Post-Saddam Iraq and the Challenges of Peace

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Abstract

The Iraq / United States (US) differences have lasted for quite some time. Iraq, having been branded as one of the three axis-of-evils, is considered a threat to international stability and global security. Within this context, its activities must be regulated to ensure stability and international peace. The irony is that efforts at resolving the Iraqi crisis including the sentence and subsequent execution of Saddam Hussein has not stopped violence and restore peace to the war torn Iraq. This paper therefore examines the causes of Iraq conflict from a theoretical perspective and the challenges posed by the execution of Saddam Hussein, centering on endless violence. The sources of materials and data include textbooks, journals, magazines, newspapers and the internet. The conclusion is that the execution of Saddam has not reduced the level of violence in Iraq but has rather escalated it as efforts made by US and its allies have failed to restore peace to Iraq.

Introduction

The orgy of violence in Iraq has assumed a threatening dimension. The 1990 and 2003, attacks on Iraq dealt devastating blows on a country that is strategically blessed with oil resources. The strategic resources incidentally is the source of conflict. Attempts to resolve this conflict using the Imobighe (2003: 1-4) integrated conflict management approach have proved abortive.

The execution of Saddam Hussein was part of the calculation for assuaging the feelings of the terrorized and restoring peace to Iraq. The irony is that rather than achieve this goal, violence has escalated. With the extent of violence, there are no signs that the crisis in Iraq will end soon. The increased manpower and nationalistic feeling on the part of the Iraqis is the result of increased militia groups which now embark on suicide bombings on a larger and more deadlier scale. A new wave of sectarian violence has taken the center stage in the socio-cultural life of the Iraqis thus leading to massive destruction of lives and properties.

Iraq is a plural society and according to Akpan (2006: 46), ethnic militias are key features of all pluralistic societies. A fundamental observation that underlies the study of social movements in Iraq is that ethnicity constitute a major fundamental basis for identity and agitation in the country. Thus militancy in Iraq can be viewed from several background. The militancy or struggle to emancipate their people from all forms of socio-political injustices meted out against them (by the allied forces), the struggle for socio-economic, environmental and political rights as well as the struggle for the protection of ethno-national interest and problems of immediate survival of these ethnic groups (directed at other ethnic groups and not the Iraqi state e.g Sunnis and Shias are part of the complexities of Iraq.

This paper consequently set the tone for discussing post Saddam Iraq which is considered as the period from his execution. The objective is essentially to examine the execution of Saddam and the consequences for peace and stability in Iraq. It explores war causations from a theoretical perspective and proceed to analyze the challenges for peace in Iraq being the consequence of Saddam execution. Effort is made to determine whether the execution of Saddam is tantamount to peace in Iraq.

War Causation: A Theoretical Perspective

Before we continue with our analysis, it is expedient to attempt a few definitions of war because of its many uses and connotation. These uses include cold war, hot war, limited war, total war, conventional war, unconventional war, civil war, guerrilla war, preventive war, political warfare, propaganda war, psychological warfare etc.

According to the New English Dictionary (cited in Palmer and Perkins, 2005: 185), war is a hostile contention by means of armed forces, carried on between nations, states, or rulers, or between parties in the same nation or state; the employment of armed forces against a foreign power, or against an opposing party in the state. Hoffman Nickerson (cited in Palmer and Perkins, 2005: 185) define war as the use of organized force between two human groups pursuing contradictory policies, each group seeking to impose its policy upon the other. Thus, it applies to parties which try to resist aggression, since this party tries to impose upon the aggressor its policy of retaining its freedom, leadership and independence.

In the conceptualization of war, it is conceived as the converse of peace. In other words, war is defined as the absence of peace. It is one form of violence which is physical, open and direct (Ibeanu, 2004: 3-4). On the other hand, peace which is the dynamic socio-economic process rather than condition is defined as a process involving activities that are directly or indirectly linked to increasing development and reducing conflict, both within specific societies and in the wider international communities (Ibeanu, 2004: 10).

