

WAR AND PEACE IN IRAQ

Introduction

Focus

This *News in Review* story focuses on the uncertain aftermath of the war in Iraq. The Anglo-American coalition won a decisive military victory, toppling Saddam Hussein's regime, but many serious problems now confront both it and the Iraqi people.



Sections marked with this symbol indicate content suitable for younger viewers.

On April 10, 2003, as U.S. military forces tightened their stranglehold on the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, a small group of Iraqis gathered in one of the city's main squares. Their purpose was to topple a statue of Saddam Hussein, the man who had ruled them and their fellow citizens with a heavy hand for over three decades. With some help from a nearby U.S. military vehicle, they succeeded in pulling down the statue and danced around it with glee. Masses of mainly foreign reporters and camera operators, who may have almost equaled the demonstrators in numbers, eagerly recorded the scene for viewers' consumption in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere. At the White House in Washington, D.C., President George W. Bush watched with satisfaction. Here was the final symbolic act in the "regime change" in Iraq that had been one of the purposes of the coalition's military campaign. The celebrations of those Iraqis who were present when the statue came crashing to the ground, ecstatic at their leader's fall, appeared to justify the coalition's actions, despite the widespread global opposition the war had triggered, even before it had begun a few weeks before.

But despite such frequently screened televised images of ordinary Iraqis welcoming American and British troops and reveling in their liberation from Saddam Hussein's tyranny, the reality in post-war Iraq was far more complex and uncertain. In the immediate aftermath of the fall of Baghdad, the city was devastated by an orgy of lawlessness and looting. Hospitals, government buildings, and even the city's world-famous museum housing priceless

archaeological artifacts were ransacked and wrecked. Baghdad residents were without electricity and running water, short of food and medicine, and lacking any remaining government infrastructure to re-establish public order and security. The occupying coalition forces, trained to deliver a decisive military blow to Saddam's army, were completely unprepared for their new role as guardians of the peace. While they did succeed in defending some sites, like the headquarters of the country's valuable petroleum industry, they did little or nothing to halt the looting and chaos in the capital they had "liberated."

In the euphoria that many Americans and supporters of the war experienced following the total collapse of Saddam's regime, many lingering questions and problems were either ignored or downplayed. For example, the major justification for the launching of "Operation Iraqi Freedom" had been the need to remove the weapons of mass destruction the regime was accused of possessing. Weeks after the end of hostilities, no such weapons had been found. U.S. military and political leaders insisted they would eventually succeed in discovering them. There was growing skepticism about this, fuelled by the U.S. refusal to allow U.N. arms inspectors back into the country to continue the work they had been forced to suspend shortly before the war had begun.

There were also a number of unanswered questions about the role the United States would play in establishing a new government for Iraq now that Saddam Hussein had been overthrown.

Voices

"This is the real day of liberation."

— Amir Mohsen, Shi'ite pilgrim happy to attend a religious festival banned under the former regime of Saddam Hussein (*Toronto Star*, April 23, 2003)

How long would its troops remain inside the country? Would the U.S. seek to establish permanent military bases there? How would it deal with the insurgent Kurdish forces it had armed and assisted in northern Iraq, especially if they tried to establish an independent state in the area? Would the Shi'ite Moslem majority in Iraq be permitted to democratically choose an Islamic government similar to Iran's for its new regime? How long would the Iraqi people continue to tolerate the presence of foreign troops on their country's soil? Would the United States permit the United Nations to play any significant role in post-war reconstruction and humanitarian aid in Iraq, especially

after it had refused to approve the war itself? Would the United States move to gain a controlling interest in Iraq's vast petroleum reserves, thus proving right those critics of the war who had charged that it was "all about oil" from the beginning? Finally, with its victory over Iraq, would the United States continue its "war on terrorism" by seeking to secure further regime changes in other Middle Eastern states with potentially hostile governments, such as Syria and Iran? By early May 2003 there was little doubt that the war in Iraq was over. However, the future contours of peace in that country, and the Middle East region as a whole, appeared far from clear.

