol the NFZs, and have attacked ground targets. The US and UK insist that the targets are military installations, but it is clear that civilians have often died in the bombing raids. The NFZs were not authorised by the UN, and Iraq claims they are an act of aggression against it. It is also unclear how the NFZs can serve to prevent human rights violations on the ground. They do not cover much of the autonomous Kurdish region. At best, they are an expression of the US and UK commitment to the protection of the Kurds.

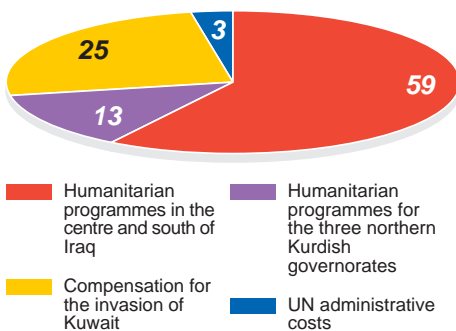
# Economic Sanctions

*Four days after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, the UN Security Council imposed comprehensive and draconian economic sanctions on Iraq.*

## Conflict over sanctions

*The US and UK remain strongly in favour of retaining sanctions\* on Iraq. Many other countries, particularly Russia, and many international aid organisations, have long criticised them for their humanitarian impact. A survey by Unicef in 1999 showed that sanctions have contributed to the deaths of 500,000 children under the age of five. Iraq's neighbours, including Kuwait, have formally supported the lifting of sanctions, and many tolerate the smuggling of oil from Iraq, thought to be worth up to \$2 billion a year.*

### How the Oil-for-Food revenues are spent (%)



### The UN Security Council in session\*



Courtesy of UN/DPI Photo

From August 1990 Iraq was preventing from importing any goods except medical supplies. It was not allowed to export anything or to conduct any international business. A Sanctions Committee, made up of representatives of Security Council member countries, was formed to oversee implementation.

After the Gulf War the sanctions regime was restructured. Sanctions on Iraqi exports were now tied to its compliance in destroying its stock of weapons of mass destruction under international supervision. All Iraqi import contracts were submitted to the Sanctions Committee, which would determine if the goods were essential for civilian needs. Any member of the Committee could put a "hold" on a contract. In practice, the US blocked a wide range of contracts, in sectors such as health, electricity, water, sewage, communications and transportation, on the grounds that such supplies could have military applications.

Critics argue that the denial of such items, and the lack of revenue from exports, have been major factors in the severe decline in the humanitarian situation in Iraq. A UN mission reported that sanctions had left the Iraqi people on the "brink of calamity", and recommended that Iraq be allowed to raise \$2.6 billion through oil sales for an initial four months to pay for basic humanitarian supplies. The Security Council proposed instead that Iraq be allowed only \$930 million over six months, and that purchases be supervised by UN officials inside the country. The Iraqi government rejected these limitations until 1996, when both sides accepted a compromise package. This was the 'oil-for-

food' scheme: Iraq was permitted to sell \$1 billion of oil every 90 days, of which 66% would be used to pay for humanitarian imports. The rest would be used to pay compensation to the victims of the invasion of Kuwait, and for UN costs in Iraq.

This scheme has been expanded over time, to raise, and then to remove, the cap on oil exports, and increase the percentage spent on humanitarian supplies. The import process has also been eased. Firstly, in 2000, a 'green list' was approved of goods that could be imported without reference to the Sanctions Committee; then, in May 2002, a new regime of 'smart sanctions' required only goods on a 'dual use' list to be approved by the Sanctions Committee. Other civilian goods are handled by national governments and UN technical staff. Weapons remain prohibited.

Iraq's economy has improved since the lifting of the oil cap in 1999, and the new sanctions regime may help this recovery but problems remain. Foreign investment, vital for the reconstruction of Iraq's infrastructure, remains prohibited. Oil is still the only permitted export, but without essential investment Iraq's beleaguered industry operates far below its potential. As a result, it earned less revenue in six years of oil-for-food than it did in 1980 alone. And 25% of these revenues still go in compensation; the rest can only be used to pay for imports of humanitarian goods. Some argue that allowing Iraq to import cash as well as goods would ease wage payments to the public sector (doctors, teachers, etc.), improving the humanitarian situation. This is probably untrue, as the Iraqi government can print dinars to pay its employees.



