"What's Happening Now is Bigger Than What I Can Write About:" The Unintended Consequences of U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Iraq and Syria from 1990-2014 as Understood through the Writings of Nuha Al-Radi and Samar Yazbek

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Introduction

The United States' (U.S.'s) initial involvement in the Middle East in general and in Iraq and Syria in particular could be characterized as sporadic, indirect, and perhaps even accidental. The Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, to which the U.S. was not a party but is certainly an heir, sought to ensure the defeat of the Ottoman Empire during World War I and to divide the region into spheres of influence over which Britain, France, and Russia retained responsibility. Later, a U.S.-Saudi Arabia consortium discovered oil near Dhahran, Saudi Arabia; in 1943, U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt declared that protecting Saudi Arabia was vital to the defense of the U.S. With that, the U.S.'s economic interest in the region became firmly established. After the 1956 Suez Crisis, the United Kingdom (U.K.) began to draw away somewhat from its involvement in the region. The U.S., viewing itself as the world's protector and rebuilder-in-chief after World War II, sought to take the U.K.'s place of influence in the region. However, in the 1960s and 1970s, the U.S. viewed the Soviet Union as its principle threat; but, because the U.S. simultaneously warred with Vietnam, the U.S. did not have the resources or political will to invest too heavily in the Middle East at the time. Thus, the U.S.'s involvement in Middle Eastern affairs remained generally limited and decisively cheap in nature with the dual goals of containing the spread of communism and ensuring space for the development of economic and loosely defined political goals (Bacevich 112; Haass 1; Engel 138).

The U.S.'s military adventurism in the Middle East began after Iran's Islamic Revolution of 1979 with a rescue mission code named Operation Eagle Claw. Eagle Claw took place on April 24-25, 1980, and its purpose was to rescue American diplomats who had been taken hostage by Iranian revolutionaries five months earlier. Unfortunately, the exceedingly intricate plan was doomed before it started. The remote area of the Iranian desert chosen as a staging

location- code named "Desert One"- turned out to be not so remote after all, and the elite commandos participating in the operation were forced to destroy a fuel truck and detain a bus full of Iranian civilians who were unlucky enough to traverse the area at precisely the wrong time. Eventually, equipment malfunctions and the unexpectedly dusty terrain forced the cancellation of the rescue mission. During refueling operations prior to departure, a hovering helicopter clipped a parked C-130 cargo plane causing both the plane and the helicopter to burst into flames, killing eight Americans and injuring several others. The survivors hastily boarded the remaining C-130s, abandoning helicopters, classified equipment, and the remains of the fallen in their rush to depart Desert One (Bacevich xix-xxii).

According to retired U.S. Army officer and scholar Andrew Bacevich in *America's War for the Greater Middle East*,

> As the action that initiated that war [for the Greater Middle East], Operation Eagle Claw proved an apt harbinger. Here was a portent of things to come: campaigns launched with high hopes but inexplicably going awry. In retrospect, we might see the events at Desert One as a warning from the gods or from God: Do not delude yourself. Do not indulge in fantasies of American arms somehow resolving the contradictions besetting U.S. policy in the Greater Middle East (xxii).

Sadly, this warning was not heeded even a decade later as the U.S. considered its response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Throughout the 1990s, the U.S. repeatedly activated missiles and military might once again to enforce Saddam Hussein's compliance with the United Nations Security Council Resolutions related to the 1991 Gulf War cease-fire and elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction programs. The U.S. finally invaded Iraq in 2003 to dispose of Hussein once and for all for his supposed links to and support of international terrorism.

Simultaneously, and somewhat surprisingly given the U.S.'s aggressive policies toward Iraq, the U.S. maintained an overall policy of disengagement with Syria. Despite the fact that Jimmy Carter's presidential administration had added Syria to its list of state sponsors of terror

and despite the fact that the authoritarian regimes of Hafez Al-Assad and later his son, Bashar, looked rather superficially similar to the Saddam Hussein regime, U.S. presidential administrations generally sought cooperation with Syria when they bothered to engage at all (Sadat and Jones 94).