To Consider

1. Why did at least some Iraqis welcome the U.S. and British troops as liberators when they entered their country?

2. What serious problems do the occupying U.S. and British forces face in Iraq now that Saddam's regime has been overthrown?

3. What do you think might be some of the long-term consequences of the invasion of Iraq for:

Iraq itself: _____

The Middle East: _____

International relations: _____

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Video Review (I)

This CBC *News in Review* video provides important information about the end of the war in Iraq and what it might mean for that country and the world. It also contains some dramatic images portraying the series of events in Iraq following the defeat of Saddam Hussein's regime there. Watch the video, and after doing so, record your answers to the questions on these pages.

Viewing For Information

1. How long did it take the Anglo-American military coalition to defeat Saddam's forces?

2. What incident in Baghdad on April 10, 2003, signified the downfall of Saddam's regime?

3. What two northern Iraqi cities fell shortly after Baghdad was taken?

4. What was the last major Iraqi city to be captured?

5. What country has the United States accused of harbouring terrorists and possibly weapons of mass destruction?

6. What were the two main objectives of "Operation Iraqi Freedom"? So far, which of them has been achieved?

7. Who is the retired American general who has been named to oversee the interim governmental authority in Iraq?

8. Who is the American military commander in charge of the coalition military forces currently occupying Iraq?

9. Who is the exiled Iraqi opposition leader the Bush administration favours to assume power in that country once a permanent government can be installed?

10. What kind of government has U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell definitely ruled out as an option for post-Saddam Iraq?

Did you know . . .

It is quite possible that Canada's famous Mounties (RCMP) may help train a new Iraqi police force to maintain order in the war-torn nation?

11. What ethnic group in northern Iraq might seek to establish an independent state in that region?

12. What neighbouring country would strongly object to this idea?

13. What religious group forms a majority of Iraq's population?

14. To what neighbouring country do they look as an example of the kind of government they would like Iraq to have now that Saddam's regime is gone?

15. What are some of the basic problems ordinary Iraqis are dealing with in the aftermath of the war?

16. What have been some of the important consequences for Canada of its decision not to support the U.S.-led war in Iraq?

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Video Review (II)

Voices

"Please send a message to all hospitals around the world. Tell them to send medicine." — Mother of 17-year-old Iraqi burn victim (*Toronto Star*, April 15, 2003)

Assessing Images

Watch the video again, and after doing so, form groups with your classmates to discuss your reactions to some of the following images from the video. How do these images convey some aspects of the situation in Iraq at the end of the military conflict there? What conclusions can you draw from them? How could both supporters and opponents of the war use these images to justify their beliefs and opinions about it? Be prepared to share your views with the other members of your class.

- toppling of the statue of Saddam in Baghdad
- looting and destruction of buildings in Baghdad, including the Baghdad Museum
- U.S. troops placing the American flag on the statue of Saddam
- U.S. troops walking through abandoned palaces of Saddam
- suffering of child victims of the war
- Iraqi Shi'ites participating in a religious ceremony
- Baghdad residents dealing with serious health hazards
- Iraqi Kurds celebrating the capture of northern cities
- U.S. troops dealing with continuing opposition to their occupation of Iraq

Assessing Statements

Watch the video again, this time carefully noting the following statements.

"Saddam Hussein is now taking his rightful place alongside Hitler, Stalin, Lenin, Ceaucescu in the pantheon of failed brutal dictators." — U.S. Defence Secretary Rumsfeld

"I think we have some equity, some standing at the head of the class, so to speak, to make sure that this goes in the right direction, so that our investment pays off, not with a military victory, but with a political victory, and that political victory is a new Iraqi government firmly based on democratic principles." — U.S. Secretary of State Powell

"If this looks like it's becoming too much of an occupation, the restlessness in the country could easily grow, but in the meantime, our job is to let the Iraqis know it's their future, not ours, and that we are getting things going in the right direction, and that there are tangible signs of progress." — Rick Barton of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C.