## Iraq since 1990

A number of assessments of the humanitarian situation in Iraq have been carried out since August 1990, providing a portrait of an impoverished society. Many observers and critics have highlighted the role of sanctions. The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, Denis Halliday, resigned from the organisation in 1998, protesting that “We are in the process of destroying an entire society. It is as simple and terrifying as that. It is illegal and immoral”. His successor, Hans von Sponeck, resigned in 2000, saying that he “cannot any longer be associated with a programme that prolongs the sufferings of the people and which has no chance to meet even the basic needs of the civilian population”.

The main surveys on Iraq have been by carried out by the United Nations Children’s Fund (Unicef), in a 1999 study of infant mortality, and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), in an assessment of food and nutrition carried out in May 2000. A general review was conducted in 1999 by a Humanitarian Panel established by the Security Council.

### General review

“In marked contrast to the prevailing situation prior to the events of 1990-91, the infant mortality rates in Iraq today are among the highest in the world, low infant birth weight affects at least 23% of all births, chronic malnutrition affects every fourth child under five years of age, only 41% of the population have regular access to clean water, 83% of all schools need substantial repairs. The [International Committee of the Red Cross] states that the Iraqi health-care system is today in a decrepit state. UNDP [United Nations Development Programme] calculates that it would take 7 billion US dollars to rehabilitate the power sector country-wide to its 1990 capacity.” (Humanitarian Panel)

### Infant Health

“... in the heavily-populated southern and central parts of the country, children under five are dying at more than twice the rate they were ten years ago [...] from 56 deaths per 1000 live births (1984-1989) to 131 deaths per 1000 live births (1994-1999). Likewise infant mortality – defined as the death of children in their first year – increased from 47 per 1000 live births to 108 per 1000 live births within the same time frame [...] if the substantial reduction in child mortality throughout Iraq during the 1980s had continued through the 1990s, there would have been half a million fewer deaths of children under-five in the country as a whole during the eight year period 1991 to 1998.” (Unicef)

### Malnutrition

“The level of malnutrition among young children remains unacceptably high. [...] Results showed 21.3% of children under five years of age were underweight, 20.4% were stunted (chronic malnutrition) and 9.3% were wasted (acute malnutrition). [...] since the six-monthly surveys began in 1997 it appears that there has been little further improvement except for chronic malnutrition which decreased from 27% to 21%. Still, at least about 800,000 children under the age of five are chronically malnourished.” (FAO)

“The prevalence of malnutrition in Iraqi children under five almost doubled from 1991 to 1996 (from 12% to 23%). Acute malnutrition in Center/South rose from 3% to 11% for the same age bracket. Results of a nutritional status survey conducted on 15,000 children under 5 years of age in April 1997 indicated that almost the whole young child population was affected by a shift in their nutritional status towards malnutrition.” (Humanitarian Panel)

### Infrastructure

“In addition to the scarcity of resources, malnutrition problems also seem to stem from the massive deterioration in basic infrastructure, in particular in the water-supply and waste disposal systems. The most vulnerable groups have been the hardest hit, especially children under five years of age who are being exposed to unhygienic

conditions, particularly in urban centers. The WFP estimates that access to potable water is currently 50% of the 1990 level in urban areas and only 33% in rural areas.” (Humanitarian Panel)

### Health facilities

“Since 1991, hospitals and health centers have remained without repair and maintenance. The functional capacity of the health care system has degraded further by shortages of water and power supply, lack of transportation and the collapse of the telecommunications system. Communicable diseases, such as water borne diseases and malaria, which had been under control, came back as an epidemic in 1993 and have now become part of the endemic pattern of the precarious health situation.” (Humanitarian Panel)

### Education

“School enrollment for all ages (6-23) has declined to 53%. [...] some schools with a planned capacity of 700 pupils actually have 4500 enrolled in them. Substantive progress in reducing adult and female illiteracy has ceased and regressed to mid-1980 levels, according to UNICEF. The rising number of street children and children who work can be explained, in part, as a result of increasing rates of school drop-outs and repetition, as more families are forced to rely on children to secure household incomes.” (Humanitarian Panel)

