US Military Intervention in the Middle East

Introduction to Middle East Politics: Change, Continuity, Conflict, and Cooperation
Overview

• The Road to War in Iraq
• ‘Operation Iraqi Freedom’
• The Post-Invasion Political Reconstruction of Iraq
• The Surge, the Mahdist Ceasefire, the al-Sahwa movement and Ethnic Cleansing
• Afghanistan to 2001
• The Taleban
• Operation ‘Enduring Freedom’
• Continued Taleban Insurgency
• The Politics of Drone Strikes
The Road to War in Iraq

• **US-Iraqi tensions**
  – The legacy of the 1990-1991 Gulf War
  – Iraq and the US through the 1990s

• **Debate in the United Nations**
  – Debates within the Security Council on the issue of Iraqi compliance with disarmament processes

• **The push of the neo-conservative movement**
  – Debates in US foreign policy circles on the issues of democracy promotion, the conduct of the ‘war on terror’, resource/energy security etc...
  – Criticism of the UN and Clinton Administration’s sanctions policy

• **The construction of the ‘coalition of the willing’**
  – The circumventing of international law and norms through the construction of the coalition
  – Iraq, the ‘War on Terror’ and the ‘Axis of Evil’
‘Operation Iraqi Freedom’

- 20 March 2003 – the invasion is launched
- 6-9 April – US forces take Baghdad, UK forces take Basra
  - The outbreak of mass looting across Iraq’s major cities including an estimated 650,000 tons of ordnance (arms, ammunition etc... believed to have gone to the insurgency)
  - The disintegration of the Iraqi army and Iraqi government
  - Collapse of Iraqi infrastructure
- 1 May – Bush, aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, announces the end of ‘major combat operations’
- June – the beginnings of violence against coalition forces around the ‘Sunni triangle’ (NW of Baghdad including Samarra, Tikrit, Falluja and Ramadi)
- 19 August 2003 – bombing of UN headquarters and withdrawal of UN forces and personnel
- 13 December – Saddam Hussein captured
- 2004 – the gradual growth of insurgent violence against coalition forces as well as sectarian conflicts, primarily in and around Baghdad between the Sunni and Shi`a communities (as well as within these communities)
- 2005 – US troop tours of duty extended as insurgency spreads
- 2006 to 2007 – the insurgency takes on clear sectarian tones and drags Iraq into civil war
  - 2007 – the US troop ‘surge’ to quell the growing sectarian conflict
The Post-Invasion Political Reconstruction of Iraq

- **De-Baathification or Staticide?**
- **The post-invasion political structure**
  - The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) – 21 April 2003 to 28 June 2004
  - Pressure by Shi`a loyal to Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani pressuring a reluctant US to hold elections for an Iraqi Interim Government who would be charged with drafting the post-Saddam Iraqi constitution
- **31 January 2005 elections – the Iraqi Transitional Government and the Sunni boycott**
  - Constitution drafted and ratified in October 2005 and a permanent National Assembly elected by December 2005
- **20 May 2006 – permanent Iraq Government is approved by the National Assembly**
- **6 December 2006 – release of the Iraq Study Group Report**
- How did the dismantling of Saddam’s political infrastructure affect the prospects for post-invasion reconstruction in Iraq?
### Iraqi Civilian Casualties (Brookings Institution Estimates)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Civilian Casualties</th>
<th>Annual % Change</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>7,300</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>16,800</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>20,200</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>34,500</td>
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<td>23,600</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>6,400</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>3,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1,578</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2,442</td>
<td>+54.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cumulative Total</td>
<td>118,320</td>
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## Casualties of US Service Personnel

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Civilian Casualties</th>
<th>Annual % Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>849</td>
<td>+74.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-59.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>-10.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cumulative Total</td>
<td>4,486</td>
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</table>
The Surge, the Mahdist Ceasefire, the al-Sahwa movement and Ethnic Cleansing

• The 2007 US Troop ‘surge’ on the back of increasing calls for US troop withdrawal
• Confrontation with the Mahdi Army, the 2008 Battle of Basra and the 2008 ceasefire
• The al-Sahwa ‘Awakening’ Movement and Sunni co-option into the political system
• Ethnic cleansing as the true source of decreased violence?
• Iraq as a new Lebanon?
Afghanistan to 2001

- Collapse of Afghanistan (DRA) in 1992 to the mujahideen
- Civil war in Afghanistan between various forces between 1992 and 1996
- 1996 establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Taleban)
  - International community initially saw this as a stabilising force
- Economic Collapse and Opium Production
The Taleban

• Who is the Taleban?
  – Formed in 1994, rise to power in Afghanistan in 1996
  – Largely Pashtun refugees in Pakistan, often veterans of the Soviet War; group received support from Pakistan ISI (Pak as US ally in Cold War, keeps Pashtun unrest in FATA and NWFP directed at Kabul not Islamabad); intensely conservative, influenced by Wahhabist doctrine, increasingly hostile to the US

• Taleban links with Al Qaeda and 9/11
  – AQ arriving in Afghanistan (1996) after removal from Sudan and cooperating with the Taleban in training
  – 1998 US embassy attacks and 9/11 planned in Afghanistan, leading to 2001 war
Operation ‘Enduring Freedom’

• Launched on 7 October, 2001
• Initial conflict was not authorised by the United Nations until December 2001
• The Taleban refused to comply with demands by the US to hand over bin Laden and the Al Qaeda leadership
• Use of the ‘Northern Alliance’ forces
Continued Taliban Insurgency

- Early 2003, signs of Taliban regrouping, particularly in Pakistan
- Attention increasingly on deteriorating situation in Iraq from 2005 and 2006, along with fragility of Afghan government and increasing civilian death toll saw the Taliban make ground in southern Afghanistan
- Changed tactics by ISAF from this time, focus on reconstruction efforts (clear, hold and build)
- 2008, US troop ‘surge’ to secure key areas lost to the Taliban since 2003
- Tensions between the US and Pakistan
Continued Taliban Insurgency

• While the Taliban has been resurgent in Afghanistan, it has also extended its influence in Pakistan
• In particular in the FATA and NWFP, with a focus on the Swat Valley region
• The current government of PM Yousaf Raza Gillani proposed a ceasefire in the Swat in exchange for Taliban disarmament
• The Taliban assumed rule in the Swat but refused to lay down arms; the Pakistani military is now engaged in a full counter-insurgency campaign in this region
The Politics of Drone Strikes

- The Logic of ‘Pre-Emptive Defence’
- Questions over National Sovereignty
- Signature Strikes
- US Drone Strikes in Yemen and Somalia