"We are optimistic that we will be able to provide service to the people. I know there are some people going to be skeptical of our intention, maybe some people are going to think that we will not succeed, but we are determined to be successful. We are determined to reach inside Iraq and get those people who can help in the process." — Ahmad Diah, Head of Iraqi Construction and Development Council

Did you know . . .

The job of reconstruction in Iraq is directed by the U.S.-led Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA)? The new Iraq has been divided into four administrative regions.

“People are euphoric about this. But they’re scared. Because they’ve never had this responsibility. It will take time.” — Ahmed al Khadri, Iraqi-Canadian delegate to political meeting to plan new government

“I think as the years and decades wear on, we will find that President Bush is actually judged in many ways on this particular failure.” — Edward Keel, Royal Ontario Museum

Responding to Statements

Form groups with your classmates to discuss the above statements. Then write a brief summary in your notes indicating the following for each:

- the importance of the person making it
- what you think it means in your own words
- how you would apply it to the situation currently facing Iraq
- carefully check the statement for any misleading facts or information it may contain (e.g. for the Rumsfeld quote, were all of the leaders he refers to really “failed” dictators?)
- state what you think is its slant or bias
- indicate whether or not you agree with it, and why

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Saddam's Legacy

Further Research

Many people believe that the war in Iraq may be part of a broader U.S. plan to shape a new world order. Visit the official site of the Project for the New American Century (www.newamericancentury.org) for an understanding of the key ideas behind this concept.

The Arab Ba'ath or Renaissance Party was founded by French-educated Syrian intellectuals. Its blend of socialism and nationalism aimed to unite all Arab nations into one. It still controls the government of Syria.

From the outset, U.S. President George W. Bush made it clear that one of the main objectives of any military action against Iraq was going to be the achievement of a “regime change” in that country. This rather neutral term actually means the forcible removal of any leader and/or government in the world that the United States finds objectionable. But why did Bush single out the Iraqi regime, and its leader, for this special treatment? The U.S. bill of indictment against Saddam was long and many years in the making. It dated back to Saddam's decision to invade and occupy the neighbouring country of Kuwait in August 1990 after a dispute over oil prices.

That act triggered the first Persian Gulf War of early 1991, when a U.N.-authorized coalition of countries, led by the United States, drove Iraqi troops out of Kuwait. In the process they nearly toppled Saddam's government. Since then the U.S. and Britain had repeatedly charged the Iraqi leader with flouting the authority of U.N. arms inspection teams, whose mission was to ensure that Iraq was not producing weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical, biological, or possibly even nuclear weapons, with which it could threaten neighbours and destabilize the fragile Middle East. His regime was also portrayed as an extremely brutal dictatorship, from which Iraq's long-suffering people longed to be freed, but lacked the internal means to do so. Hence, the invasion of Iraq was justified, at least as far as George W. Bush and Tony Blair were concerned, if one of its principal results was the removal of Saddam Hussein from power.

However, prior to 1990, Saddam had been a firm ally of the United States, Britain, and other Western nations, despite his record for brutal treatment of political opponents inside Iraq. He had risen to power as a result of a military coup in 1979, about a decade after he first gained prominence as a leading member in the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party regime.

Once installed as president, one of his first acts was to initiate a ruthless purge of real or imagined political enemies, including Iraq's once-powerful Communist Party, a move that was very welcome to the United States. In 1980, he began a bitter and costly eight-year conflict with neighbouring Iran over disputed oil fields bordering the two countries. Since Iran was under the rule of an Islamic fundamentalist government strongly opposed to the United States, Saddam came to be viewed favourably by Washington, on the principle that “the enemy of your enemy is your friend.” Despite the fact that he is alleged to have ordered the use of chemical weapons against Kurdish civilians in northern Iraq during that conflict, his conduct received no public criticism from the United States at the time. On the contrary, Donald Rumsfeld, then, as now, U.S. Secretary of Defence, visited Saddam and assured him of full American support in his military struggle with Iran.