Notwithstanding the U.S.'s vastly different foreign policies toward Iraq and Syria, the U.S.'s occupation policies in Iraq after 2003- particularly as they related to detention operations- drew Iraq and Syria closer together. As Richard Engel points out in his *And Then All Hell Broke Loose: Two Decades in the Middle East,* "Iraq and Syria share a long border drawn by the European powers after World War I. Despite their interwoven histories, the two countries have had long periods of disagreeable relations since their partition. But, [by 2007], the Syrians were sympathetic to their neighbor, holding the US government responsible for the bloodshed in Iraq" (Engel 138). The U.S.'s policies toward each of the countries, the geographic reality of the long border, and the overlapping populations on the border created fertile ground for the rise of fundamentalist Islamist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) that have further complicated U.S. foreign policy and created evermore distressing circumstances for the average Iraqis and Syrians still living in the area.

This paper examines the unintended consequences of U.S. foreign policy toward Iraq and Syria from 1990 to 2014, specifically with regard to its impact on Iraqi and Syrian civilians. The paper takes both a chronological and thematic approach to the U.S.'s foreign policy decisions of the time period and organizes the information into the following five sections: The Gulf War (1991), Embargo and Sanctions (1991-2003), Operation Desert Fox and Bombing Campaigns (1998-2003), the Iraq War (2003-2011), and The Syrian Revolution (March 2011-). This paper relies on Nuha Al-Radi's *Baghdad Diaries: A Woman's Chronicle of War and Exile* and Samar

Yazbek's *A Woman in the Crossfire: Diaries of the Syrian Revolution* and *The Crossing: My Journey to the Shattered Heart of Syria* which function as stand-ins to represent the experiences and opinions of regular Iraqi and Syrian citizens as they lived the results of U.S. foreign policy toward their respective countries; the two authors and three books will be described more fully below. While Al-Radi and Yazbek's body of work should be studied and appreciated in its own right, the inclusion of their books here serves to give voice to the local within a broader geopolitical context. The paper acknowledges that foreign policy is an extremely complicated field, and many factors such as history, context, domestic policy, and even the personalities and worldviews of the policy-makers themselves impact the decisions and the implementation of the policies. However, by drawing on examples from the works of Al-Radi and Yazbek that illustrate the horror of living under certain U.S. foreign policies, this paper concludes that foreign policy decisions must be continually reassessed when the objectives of the decisions are unclear or fluctuating and/or when policies include acts of war, sanctions, and the provision or withholding of humanitarian aid that create the potential for great harm to civilian populations.

Source Summary

Three books written by two women serve as the primary source documents representing the experiences and opinions of average Iraqis and Syrians with respect to American foreign policy in action. First is *Baghdad Diaries: A Woman's Chronicle of War and Exile*, written by Nuha Al-Radi. Al-Radi was a painter and sculptor from an affluent, educated, and well-traveled Iraqi family. Her father had been a diplomat in the 1940s and 1950s, and the family spent time in Iran and India. Later, Al-Radi studied at the Byamshaw School of Art and Chelsea Pottery, both of London, and she taught at the American University of Beirut from 1961-1963. When war broke out in 1991 between Iraq and a U.S.-led coalition of thirty-five countries in response to

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Al-Radi was living in the Suleikh district in north Baghdad. She decided to keep a diary of the wartime experiences of her family and friends because, "After all, this kind of thing doesn't happen every day" (Al-Radi 10). Al-Radi's record of the 42-day 1991 Gulf War was originally published in December 1992 in the 42nd volume of the London quarterly literary magazine *Granta* as an essay called "Baghdad Diary." An expanded memoir titled *Baghdad Diaries: A Woman's Chronicle of War and Exile* first appeared in book form from Saqi Books of London in 1998. An updated edition published by Saqi Books in 2003 included a lengthened final chapter that incorporated Al-Radi's observations about the bombing campaign known as Operation Desert Shield and the September 11, 2001 attacks on the U.S. (9/11), as well as a postscript covering the earliest days of the U.S.'s 2003 invasion of Iraq. Given Al-Radi's family ties, her physical location during the 1991 war, and her Western education and contacts, she was uniquely suited to chronicle and editorialize about the war, the embargo, the bombing campaigns, and war part two, as well as her lived experiences during each. Nuha Al-Radi eventually developed leukemia, which she attributed to the massive amounts of depleted uranium the U.S. and its allies used against Iraqi tanks in 1991.[1] Al-Radi died of leukemia in Beirut in 2004 (Al-Radi 8, 18; "Baghdad Diary," *Granta*; Flint, "Nuha Al-Radi").