For Clausewitz, war is nothing more than a continuation of politics by an admixture of other means (Bassey, 2005: 23). It only confirms that wars can become instrument for achieving set goals. If for instance, policy creates war, the political object will in turn determine other issues such as the military objective to be reached and the amount of efforts to be committed. An obvious role of the military strength is to persuade potential opponents not to risk confrontation. According to Rouke and Boyer (2002: 25), one reason why the US has been and still remain a leader of the West is because massive US conventional and nuclear military power creates a psychological assumption by both holder and beholder that the country with dominant military power will play a strong role.

It has been argued that there is no single reason why people fight hence there is no single root cause of war. Wars still occur but they are increasingly criticized as

being less legitimate and are more widely condemned in principle. However, Rouke and Boyer (2002: 246-247), discuss the multiple causes of war in three classifications- system-level which focus on power imbalance among major actors; state-level which focus on the competitive efforts of states to seek and maintain power relative to other states; and individual-level which focus on personal ambition of particular leaders as causes of conflict.

Available evidence in extant literature on war causations vary extensively according to the distinctive subcultures associated with participants of such debate. Waltz .K. (cited in Bassey, 2005: 102), identifies the causes of war as being found within man, within the structure of the separate states and within the state system. Thus contemporary theories that attempt to explain the causes of war are classified into psychological and phylogenetic theories, sociological theories and political theories. They all focus on human nature, structure of the state, and anarchical nature of the international system as the primary cause of war. Difficulty in testing these theories is a major problem because of their lack of universal application.

The 1990 military action against Iraq was premised on Saddam's invasion of Kuwait and his stubborn attitude/ response to international diplomacy. All attempt to dissuade him from annexing Kuwait had failed. Iraq invasion and occupation of Kuwait was therefore to fulfill her imperialist economic desire but not for Kuwait or the US, hence US-led allied forces (Akpotor and Nwolise, 1999: 4). Of course Iraq was already branded as the biggest future threat to international stability, having been suspected of being in possession of weapon of mass destruction (an allegation that was never proved). This is in addition to the stigma of being one of the three axis-of-evil. The other two are Iran and North Korea. Ironically, Saddam was a monster that the US helped to create. The growing radicalization of the social forces in Iraq and their desire and determination to resist the American occupation of the country has turn an expensive misadventure which has constituted a major nightmare and security dilemma for America and the international community.

Now the immediate cause of the 2003 attack on Iraq is rooted in the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the twin-tower in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington (Agbebaku, 2006: 36). President Bush, in hunting Bin Laden and the Al-Qaida movement which was suspected as the brain behind the attack also decided that Saddam must be ousted by all means including military action. The underlying rationale is known as "the Bush doctrine". The doctrine which came into existence after the Al-Qaida attacks on US declares that the US should no longer wait to be attacked before it acts. It should with the help of allies if possible but alone if necessary, take preemptive military action against any nation or terrorist group that possesses weapon of mass destruction that might be used against the US. It replaces such earlier policies as Truman doctrine (containment of hostile regime), the Reagan doctrine (supporting all freedom fighters), and the Clinton doctrine (always act multilaterally) (Almond, Powell, Strom and Dalton, 2006: 745). But the United Nation's effectiveness in controlling both domestic and international collective violence depends on the maintenance of consensus

among the great powers. How tenuous this consensus can become is illustrated in the UN handling of Iraq/ US war.

Irrespective of the argument that may have been put forward and no matter how logical it may seem, the primary reason for the attack is purely economic. The strong reaction of the industrialized (and petroleum import-dependent) countries to Iraq's aggression in 1990 was based on the distribution of resources. Turmoil in the Persian Gulf region threatened vital oil supplies. American Presidents had pledged US protection of the west's primary petroleum source (Rouke and Boyer, 2002: 51). In fact former US Secretary of State- James Baker was quoted to have said "the economic lifeline of the industrial world runs from the Gulf and we cannot permit a dictator … (apparently referring to Saddam) to sit astride that economic lifeline" (New York Times, May 5, 1994: A11). So Iraq invasion and annexation of Kuwait and subsequent threat to Saudi Arabia a strong US ally and other oil producers brought a predictable reaction from the powerful petroleum importing states.