There is no question that under Saddam Hussein Iraq was a police state, where even the remotest sign of opposition to the regime was met with cruel repression. Many Iraqi opponents of Saddam went into exile, while countless

others were imprisoned, tortured, or executed. Like many dictators, the Iraqi leader exalted in what he took to be, or orchestrated as, the mass adulation of his people. Along with a few trusted advisors, most of them drawn from his native city of Tikrit, and his two sons, he ran a corrupt government, building countless palaces and erecting statues of himself all over the country. In public Iraqis sang the praises of their “glorious uncle”; in private many longed for an end to his heavy-handed regime.

But until the end of the costly war with Iran in 1988, and despite the lack of political freedom in the country, Iraq had been an economic and social success story in the Middle East. Saddam had used Iraq’s vast and lucrative oil reserves to finance ambitious programs designed to build hospitals, schools, transportation and communication infrastructure, and social welfare facilities. Ordinary Iraqis saw their lives improve markedly under his regime. Iraq’s standard of living dwarfed every other Middle Eastern country with the exception of Israel. So long as one did not indicate even the slightest opposition to the government, either by word or by deed, then it was quite possible for an Iraqi citizen to live a fairly decent life and expect that his or her family’s economic and social conditions would steadily improve. The status of women in Iraq, for example, compared extremely favourably with that in other Middle Eastern nations.

The Cost of War

All this was to change for the worse as a result of the Iran-Iraq war, and even more so following the 1991 Persian Gulf War. In the eight-year struggle with Iran, Saddam bankrupted the nation’s treasury, and Iraq suffered over a million casualties. His defeat in 1991

led the United States and Britain to impose harsh economic sanctions against Iraq, which only served to further impoverish and cause pain to his already-suffering people. According to U.N. estimates over half a million Iraqi children died during the 1990s from treatable medical conditions because Iraq’s hospitals were unable to obtain needed medicines as a result of the sanctions. Like other dictators, Saddam Hussein manipulated the sanctions for political and propaganda purposes. He deflected the attention of Iraqis away from his own corrupt government and blamed foreign powers for their plight instead. For a while this worked—in tandem with his unhesitating use of brutal force to crush any dissent. This was clearly seen in his horrifying military repression of the northern Kurdish rebellion and the southern Shi’ite insurrection against him just after the end of the 1991 war. It is probably true that many Iraqis had come to despair of any hope that by their own efforts they would ever have been able to remove Saddam from power. For this reason alone, at least some Iraqis welcomed the conquering Anglo-American forces as liberators when they entered Iraq in March 2003.

Post-war Iraq

By early May 2003 Saddam’s whereabouts were still unclear, and it was not known for sure whether he was still alive. Some members of his regime, including Tariq Aziz, the former deputy vice-president, had turned themselves in, but the former dictator likely remained at large, hiding either in Iraq or a neighbouring state. If he were to be captured alive, it was quite likely that the United States would take steps to have him tried as a war criminal, as was done with former Serb leader Slobodan

Milosevic. The remnants of the Ba'ath Party administration were in the process of being purged from Iraq's political life. It appeared certain that whatever the nature of the country's new government, there would be no place in it for those who had formed part of the previous one.

Now that he has departed from the scene in Iraq, in all likelihood never to return, how will Saddam be remembered? His own attempts to characterize himself as a latter-day version of the Babylonian and Saracen warrior-kings Nebuchadnezzar or Saladdin were the objects of widespread ridicule, even in his own country. So also was his effort to drape his once-secular regime in the mantle of Islamic orthodoxy. But it is nevertheless true that to many in the Arab world he did assume heroic status. His defiance of the United States in the face of overwhelming odds against him inspired many who view unchecked American military power, along with its unquestioning support of Israel, as the main roadblocks to peace in the region. To many Palestinians suffering under

the brutal Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza, Saddam's financial support to the families of those killed in the resistance was very welcome.