### Society

“... the following aspects were frequently mentioned: increase in juvenile delinquency, begging and prostitution, anxiety about the future and lack of motivation, a rising sense of isolation bred by absence of contact with the outside world, the development of a parallel economy replete with profiteering and criminality, cultural and scientific impoverishment, disruption of family life. [...] UNICEF spoke of a whole generation of Iraqis who are growing up disconnected from the rest of the world.” (Humanitarian Panel)

### Mental health

“... the number of mental health patients attending health facilities rose by 157% from 1990 to 1998 (from 197,000 to 507,000 persons).” (Humanitarian Panel)

### Economy

“The data provided to the panel point to a continuing degradation of the Iraqi economy with an acute deterioration in the living conditions of the Iraqi population and severe strains on its social fabric. As summarized by the UNDP field office, ‘the country has experienced a shift from relative affluence to massive poverty’.” (Humanitarian Panel)

### Prices

“... according to estimates for July 1995, average shop prices of essential commodities stood at 850 times the July 1990 level.” (Humanitarian Panel)



Courtesy of IraqCD.com

# After September 11th

*Following the attacks on the United States, President Bush has declared that the US will work for “regime change” in Iraq, using military force if necessary.*

## A shift in US policy

*In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, Iraq became a top priority for the US government. Usama bin Laden, held responsible for the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks, had repeatedly justified his actions in terms of the sanctions on and bombing of Iraq, as well as the stationing of US troops in Saudi Arabia which began with Operation Desert Shield.*

In June 1996, a fuel tanker loaded with explosives destroyed these barracks at the US military base in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Nineteen American soldiers were killed and scores of Saudi and Bangladeshi civilians were injured. Usama bin Laden tapped a deep vein of hostility to the US by declaring his opposition to US bases in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi government could not now risk its own stability by endorsing a US attack on Iraq, or by again permitting the use of Saudi facilities or airspace for this purpose.

The Iraqi government alienated many otherwise sympathetic observers by initially praising the perpetrators of the outrage. Its mission at the UN in New York refused to fly its flag at half-mast. Rumours circulated of Iraq's involvement in training and even financing the hijackers. The US deputy defence secretary, Paul Wolfowitz, is reported to have urged immediate air strikes on Iraq, and spoke of “ending states who sponsor terrorism”.

Over the subsequent months, as attention focused on Afghanistan, the Iraqi leadership took a more conciliatory stance. Allegations that an Iraqi official had held meetings with one of the hijackers in Prague also seem tenuous. Nevertheless, with the defeat of the Taliban, the issue of Iraq resurfaced. In January 2002, President Bush famously accused Iraq of participating with Iran and North Korea in an “axis of evil”, and stated that the policy of his administration was to remove the Iraqi leadership from power, by

military means if necessary. He invoked the possibility that Iraq could supply non-conventional weapons to terrorists for use against the US.

US opposition to the current Iraqi government goes beyond concern over its alleged development of non-conventional weapons. Secretary of State Colin Powell declared in May 2002 that, “regardless of what the [weapons] inspectors do, the people of Iraq and the people of the region would be better off with a different regime in Baghdad”. The US also insisted that any new inspection regime in Iraq would have to be even more intrusive than the earlier one, thus increasing Iraqi reluctance to re-admit Unmovic personnel.

If the West chooses to move beyond ‘containment’ it has three major strategic options. Firstly, there is what appears to be current US policy, which is to try to unseat Saddam Hussein. This could be done by providing military assistance, technical expertise and aerial support to Iraqi opposition groups\*, who would take on the responsibility of combating the Iraqi army on the ground. They might incorporate any army units which defect. This was the strategy adopted by the US in Afghanistan, and resulted in few US casualties. Alternatively, the US and UK could launch a ground invasion themselves, accepting the potentially heavy risks to their service personnel. This is the more likely choice, in that the armed Iraqi groups are weak and many of them do not support US strategy. SCIRI opposes President Bush's characterisation of their ally, Iran, as part of the “axis of evil”, and the main Kurdish groups, the KDP and





## A crumbling coalition

*In 1990-91, as part of Operation Desert Storm, a coalition of 34 countries was assembled which included Arab and Islamic states such as Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. All these countries are now opposed to another attack on Iraq. Among European countries, France is opposed to the continuation of the 'no-fly zones' and its planes fly to Iraq without seeking permission from the sanctions committee. Germany has advised strongly against a military invasion of Iraq.*

*Many Arab leaders are aware how unpopular an attack on Iraq would be among their own people, particularly if Israel is not compelled to make a meaningful compromise with the Palestinian people. Even Kuwait put its name to a collective Arab declaration in March 2002 emphasising its "categorical rejection of attacking Iraq". Any new military action is likely to be carried out by the US and UK alone.*

*"Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax and nerve gas and nuclear weapons for over a decade..."*

*"This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens, leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children..."*

*"States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world..."*

*"By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic."*

*George W. Bush, State of the Union message, January 2002*

PUK, fear that their current autonomous status will be eroded if a regime more acceptable to the US and its allies comes to power.