Challenges for Peace and Stability

With the execution of Saddam Hussein, it appeared peace was murdered in Iraq. The death which was supposed to assuage the feelings of those oppressed, harassed and traumatized has suddenly turned into a nightmare for Iraq. The country's legion of enemies has increased and there is heightened suspicion among the opposing groups. Ogunbayo (2007: 50) submitted that "Iraq today faces more threat of peace than ever and America, the sponsor of the war that eventually dislodged Hussein's hegemony, is in a dilemma over what to do". Much of the attacks in Iraq are directed at the American troops and their supporters. Many moderate Iraqis have since enlisted in militias.

The death or execution of Saddam has become a strong unifying force for his fellow *Sunnis* who now join the militia group in thousands as a means of avenging the perceived injustice against them. Saddam is said to have written a highly poetic letter which was pasted on the *world wide web* urging his followers to resist the American forces with their blood as he was about to do, until they are driven out of Iraq (Ogunbayo, 2007: 50). A commentator once said: the arrogance of the Bush regime is total. France, Russia and China are standing on the side of reason and restraint,… They (US) have invaded Iraq without provocation; other than banditry. The ultimate goal is to take control of Iraq's oil wealth… Let them kill opposing troops, innocent women and children, because they have the power and nobody can stop them. But some day in future, it will be pay back time for the invaders (Osaldor, 2003: 51). The consequence no doubt of this payback time is unquantifiable and devastating as noticeable in this analysis.

There is escalated or increased violence which has claimed lives and properties. The violence is however directed at Americans on one hand, the police and rival ethnic *Shias* on the other hand. In three days following Saddams' execution, more than 300 deaths of civilians and armed personnel were recorded. Between January 20 and 21, 2007, 27 American marines were killed in suicide attacks. January 22,

2007, Baghdad again recorded the highest casualties in two months when nearly 100 people were killed, 150 others were wounded and 12 cars were destroyed (Ogunbayo, 2007: 50-51; Ezeoke, 2007: 55).

20 Americans and 2 Polish employees of Blackwater Security Consulting or Blackwater USA had also died in Iraq coupled with 5 Americans who were shot in the head after an air crash in Iraq (The Guardian, January 25, 2007: 11). About 300 militants lost their lives after they were engaged in a fierce battle by the US-backed Iraqi troops. During the fight, a US helicopter crashed, killing two American soldiers. This was the second US helicopter to go down in eight days. Meanwhile, the casualty toll for Iraqi forces was three soldiers and two policemen killed and 30 wounded. Among the 300 militias killed, 30 were Afgans and Saudis while 20 were captured. At least 15 other people were also killed in other skirmishes where bomb and mortars were targeted at *Shiites* (The Guardian, January 30, 2007: 80).

March 20, 2007, a parked car bomb exploded near a main bus station in central Baghdad killing 5 civilians and wounding 18 (The Nation, March 21, 2007: 54). Gunmen also killed up to 50 people in a *Sunni* district in North Western Iraq border town of Talafar. They were in apparent reprisal for bombing in a *Shia* area which earlier left about 55 people dead. Elsewhere, 2 suicide trucks carrying chlorine were detonated near a compound in Fallujah, wounding 15 soldiers (The Punch, March 29, 2007: 51).

On Wednesday, April 4, 2007, 22 shepherds were reportedly abducted in the west of Baghdad. In another incident, gunmen opened fire on a mini-bus carrying power plant workers in a predominantly *Sunni* area in west of Kirkuk, killing 6 men. Also a suicide car bomber and a mortar attack hit a police station being manned by US and Iraqi forces in the *Shiite* Sadr city enclave in Baghdad wounding 2 policemen and 2 civilians (The Guardian, April 5, 2007: 11). A woman suicide bomber attacked a police recruiting centre in Iraq killing 14 and wounding about 20 in North East Baghdad town of Muqdadiya. Earlier 5 civilians had been killed by a car bomb near the university while 3 US military died in a roadside bomb attack in Baghdad and another died in a combat in western Anbar province. Thus bringing the estimated number of US fatalities to 40 in April, 2007 and 441 US military fatalities between December 2006 and April, 2007 (Daily Independent, April 11, 2007: A10). The tables below illustrates the fatalities occasioned by the violence.