In the broader context of Middle Eastern and Arab opinion, he was never that favourably perceived, due to his dictatorial rule, aggressive policies, and personal vanity and corruption. As far as the United States government was concerned, he served a useful propaganda purpose as the epitome of evil, alongside the likes of Al Qaeda mastermind Osama bin Laden. Saddam was even inaccurately compared to Hitler. His departure deprives the Bush administration of a designated villain to use as a rallying point for pro-war opinion in the United States. It remains to be seen which leader of another "rogue state," or member of the "axis of evil" will replace him as the object of American hostility and possible military intervention with the purpose of achieving yet another regime change, either in the Middle East or somewhere else in the world.

Responding

Answer the questions below in your notebooks.

1. Why did the United States once view Saddam as an ally? What changed that perception?
2. What were the main reasons the United States and Britain gave to justify their military intervention in Iraq in March 2003?
3. To what extent can Saddam's legacy in Iraq be viewed as a mixed one?
4. In what ways did Saddam serve a useful propaganda purpose for the United States?
5. Why do some people in the Middle East have a more favourable view of Saddam?

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Costs and Consequences of the War

In a speech delivered to the American people from the deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln* in late April 2003, an ebullient President George W. Bush declared that the military phase of “Operation Iraqi Freedom” was at an end. But Bush stopped short of proclaiming a complete victory for the coalition he had led into the conflict. Unlike the first Persian Gulf War of 1991, which his father had overseen successfully, this second struggle did not as yet appear to provide clear signs of the decisive triumph its advocates had anticipated. While it was almost certain that Saddam Hussein would never again rule from Baghdad, the shape of the post-Saddam era in Iraq, and its implications for the Middle East and beyond, were still far from settled. Here are at least some of the costs and possible consequences of the war itself and the clouded peace that followed it.

1. A devastated nation: Iraq’s economic, social, political, technological, and cultural life has been almost completely shattered after years of crippling economic sanctions, the corruption of Saddam’s rule, and the destruction of the latest war. The country has no functioning government, the cities have hardly any infrastructure of transportation, communication, and social services, and hospitals and schools are in a desperate situation. The total reconstruction bill for Iraq is estimated in the hundreds of billions of dollars. Will the United States make good on its pledge to ensure that Iraqis see their country restored to some semblance of working order within the immediate future?

2. A new government for Iraq: Although the United States insists that its goal is the creation of the conditions for democracy to take root in Iraq, the country has hardly any experience with that kind of government. If for example, democracy means majority rule, then it is quite possible that the 60 per cent of Iraqis who adhere to the Shi’a branch of Islam might elect for an Islamic-style regime like the one in neighbouring Iran. The U.S. has officially ruled out such a possibility and has promoted its own hand-picked group of Iraqi exiles, most notably Iraqi National Congress chair Ahmed Chalabi, as its favourites for the country’s next rulers.

3. Further conflict in the Middle East: The war in Iraq was scarcely over when senior American officials began to make what were widely interpreted as menacing statements to Iraq’s neighbour Syria. Despite the fact that this country’s rulers had little love for Saddam and had actually participated in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the Bush administration viewed Syria as another “rogue state,” whose regime backed Middle Eastern terrorist groups and might be harbouring both weapons of mass destruction and fleeing Iraqi leaders. Some observers feared that Syria might find itself the next target in Bush’s war on terrorism.

4. A road map for peace: In the aftermath of the war in Iraq, the long-awaited “road map” for a permanent peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians was made public. Brokered jointly by the U.S., the European Union, and Russia, it called on both

Definition

Pax Americana is Latin for "American peace." Other periods of stability enforced by powerful armies have been the *Pax Britannica* (Britain) and the *Pax Romana* (Rome).

sides to make substantial concessions to end their conflict. The Bush administration believed that having shown its resolve to deal with the Iraq crisis, its credibility as an "honest broker" in the Israel-Palestine dispute might be strengthened. But to the majority of Arab public opinion, Bush's credentials are seriously tainted by his almost total support for Israel in its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Shortly after the road map was released, the difficulties in achieving its goals were made clear. While the Palestinian Authority endorsed it without conditions, Israel listed at least a dozen points that it could not accept. At the same time, a militant Islamic group opposed to any peace plan at all staged yet another suicide bombing inside Israel.