Both these strategies to overthrow the Iraqi government by force face similar problems. Unless Iraq's neighbours reverse their current opposition to military action, an attack will be difficult if not impossible, and regional hostility to the US might escalate from a popular to an official stance. Any military assault is also likely to produce many casualties, both direct as a consequence of war, and indirect, through the hardship that will be created. Many Iraqis receive the majority of their food through the government-run rations system developed under sanctions, and have no way of growing or purchasing their own food. If the rations system collapses, many Iraqi families will be left without significant sources of nutrition. The Kurdish region will face particular problems: the UN staff who run the ration programme may well have to be evacuated, and supplies of essential goods, which are warehoused in territories under the control of Baghdad, would almost certainly be terminated.

A longer term problem concerns a viable replacement for the current Iraqi regime. The individuals promoted by the US in recent months as possible future leaders are often Ba'athists who have defected from the Iraqi military, and themselves have a history of engaging in repression. There is a fear that non-military leaders (if they were Shi'a Muslims) would ally themselves with Iran, and that they would not have the authority to lead the diverse communities of Iraq.

A second option for the West would be to concentrate on removing Iraq's non-conventional weapons, rather than on changing its leadership. The Iraqi government has little incentive to comply with new weapons inspections and disarmament if it believes that the US will invade anyway.

A system of incentives could be devised, e.g., by providing a clear-cut timetable for the ending of sanctions if there is full cooperation with the weapons inspectors.

But if Iraqi compliance did succeed in lifting sanctions, support for ongoing monitoring would very likely decrease, making it easier for Iraq to re-start its weapons programmes. It has demonstrated already its willingness to use chemical weapons in order to crush internal dissent, and it will remain a major military power even without non-conventional weapons.

A third option, which could be coupled with the second, is to address wider regional problems. Iraq's development of non-conventional weapons has been spurred on by the general insecurity of the Middle East. Israel possesses a substantial arsenal of nuclear weapons, and is extending its illegal occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by a war that horrifies many Arabs. Resolving these problems might serve to curb Iraq's aggressive stance towards the wider world, and encourage it instead to participate in regional networks that aspire to resolve political differences through non-violent means.

However, US politics at present remain focussed on being 'tough on Saddam', and on support for the Israeli government. Many in the US feel that a pro-American government in Baghdad would help quell the violence of Palestinian protests, contain Iran better, and lessen US dependence on Saudi Arabia for maintaining regional order. After September 11th, any moves to encourage Iraqi cooperation or compel an equitable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict are likely to be deeply unpopular with US politicians. Wider regional stability may neither be possible in the near future, nor contribute much to lessening the repressive nature of the government currently in power in Baghdad.

# Additional notes

## Ottoman Empire

A Muslim Empire created in the 14th century, ruled from modern day Turkey, and including at its height an area incorporating South East Europe, North Africa and most of the Arabian peninsula. Iraq was its easternmost territory, and served as the battleground for its wars with the Safavid Empire (largely modern Iran). From the 17th century, it was highly devolved, with local rulers in charge of affairs in their regions. It collapsed in World War I, with its territories occupied by the Allies, and was formally dissolved in 1920.

## British mandate

When the League of Nations, the precursor to the UN, was established in 1919, the victorious powers in World War I were faced with the question of how to deal with the territories that had come under their rule during the war. The League established a system of 'mandates', which promised independence to the local people, but only when they were judged to have developed enough to rule over themselves. The 1920 San Remo Conference of Allied Powers gave the British a mandate to rule Palestine, Transjordan (later Jordan) and Mesopotamia (renamed Iraq), and gave France the mandate over Syria and Lebanon.