The second author is Samar Yazbek, a Syrian writer and journalist. Born in the city of Jableh on the Syrian coast in 1970, she lived nearly her entire life under the Al-Assad regimes.

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[1] According to Toby C. Jones in "Toxic War and the Politics of Uncertainty in Iraq," "In the United States, [depleted uranium or] DU-contaminated sites like Concord, Massachusetts and Colonie, New York- manufacturing centers for DU weapons that caused local environmental damage- have been shuttered by military or environmental authorities for the threats they pose to surrounding communities" (798). However, "Iraq's toxic status is mediated not so much by scientific evidence as by differential power relations and the politics of expertise" (798). Jones suggests that, despite the fact that depleted uranium is generally acknowledged to present grave risks to health, the study of depleted uranium's effects on the health of Iraqis has been politically managed by U.S. experts to absolve the U.S. of any responsibility to Iraqis suffering from the consequences of depleted uranium exposure.

She studied Arabic literature at Tishreen University in Latakia, and her professional work includes novels, short stories, film scripts, and television dramas. In 2010, she was included among the Beirut 39, a group of authors designated by the Hay Festival as examples of the best writers in the Arab world under 40 years of age. Although she is a member of the Alawite sect, she is an outspoken critic of the Alawite Bashar Al-Assad regime. Her first non-fiction book, *A Woman in the Crossfire: Diaries of the Syrian Revolution*, was translated into English and published by Haus Publishing of London in 2012; for this book, Yazbek received the 2012 PEN prize as an "international writer of courage," the Swedish Tucholsky prize in 2012, and the Holland Oxfam/Pen award in 2013. *A Woman in the Crossfire* chronicles the first four months of the Syrian uprising from March to June 2011. The protests began in response to the Al-Assad regime's detention and torture of fifteen teenage boys who wrote graffiti on the walls of Dar'a, Syria in support of the Arab Spring. In *A Woman*, you see the early optimism of the peaceful protesters she records, who demanded only the return of their children and additional respect and freedoms from the regime, turn quickly toward mortification and then militarism in response to the brutal repression the Al-Assad regime inflicted upon the demonstrators. Her efforts to record the events as she saw them and to present the stories of a variety of demonstrators participating throughout the country sought to bring the truth to a global audience, but they also drew the ire of the Al-Assad regime which was intent on creating its own narrative of the uprising. After several detentions, Yazbek fled her home in Damascus in the summer of 2011 for her own safety and for that of her daughter. She first went to London and finally settled in Paris (Yazbek, *A Woman* 271; Yazbek, "Mobilising;" Flood, "Syrian Author;" Al-Samman 147, 151).

However, Yazbek noted in 2013, "Although I was living in exile in France, I hadn't learned French yet because I had been resolved to move back to Syria and settle in the north"

(*Crossing* 139). In August 2012, just a little over a year after she first fled the country, she crossed back into Syria for the first of three visits with a two-fold mission. First, she wanted to set up projects and women's workshops that would both develop women's skills and serve as revenue-producing ventures so widowed women could learn to support themselves financially. Second, and especially during her later visits, Yazbek sought to bear witness to the events happening on the ground as the revolution progressed and to clarify the story reaching the outside world of the confusing events occurring inside Syria. Indeed, during her third visit to Syria in July-August 2013 she writes, "If it hadn't been for this process – of relaying these stories – I would have stopped returning to Syria, and remained cocooned in my exile" (*Crossing* 248). By the end of her third visit to Syria, her presence in Syria had become known, and she feared not only being harassed by the Al-Assad regime but also by the Islamist fighters, including the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), who targeted journalists and those with foreign connections for kidnapping, ransom, or worse. Yazbek could no longer visit the women's small business initiatives she helped to start the year before without the assistance of armed chaperones. When a barrel bomb exploded above the car in which she was traveling after the helicopter that dropped it was fortuitously pushed upwards by rebel gunfire, the near-death experience convinced Yazbek she could no longer stay in Syria, not because she might be killed but because her presence might lead to the death of those who had volunteered to be her protectors. Instead, she returned to Paris and compiled the interviews and accounts of events she recorded during her three visits to Syria from August 2012 to August 2013. Rider Books published the resulting manuscript in English in 2015 as *The Crossing: My Journey to the Shattered Heart of Syria* (*Crossing* 11, 77, 121, 126, 139-140, 159-161, 168, 238, 241; Flood, "Syrian Author").