5. *Pax Americana*: The willingness of the United States, and its main ally Britain, to override the authority of the United Nations and defy considerable global public opinion in launching Operation Iraqi Freedom was a matter of concern to many international observers. Because it is the only remaining world superpower, in possession of unrivalled military force, the United States has the ability, and now perhaps the will as well, to impose its wishes anywhere in the world it chooses to do so. Some drew disturbing parallels to the British Empire of the 19th century,

and the Roman Empire of the first centuries CE, where a single state was able to dominate the world. Some commentators believe the United States is a "benevolent" empire, intent on promoting the goals of democracy, technological advance, and economic well-being around the world; however, others view the rising *Pax Americana* of the early 21st century as yet another example of imperialism and exploitation.

6. The U.S. economy and Bush's re-election chances: George W. Bush is believed to be haunted by the fate of his father, George Bush Sr., who enjoyed unheard-of popularity after the success of the Persian Gulf War of 1991, only to crash to defeat in his re-election bid in 1992. At that time, Bush Sr.'s neglect of the American economy was viewed as the main reason for his loss to Bill Clinton. Bush Jr. is determined to avoid his father's fate. He is promoting an ambitious economic program that includes huge tax cuts in order to stimulate growth and win public support. But many economists warn that if the U.S. is entering a recession, Bush's tax cuts will deny the government much-needed revenue, balloon the federal budget deficit, and cause much potential harm to what is already a very precarious economic situation. All this could impact seriously on Bush's hopes to win a second term in office in 2004.

To Do

1. After reading this list of costs and consequences of the war in Iraq, form groups with your classmates to discuss any one of them. Brainstorm the issue and prepare a summary of what you think are the most likely scenarios for the future course of events for it.
2. Imagine you are looking back at the end of the Iraq war some time in the future. Write an evaluation of what you think are likely to be its most significant results for Iraq, the United States, the Middle East, and the world.
3. How has the war shaped your view of the world?

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IV What Should Canada Do Now?

Did you know . . .

One former U.S. CIA chief, James Woolsey, has described the current U.S. campaign against state-sponsored terrorism as the Fourth World War? He views the U.S.-U.S.S.R. Cold War from 1945-90 as the Third World War.

Voices

"A peaceful, prosperous Iraq . . . will be run by and for the Iraqi people."
— British Prime Minister Tony Blair
(*Toronto Star*, April 5, 2003)

Canada's refusal to support the United States in its war against Iraq has led to fears that this move may result in serious damage to relations with our neighbour. Some observers point to the critical remarks the U.S. ambassador to Canada, Paul Cellucci, made to a Canadian business audience during the war, and Bush's decision to postpone indefinitely his state visit, originally scheduled for May 2003. As a final activity for this *News in Review* story, form groups with your classmates to discuss at least one of the issues in Canadian-U.S. relations listed below and note how you think the issue(s) could be improved now that the war is over.

Issues for Canada-U.S. Relations

1. Canada's assistance to post-war reconstruction and the establishment of a new government in Iraq
2. Canada's position on future U.S. efforts in the ongoing war on terrorism, including further attempts at regime change (e.g. Syria, Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Venezuela)
3. Canada's proposal to decriminalize marijuana and the U.S. reaction to it
4. Ongoing trade irritants and border security issues
5. The approach a new Liberal prime minister might take to Canadian-U.S. relations following the departure of Jean Chrétien
6. The approach a future prime minister from another political party (Canadian Alliance, NDP) might take to Canadian-U.S. relations
7. Potential economic effects on Canadian businesses and the national economy from a possible deterioration in relations with the United States

What to Do

Each group should do the following:

- a) Prepare a summary of how it views the importance of these issues and state what policies it would recommend to the Canadian government in order to improve relations with the U.S.
- b) Indicate how it thinks ordinary Canadians view the state of our relationship with the U.S.
- c) Groups should present their statements to the class for an in-class discussion.