## The boundary dispute between Iraq and Iran

The modern dispute over the border began in 1937 when the British, with oil interests in Iran, pressured Iraq into accepting a frontier treaty that would protect British oil terminals in Iran and safeguard its navigational rights into the Persian Gulf. Along the Shatt al-Arab, the waterway that runs between the two countries, for the 4 miles from the terminal up to the mouth of the Gulf, the border would be at the mid-point of the river (the thalweg), and ships from all countries could use these waters; apart from this, Iraq would retain full control over the rest of the Shatt al-Arab. Before long, however, both sides were dissatisfied with these arrangements. Iran wanted the thalweg principle to apply for the whole 65 miles for which the Shatt al-Arab forms the border. Iraq wanted full control of the river. Both countries were aware of the dangers to their shipping and oil terminals built along the Shatt al-Arab, and sought greater control over this strategic waterway.

In 1969, Iran renounced the 1937 Treaty and claimed half the Shatt al-Arab. Both sides sponsored opposing rebel groups. With strong US support for Iran, Iraq finally gave way in 1975: a new treaty, agreed under Algerian mediation, recognised the thalweg principle for the whole of the Shatt al-Arab. In return, Iran stopped its support for the Iraqi Kurdish uprising. When Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, the official aim was to reclaim the whole of the Shatt al-Arab for Iraqi sovereignty. Ten years later, 12 days after ordering the invasion of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein wrote to the Iranian President, accepting again the division of the Shatt al-Arab in line with the 1975 Treaty.

## The Iranian Revolution

In 1979, a popular revolution in Iran overthrew the Shah, a pro-Western hereditary ruler who had built up a strong military. In his place, Shi'ite clerics led by Ayatollah Khomeini took charge, and installed a government that they claimed was based on Islamic principles. The long-standing persecution of Shi'ites in Iraq quickly became a major issue for the new Iranian leaders, especially when a close friend of Khomeini's was executed. Khomeini called for the overthrow of the secular Iraqi regime, and its replacement by an Islamic government. Iran also began to sponsor Shi'a and Kurdish opposition groups. The Iraqi leadership was fearful of an Islamic revolution in Iraq, and this was a major factor in encouraging the invasion of Iran in 1980.

## United Nations Security Council

The Council comprises 15 representatives: those from Russia, China, France, the UK and US, who are referred to as the 'permanent five' or P5; plus those from ten other countries who are selected to sit on the Council for a period of two years. A Council resolution is passed if there are 9 votes in favour of a motion, but only if no member of P5 votes against it. Lifting or lightening sanctions would require a new resolution: therefore, any member of the P5 could veto an attempt to do this. Council resolutions are legally binding on every member of the United Nations.

## Economic sanctions

Before 1990, the Security Council had only imposed economic sanctions in one case, that of Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe)

from 1966 to 1979. Since 1990, economic sanctions have been imposed on Iraq, Libya, Serbia / Montenegro, Haiti, Angola, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan. This expanded use of sanctions has led many observers to label the 1990s 'the sanctions decade'. However, Iraq remains a special case: as a spokesman for the US State Department put it, these were "the toughest, most comprehensive sanctions in history". Since the late 1990s, there has been disquiet at the severe humanitarian difficulties that have accompanied the imposition of many of the sanctions regimes. The UN Secretary-General said that, "sanctions remain a blunt instrument, which hurt large numbers of people who are not their primary targets". John and Karl Mueller, two noted foreign affairs specialists, have argued that these sanctions have killed more people than all the traditional weapons of mass destruction throughout history. There has been a general acceptance that sanctions should be better targeted at specific individuals, such as by seizing their overseas assets, rather than aimed at countries as a whole. More recent implementations of sanctions have taken these factors into account.

## Iraqi opposition groups

The US has provided military and financial assistance to a London-based umbrella organisation, the Iraqi National Congress (INC). The INC was established in 1992, and is led by Ahmad Chalabi. It verbally supports democracy and human rights, but has been consistently tainted by allegations of corruption and internal disorganisation. In 1995, the US pulled out of an INC-led coup attempt in Iraq at the last moment, leading to the capturing of INC agents. The Iraqi National Accord (INA or Wifaq) is led by dissident officials from the military and Ba'ath party, and seems to have more support in Iraq than the INC. It is led by Iyad Alawi. The INA has good links with other independent ex-military officials whom US spokespeople have mentioned as potential future Iraqi leaders, such as General Nizar Khazraji and Brigadier-General Najib Salihi. The major groups among Iraqi Kurds are the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. Among Shi'ites, SCIRI, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq is the largest opposition group, and is funded by Iran.