Some may wonder whether women can report accurately and comprehensively about the masculine world of war and about the effects of foreign policy. I argue that women are ideally suited to record the events as they impact civilians because, as both Al-Radi and Yazbek point out, it is the women who stay. For example, Al-Radi notes on the 17th day of the 1991 war that, "We are a multitude of women in the Suleikh" (26). Later, as the embargo drags on and supplies run short, Al-Radi asks a friend if anything is increasing and for whom: "'Depression,' she answered, 'more than anything else.'…'What percentage of them are women?' I asked. 'Are there more than men?' 'Far more,' she answered. 'They carry all the responsibilities of caring for their house and children on virtually nothing while the men disappear or stay home and sleep'" (93-94). Similarly, Yazbek notes in June 2011,

> Recently, I have been meeting with women in order to set up a 'Syrian Women in Support of the Uprising' initiative, which requires meetings and action. The aim of this group was to provide the demonstrators with all the support they need, particularly emergency care for the wounded and cover for the young men of the coordination committees who have been forced into hiding as a result of being pursued by the security forces (*A Woman* 130).

When Yazbek returns to Syria beginning in August 2012, it is to facilitate the establishment of women's cooperatives to assist precisely those women who stayed in order to create for these women some financial independence or at least a degree of stability in the absence of male wage earners. However, it is Yazbek- a woman and a journalist at heart- who ends up witnessing and recording the experiences of those fighting on the front lines to preserve the memories of the men who were fighting and dying. Additionally, both Al-Radi and Yazbek repeatedly note the strength and ingenuity of the women they encounter. Al-Radi remarks that "…Iraqi women are tough as old boots…" yet capable of retaining their femininity by adapting their personal hygiene regimens to commodity shortages during the embargo years (162). Similarly, Yazbek observes both "…old women stronger than tanks" and young female activists who believed it would be

the women who brought real change to Syria (*A Woman* 114). Both women struggled at times to bear witness to the terrible events taking place around them. In April 2002, Al-Radi explains a break in her diary by confirming, "There is nothing to write about except horror stories, so I haven't been writing" (204). On May 15, 2011, Yazbek, after learning that her name appeared on a list of Alawite figures the regime targeted for assassination, justifies her pause in writing saying, "What's happening now is bigger than what I can write about" (*A Woman* 100). Yet, these strong women persisted. Far from being relegated to the background, both Al-Radi and Yazbek lived in the "crossfire" and chronicled historic and violent events as they saw them unfold (Al-Radi 63-64, 65, 71, 79, 96; Yazbek, *Crossing* 11, 204-205).

Broadly speaking, the sources used in this paper to define and explain U.S. foreign policy with regard to Iraq and Syria from 1990-2014 are of three types. The first are "primary source" documents in book form, disguised as secondary sources. However, because of the status or location of the authors of these books, these sources provide valuable first-person accounts of significant events related to both the decision-making process and the application of U.S. policies abroad. Many of these types of sources take the form of memoirs written by journalists and foreign correspondents who witnessed and reported on events in the Middle East from an American perspective. Richard Engel's *And Then All Hell Broke Loose: Two Decades in the Middle East* and Andrew Tabler's *In the Lion's Den: An Eyewitness Account of Washington's Battle with Syria* are such examples. Other memoirs, such as George Tenet's *At the Center of the Storm: The CIA During America's Time of Crisis*, present the perspective of members of the various presidential administrations or the U.S. intelligence community.

The second type of source representing U.S. foreign policy positions and their applications include historic overviews of both specific events and broader regional histories

written by people with particular expertise or access. For example, Charles Glass is a journalist who specializes in the Middle East; he wrote *Syria Burning: A Short History of a Catastrophe* based on his decades of personal experience traveling throughout Syria combined with research into Syrian history. Similarly, Michael R. Gordon, the chief military correspondent for *The New York Times*, and Bernard E. Trainor, a retired U.S. Marine Corps general, used their specific knowledge of modern U.S. military history to write *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama.*

The final type of secondary source is the work appearing in scholarly journals produced primarily by academic researchers specializing in foreign relations, international law, and regional history. Examples used in this paper are varied but include Abbas Alnasrawi of the University of Vermont's economics department and his "Iraq: Economic Sanctions and Consequences, 1990-2000;" Uzi Rabi and Brandon Friedman of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University and their "Weaponizing Sectarianism in Iraq and Syria;" and Judge Advocate Sean M. Condron of the U.S. Army Defense Counsel and his "Justification for Unilateral Action in Response to the Iraqi Threat: A Critical Analysis of Operation Desert Fox."