Table 1: **Iraq Security Forces and Civilian Deaths**

April 2007	1210
March 2007	1889
February 2007	1531
January 2007	1802
December 2006	1752

Source: http://icasuaties.org/oif/. Retrieved 23-04-2007.

Table II: **Military Fatalities: By Month**

Period	US	UK	Others	Total	Days
4-2007	85	11	1	97	24
3-2007	81	1	0	82	31
2-2007	80	3	1	84	28
1-2007	83	3	0	86	31
12-2006	112	1	2	115	31

Source: http://icasualties.org/oif/. Retrieved 23-04-2007.

Table III: **US Casualties by Calendar Year**

Year	US Deaths	US Wounded
2003	486	2408
2004	849	8002
2005	846	5947
2006	822	6389
2007 (as at April)	329	1568
Total	3332	24314

Source: http://icasualties.org/oif/. Retrieved 23-04-2007.

Table IV: **US Wounded by Month**

Period	Wounded
March 2007	428
February 2007	505
January 2007	635
December 2006	699

Source: http://icasualties.org/oif/. Retrieved 23-04-2007.

The execution of Saddam Hussein and the formation of a government led by Nouri Al-Maliki, a *Shia*, marked the last vestiges of authority and power that was once held in Iraq by the minority *Sunnis*. This reinforced a feeling of marginalization and oppression that must be resisted. Consequently a renewed wave of sectarian violence and ethnic cleansing in the country has dawned. *Shias* and *Sunnis* are acutely divided because by executing Iraq's foremost *Sunnis* as represented by Hussein, the Iraqi government now dominated by *Shias* has revealed that it is determined to act in sectarian fashion (Ogunbayo, 2007:51). This perhaps explains the judgement on Saddam, date, manner and speed of execution. The judgment is described as faulty as no evidence of supporting terrorism and weapons of mass destruction were tendered before the kangaroo court. The date coincided with the Moslem Eid El Kabir when people were still reciting their prayers. The manner of execution was revolting and barbaric. *Shia* guards pulled the lever to the trap door for a swift execution before Saddam could finish his full Islamic profession of faith and the speed was extra-ordinary by executing him immediately after his second and final appeal was rejected. The lack luster attitude and reluctance of Al-Maliki's government to clamp down on *Shia* militias is a demonstration of the same feeling. The difference between the *Sunnis* and *Shias* is thus heavily heightened and rivalry intensified.

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The rapidly worsening humanitarian crisis resulting from the situation in Iraq is heightened. For majority of people in the country, life is consumed by the challenge of survival, which is further compounded not only by violence but by disease, malnutrition and the limited availability of basic services. They live not only with extreme poverty, but with profound insecurity that exists in a society where the infrastructure and rule of law have collapsed. With increased hostilities, communities are destroyed, while family units are displaced and dislocated thus resulting in humanitarian and refugee problem. This is a major challenge to the government, international community and humanitarian relief agencies.

Other interest parties are getting involved in the Iraqi crisis already. Indications in the region showed that Saudi Arabia- an ally of the US is deeply concerned at the crisis. It contemplates intervention in Iraq to protect its *Sunni* minority, with whom it shares strong tribal and religious ties and to forestall the crisis from spilling over to Saudi Arabia if America troops decide to leave Iraq. If violence in Iraq is unchecked it has potentials for destabilizing Saudi Arabia because of its proximity. This perhaps explains the reluctance of America troops to leave Iraq and the consequent involvement of some Saudis and Afgans in the crisis in Iraq as mentioned earlier in this paper.

Another challenge is how to reduce the over bearing influence of America. The vested interest in Iraqi oil was the underlining factor for US intervention in Iraq. This interest must be protected. Though the US keep increasing her troops in Iraq, it is to protect its strategic interest rather than the Iraqi people. Stabilizing a country of over six million people with about 30,000 soldiers has proved a Herculean task. This occupation led to increase in militia groups aimed at challenging the US and its allies. The consequence of this no doubt is increase in US casualties and military expenditure in recruiting, maintaining these troops and providing arms, ammunitions and weaponry. Currently, the US spends about $6 billion per month on operations in Iraq. There are other cost such as disability payments to veterans over the course of their lifetime, medical costs, cost of transporting returning troops back to their home bases, death gratuities and payments, life insurance, private military contractors and experienced security guards who are also former military personnel that earn as much as $1000 per day. A major response was American Congress decision to check the country's funding of the war as approval for further funds by congress is now tied to withdrawal timetable by the President Bush's government. It has lend credence to the argument that committing further resources to prosecute the war serves no good. The pressure is so intense that George Bush also threaten to veto any bill that ties war funding to a timetable for the withdrawal of troops on one hand and the America Senate threat to cut off money for more Iraq war operations after March 31, 2008 if the President vetoes Congress proposal (The Guardian, April 5, 2007: 11).