# Sources, bibliography and websites

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## Books and other publications

**Ancient Iraq**, by Georges Roux (Penguin Books, 1980)

A thorough account from the prehistory of Mesopotamia up to the advent of Christianity. Although the text is not recent, there have been few archaeological finds since it was written to call its judgements into question.

**A History of Iraq**, by Charles Tripp (Cambridge University Press, 2000)

A detailed account of the development of the Iraqi state, and an analysis of why its relations with its Shi'a and Kurdish populations has been so troubled.

**Sanctioning Saddam: The Politics of Intervention in Iraq**, by Sarah Graham-Brown (London: I.B.Tauris, 1999)

A comprehensive account of the use of economic sanctions against Iraq, as well as other forms of Western intervention in recent years. The author was based with an aid agency in Northern Iraq for much of the period under review.

**Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein**, by Andrew Cockburn and Patrick Cockburn (HarperCollins, 1999)

Traces the rise and decline of Iraq from the colonial period to the modern day. It focuses on how Saddam Hussein has stayed in power and the mistakes made by Western governments in dealing with him. The book argues that sanctions have only strengthened Saddam Hussein, and that Iraqi civilians have suffered terribly as a consequence of the West's mistakes.

**Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq**, by Kanan Makiya (University of California Press, 1998).

A detailed account of how the Iraqi government uses violence against its own citizens in a highly public way, in order to intimidate the population into compliance. The book was first published in 1989, under the pseudonym of Samiha al-Khalil, and the new edition contains an update on changes in Iraqi society since then.

**Iraq Since the Gulf War: Prospects for democracy**, edited by Fran Hazelton (London: Zed Books, 1994)

Published for the Committee Against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq,

this book is a collection of articles by prominent opposition Iraqis on different aspects of Iraq since the Gulf War. Articles include 'Human Rights, Sanctions and Sovereignty' in which Laith Kubba argues that sanctions without other measures to topple Saddam do more harm than good; 'Attitudes to the West, Arabs and Fellow Iraqis' by Ayad Rahim which gives a valuable though anecdotal insight into attitudes and aspirations of ordinary Iraqis; and an article by Abbas Alnasrawi on the Iraqi economy.

Three books by Dilip Hiro:

**The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq military conflict** (London: Grafton, 1989)

**Desert Shield to Desert Storm: The Second Gulf War** (London: Paladin, 1992)

**Neighbours, Not Friends: Iraq and Iran after the Gulf Wars** (London: Routledge, 2001)

Together, these books form an accessible introduction to modern Iraqi history. In the most recent work, the conflict and mutual deception over the arms inspection teams are particularly well covered. A general overview of Iraqi history is provided at the start of each work.

**Needless Deaths in the Gulf War: Civilian Casualties During the Air Campaign and Violations of the Laws of War**, by Human Rights Watch (Yale University Press, 1991)

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/1991/gulfwar/>

An account of the civilian impact of the 1990-91 Gulf War.

**International Sanctions in Comparative Perspective**, by Margaret P. Doxey (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996)

Provides a valuable theoretical and comparative background to the Iraqi sanctions as well as extensive treatment of the Iraqi case itself.

**Iraq - a Country Study** (US Library of Congress, 1988)

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/iqtoc.html>

A thorough overview of all aspects of Iraq before the Gulf War.

**Endgame: Solving the Iraq Problem – Once and For All**, by Scott Ritter (Simon & Schuster, 1999)

**The Greatest Threat: Iraq, Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Growing Crisis in Global Security**, by Richard Butler (PublicAffairs, 2000)

**Saddam's Secrets: The Hunt for Iraq's Hidden Weapons**, by Tim Trevan (HarperCollins, 1999)

Books by former members of Unscorm: the head of its concealment operations unit, its executive director and a British expert on biological weapons. The books draw very different conclusions. Ritter argues that Iraq had been

effectively disarmed, but Iraqi trust in Unscorm was destroyed in part by US interference with its operations. Butler argues that Iraq continues to develop non-conventional weapons. Trevan's focus is on Iraq's attempts to obstruct Unscorm's work.