Finally, a brief note on potentially valuable sources that are not included in this paper. With few exceptions, this paper does not incorporate U.S. government reports, speeches by key foreign policy decision-makers within the various Presidential administrations, or other primary source documents relating to U.S. foreign policy as it was developed and implemented. The reason for this omission is the regrettably short period of time during which this paper was researched and produced. Online government archives and presidential libraries offer insight into the ways Presidents and diplomats, for example, weighed policy decisions; however, discovering

the useful bits of information within the vast archives is rather like searching for the proverbial needle in the haystack. Future versions of this paper will include more thorough investigation of U.S. government archival holdings.

The Gulf War (1991)

To begin, while Nuha Al-Radi's diary commences after the initiation of the bombing campaign that heralded the coming Gulf War of 1991, she does allude to the pre-war era at several points throughout her notes. Shortly after the end of the war in her March 14, 1991 entry, Al-Radi laments, "I wish I'd kept a diary in the six months before the war started when we had that endless array of dignitaries coming to visit, starting with [Austrian President Kurt] Waldheim and ending with [Secretary-General of the United Nations Javier Perez] de Cuellar. Then there was always hope. Now, nine months later, we're a beaten nation" (53). While Al-Radi notes that most economically comfortable Iraqi families purchased foodstuffs and supplies in preparation for the possibility of war, probably very few actually believed war would occur. The author herself was amongst those who expected events to take a more diplomatic and peaceful turn: "I'm not sure why I was so definite that there would be no war- my positive attitude had friends and family phoning up for reassurance until the last day. Perhaps I simply couldn't believe that in this day and age leaders could be so childish and/or plain stupid as to think that war could solve any issue" (9). So, for Al-Radi, and likely for many other urbanized and prosperous Iraqis, the pre-war days caused some degree of baseline anxiety, but the expectation remained that regional and international tensions could and would be mitigated through regular diplomacy (33).

However, Al-Radi's fundamental assumption, namely that those states involved in the conflict were prepared to take every step to avoid war, turned out to be tragically wrong,

especially in the case of the United States. Policy analysts, journalists, and academics then and now have advanced any number of reasons for the U.S.'s seemingly abrupt turn from modest and indirect involvement in the region to a major and overt presence. Perhaps the most widely cited and convincing argument is that after the conclusion of the eight-year Iran-Iraq War in 1988, during which the region's primary powers had been distracted, the U.S. felt more fully the loss of its long-time ally in Iran and recognized a need for more direct involvement in the region to secure its own political and economic interests. Though the U.S. had tilted toward supporting Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War when it appeared that Iran was gaining the upper hand, Saddam Hussein's unwillingness to bend to the will of the U.S. in matters relating to Israeli security and free access to cheap energy made him extremely unpopular to successive American administrations. Interestingly, Al-Radi herself, in the aftermath of "an awful night. Rocketing non-stop and the biggest and loudest explosion ever" on day seventeen of the 1991 Gulf War, ponders whether this was the reason for war, asking, "…what did we do to you, George Bush, that you should hate us with such venom? One can hear it in your voice. Is it because we stood up to the USA and said no?" (Al-Radi 25; Haass 2; Hallaj 5-6; Ryan 465; Zunes 85; Klare 5).

Other reasons cited for the U.S.'s interest in participating in a war against Iraq in 1991 were far more cynical but, perhaps, no less probable. For example, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the Soviet Union grew increasingly weak, and the Cold War finally looked to be nearing a conclusion. While celebrated by the American public as well as by the Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations, the Pentagon worried that the "threat blank" left by the loss of known Cold War enemies would mean a severe cut in military spending. As Colin Powell noted during his time as Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1991, "I'm running out of villains. I'm down to Castro and Kim Il Sung;" Saddam Hussein, with his intransigent attitude toward

U.S. involvement in regional affairs as well as his reported million-man army, made a perfect villain (Ryan 460, 463).