The challenge of committing enormous resources to restore peace in Iraq with little dividend is a major headache and it is embarrassing to America. America currently earmarked $120 billion in 2007 as extra budgetary supplements on wars in Iraq

and Afganistan (wikipedia). That the troops and American road map for peace in the war torn Iraq have failed is not contestable. The danger and embarrassment of accepting failure increasingly hunts the American government. The military remained extremely concerned about high profile bomb attacks. A senior US military brass in Iraq, Major General William Caldwell captures this scenario when he said "when you look overall at the country at large, you have seen... not a great reduction that we had wanted to see thus far" (The Guardian, April 5, 2007: 11). This position is also acknowledged by the Iraqi government.

Conclusion

Having x-rayed events in post- Saddam Iraq, it is imperative to conclude that peace has eluded Iraq and will remain so for quite some time. Iraq can best be described as a failed state since it is currently at a critical point of collapse. Since the execution of Saddam, violence has escalated in Iraq. Insurgency has taken over the country. This means that Saddam factor is inconsequential in the restoration of peace to Iraq. The nationalistic feeling has resulted in the emergence of several militias and the Iraqi people are resolved to chase out the American troops who they refer to as an army of occupation.

Though the invasion of Iraq has been most unfortunate, it was embarked upon with the intention of stabilizing the international system. However, the near unilateral decision of America to oust Saddam Hussein is an action directed at protecting American core interest in the Middle East which is oil supplies. It was from the beginning a miscalculated adventure. The United States went against all honest advice to allow the UN Security Council give the go ahead with the powers vested on it by Chapter VII of the charter. This action is itself criticized because it has posed a threat to global environment and put international peace and security in jeopardy.

The invasion of Iraq is to say the least unfortunate. The popularity rating of President George Bush has plummeted as it has caused the Republican Party the majority it has enjoyed in the Congress for the past fourteen years. President Bush's staunch ally, former Prime Minister Tony Blair also faced a barrage of criticisms at home and this contributed in large measure to his relinquishing No 10 Downing Street to Gordon Brown on June 27, 2007.

The biggest damage is on Iraq as a country. The different ethnic groups, the *Sunnis*, the *Kurds* and the *Shias* are at each other's throat. There is war of everyone against the other. There is distrust and insecurity everywhere and it will take a long time to remedy this prevailing condition.

The influence of Syria and Iran in fuelling the crisis in Iraq cannot be glossed over. These two countries which seize any given opportunity to hit back at the United States of America are arming the militias in Iraq to fight the American soldiers and their allies. Therefore in an attempt to resolve the Iraqi crisis, it is necessary to involve Syria and Iran. The United States of America should discuss with these

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two countries, assuage their frayed nerves and extract from them commitment that they will stop arming the insurgents and fueling the crisis in Iraq.

The United Nations must now get involved. The UN has not been enthusiastic in getting involved in Iraq just because of the unilateral position taken by the US in invading Iraq. In other words, the US should swim in its own juice. For the sake of world peace which the UNO stands for, it is time that the world body steps in to resolve the crisis. The Iraqis are killing themselves by the hundreds everyday and there is a high state of insecurity and so normalcy must be brought to that country and the region in general.

The road map to peace as designed by America has not brought peace to Iraq. It has failed as it seems and the country is seriously under pressure to pull out of Iraq. This position confirms that they have not won and have not lost totally. Therefore it is suggested that the America expansionist foreign policy be reexamined as it concerns Iraq and other future interventions. Policy makers must also ensure that a *cost benefit analysis* is undertaken before any project is embarked on particularly one with significant consequence as war.

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