**The Kurdish Predicament in Iraq: A Political Analysis**, by Michael M. Gunter (Palgrave, 1999)

A full account of both the repression by the Iraqi government before 1991, and the difficulties that Kurdish groups have faced in establishing an autonomous governing authority under Western protection since then.

**The Generals' War: the inside story of the conflict in the Gulf**, by Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor (Little Brown & Co, 1996)

Written by a New York Times military correspondent and a general with academic and journalistic experience, this book provides a detailed and readable guide to the US military thinking and debates behind the Gulf War.

## Some useful websites

[www.un.org/Depts/oip](http://www.un.org/Depts/oip) (The UN Office of the Iraq Programme)

[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org) (The UN Children's Fund)

[www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/index.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/index.htm) (The UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission)

[www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk) (The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office)

[www.un.int/usa/asiainraq.htm](http://www.un.int/usa/asiainraq.htm) (The Iraq page of the US mission to the UN)

[www.iraqi-mission.org](http://www.iraqi-mission.org) (Iraq's mission to the UN)

[www.uruklink.net/mofa](http://www.uruklink.net/mofa) (Iraq's ministry of foreign affairs)

[www.casi.org.uk](http://www.casi.org.uk) (Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq, the most extensive collection of links and documents from the UN and other sources on modern Iraq)

[www.iraqwatch.org](http://www.iraqwatch.org) (Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, monitoring Iraq's progress in building weapons of mass destruction)

[www.fas.org/man/dod-101/ops/iraq.htm](http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/ops/iraq.htm) (the Federation of American Scientists military analysis of Iraq)

[www.iraqdaily.com](http://www.iraqdaily.com) (latest news on Iraq)

[http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/iz00t\\_.html](http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/iz00t_.html) (the Iraqi Constitution)

[www.iraqart.com](http://www.iraqart.com) (pages on Iraqi artists, folk song lyrics, calligraphy, poetry and more)

[www.IraqCD.com](http://www.IraqCD.com) (Source of a very big compilation of pictures on CD of many aspects of Iraqi history and present-day life)

[www.krg.org](http://www.krg.org) (the Kurdistan Regional Government, with information on Kurdish culture and news, as well as an overview of the region).

[www.kurd.org](http://www.kurd.org) (the Washington Kurdish Institute).

# Notes on the topic map (centre pages)

## Figure 1: Profile of Iraq

Over 70% of Iraq's population live in its cities. Baghdad has been the capital city since the creation of Iraq, and has a population of approximately 5.5 million. Although it has always been a predominantly Arabic city, the cultural influence of Iraq's neighbour, Iran (historically known as Persia), is shown in its name: Baghdad means 'gift of God' in Persian. It was originally built in 762 AD as a walled circular city on the western bank of the River Tigris, with the caliph's palace at the centre. Over the intervening centuries, it has expanded onto both banks, with eleven bridges connecting the two halves of the city.

Basra, the historic second city, lies at the confluence of Iraq's two major rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris. Basra is a historic centre of learning, famous for its literature and theological studies since the 8th century. Its 1.3 million people have borne the brunt of the Iraqi civilian casualties in the 1980-88 war with Iran, and its facilities were badly damaged in the 1991 Gulf War. The 1991 uprising against the Ba'thist regime began when army units retreating from Kuwait entered central Basra, and turned their fire on the symbols of Saddam Hussein's rule. From the late 1990s, the Iraqi authorities have invested heavily in the re-building and development of Baghdad, but Basra has been relatively neglected. The effects of Iraq's impoverishment under economic sanctions are visible most clearly in Basra's decline since 1990.

Mosul is the major city of northern Iraq. Its population of 1.7 million now outstrips that of Basra. It is near the site of the ancient Nineveh, and has served as a major trading entrepôt between Europe and the East, on the route stretching to Aleppo in Syria. Mosul, Baghdad and Basra host major universities that have acquired prestige throughout the Arab world.

Kirkuk, also in northern Iraq, is the centre of Iraq's oil industry. A historically Kurdish site, Kirkuk has been subject to extensive 'Arabisation' since the 1970s through the deporting of some of its Kurdish population and the resettlement of Iraqi Arabs there. South of Baghdad, Kerbala and al-Najaf are holy cities for Shi'ites. They have had strong historic links with Iran due to the large numbers of Iranian pilgrims who visit. To the east of al-Najaf lie 52,000 square kilometres of marshes, the historic home of the Ma'dan. Western Iraq is an extension of the Syrian desert and is sparsely populated. To the east and north of Baghdad are the Zagros

mountains, the ancient land of the Assyrians before the 20th century, but now predominantly inhabited by Kurds.

Most of Iraq has little rainfall, with temperatures reaching 43°C in summer. Only in north-east Iraq, in the area now largely under Kurdish autonomous administration, can crops grow without artificial irrigation. Iraq relies on its two major rivers for its water supplies, but their sources are located in Turkey, with whom Iraq has tense relations. Turkey has in the past blocked the Euphrates for short periods of time, both in order to fill its reservoirs and also to exert political pressure on Iraq and Syria. Such actions can severely disrupt life in Iraq. It is not difficult to imagine how a dispute could escalate into full-scale military conflict.

## Figure 2: Oil revenue

Two extensive rises in world oil prices have had a major impact on Iraq's development. Firstly, in 1973, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) – which controls the majority of the world's oil exports – made the collective decision to quadruple oil prices. This was in part an attempt to pressure Europe and the United States to urge Israel to withdraw its troops from the Arab lands they occupied in 1967. The second rise was over the period from 1979-80, when the Iranian revolution and the war between Iraq and Iran increased international fears over the threats to Gulf oil.

Iraq managed to take full advantage of its increased revenue to build up not only its military but also its civilian infrastructure and services, such as schools and hospitals. The Iraqi leadership could thus offset internal opposition to its human rights abuses and lack of democratisation by pointing to the high standard of living it had brought.

Through the 1980s the oil price fell steeply and Iraq's ability to produce and export oil was hampered by Iran's attacks on its facilities and shipping. As a result, Iraq's earnings were not sufficient to fund its war efforts. The extensive debts Iraq built up over this period were a factor in encouraging the invasion of Kuwait, in the misguided belief that a withdrawal could be linked to a restructuring of the debt.

Economic sanctions prevented exports of oil (other than to Jordan) until 1996. Since then, oil sales through the oil-for-food programme have expanded. At first, these were capped at a value of \$1 billion every 90 days, but since December 1999 Iraq has been allowed to export as much oil as it can produce.

Nevertheless, the official revenue Iraq has derived in the six years of oil-for-food is roughly the same as it earned in 1980 alone (adjusting for inflation). Iraq's population is now double what it was in 1980, so the reduced revenue has to be spread around all the more thinly. The lower revenue is due in part to the low oil price. Iraq has also sold over \$6 billion of oil on the black market since 1997 according to US estimates, reducing the amount sold through official channels. In addition, it has shut down its oil industry for short periods to protest at the policies of the US.

However, the reduced revenue is largely due to the condition of Iraq's oil industry, described as in a "lamentable state" by UN oil experts in 2000. The toll of war and the lack of finance that the Iraqi government has access to in order to rebuild its oil facilities has made that process all the more slow and difficult. Unless sanctions are relaxed further to allow foreign investment into Iraq's infrastructure, it is unlikely that Iraq will approach its former capacity to produce oil for a long time to come.

## Figure 3: Military balance

If the US were to launch a full invasion of Iraq, the main resistance would come from the Iraqi army. This is the sole component of Iraq's military that is comparable in size to any US force. Iraq's elite forces are the Republican Guard, which largely managed to avoid significant damage in 1991. A 'Special Republican Guard' of 50,000 to 60,000 men was established in 1991 to safeguard the President, and is thought to be deeply loyal to Saddam Hussein. However, it is not clear if the same can be said for regular Iraqi troops, or if they would turn against their leader after protracted aerial bombardment.

The main US military centres that are likely to be used in a military assault are Kuwait's Camp Doha where US troops are stationed; the Ahmad al-Jaber and Ali al-Salem airbases in Kuwait; Qatar's al-Udeid base, which hosts the US air force and ground troops; and Bahrain, which is the headquarters of the US Navy's Fifth Fleet and also hosts an air base. The US will also hope to secure Saudi Arabia's permission to overfly its territory, and Turkey's permission to use Incirlik air base but both countries are stating at present that they will refuse permission.

The US also has facilities in Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and on Diego Garcia, an Indian Ocean island leased from the UK to the US.



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