Additionally, the U.S. military saw in Iraq its first real opportunity since the conclusion of the Vietnam War to exercise its conventional forces and exorcise the stench of military defeat. When Congress eventually voted to authorize the use of force in Iraq on January 12, 1991, the declaration was not so unanimous as the later war narrative suggested. In fact, the 52-47 vote in the Senate and the 250-183 vote in the House of Representatives in favor of the war divided less along party lines and more along the lines of those still haunted by Vietnam and those who wanted to discard the Vietnam-induced constraints. The specter of Vietnam hung over military planning as well, with civilian and military leadership alike agreeing that specific Vietnam-era practices such as civilian micromanaging of the war and gradual escalation would be avoided. Indeed, George H. W. Bush announced on March 1, 1991- immediately after the conclusion of the ground war in Iraq- that the allied victory had "…kicked the 'Vietnam syndrome' once and for all" (Jacobs 141). Use of force against Iraq also represented the first real test since 1975 of the U.S.'s willingness and ability to use its military as a tool for conducting foreign policy (Bacevich 117-118, 134; Hallaj 10).

Perhaps the most disturbing proposal regarding the reasons behind the U.S.'s entry into conflict with Iraq is that war was intended to serve as an economic and employment stimulus project for the American public. On day twenty-one of the war, Al-Radi wonders as much when she writes, "Maybe they want to destroy us so they can produce more jobs for their people in the West! Reconstruction and new military supplies could keep them going economically for years" (29). Unfortunately, Al-Radi may have been correct in her contemplation. On November 13, 1990, after meeting with Canadian Foreign Minister Joe Clark, U.S. Secretary of State James

Baker confirmed that the motivation for the troop and equipment build up in and nominally for the protection of Saudi Arabia known as Operation Desert Shield (August 2, 1990 - January, 16 1991) revolved around the domestic economy: "To bring it down to the level of the average American citizen, let me say that it means jobs…If you want to sum it up in one word, it's jobs" (Jacobs 153).

Moving on from the motivation for war to the specific cause of the war, in her first diary entry two days into the conflict on January 19, 1991, Al-Radi indicated that, in general, war is utter foolishness. Citing much experience in these matters, having "…witnessed at first hand three revolutions in Iraq, the Suez war in Egypt and some of the Lebanese civil war," Al-Radi concludes that "in this instance, nobody wanted to communicate to allow for a compromise" (9). Once again, Al-Radi appears spot-on in her analysis. Retrospectively, analysts agree that a failure to communicate, specifically to conduct normal diplomacy in an effort to avert armed conflict, is what caused the outbreak of hostilities. However, analysts disagree as to who deserves censure for this failure.

Some, specifically those with links to the George H. W. Bush administration, try to place the blame squarely on Saddam Hussein and his inflexibility and duplicity. For example, the U.S. State Department accused Hussein of making "inflammatory, irresponsible, and outrageous" statements when, on April 2, 1990 during a radio broadcast in Iraq, Hussein avowed the availability of advanced chemical weapons for use against Israel in the event of a "pre-emptive strike" (Jacobs 143). However, two weeks later, the chief of Israeli military forces, General Ehud Barak, suggested Hussein was practicing deliberate obfuscation in communicating his intentions: "Saddam Husayn's trying to fool the world. His plan isn't to attack Israel. You should look south of Iraq. That's where he is really looking" (Salinger 597). Additionally, some point to Hussein's

behavior with regard to the July 31, 1990 conference in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia as a direct cause for war. Ostensibly, the conference was intended to facilitate a negotiated settlement among the governments of Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia; however, Hussein did not attend the conference, citing the "deadly insult" of Kuwaiti Emir Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's last minute announcement that he would not attend the meeting (Salinger 600). Instead, Hussein sent high-ranking Baath Party member 'Izzat Ibrahim with strict instructions from which Ibrahim was not permitted to deviate. The conference stalled after ninety minutes when Ibrahim would budge neither from Hussein's demand for a $10 billion financial "gift" from Kuwait nor address the Kuwaiti concern of border demarcation (Salinger 600-2; Klare 13-15).

Although Saddam Hussein's failure to engage in open and honest dialogue surely contributed to the war, the same can be said for George H. W. Bush. It is not clear, however, whether Bush's failure to communicate was due to his administration's incompetence or whether it was intentional and/or strategic in nature. The Bush administration, for example, gave Hussein several friendly signals immediately prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. In February 1990, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State John Kelly met with Hussein and stated, "You are a force of moderation in the region, and the United States wishes to broaden her relations with Iraq" (Salinger 597). Two months later, a Congressional delegation visited Iraq, and one Senator said to Hussein, "There's no problem between you and the American government or the American people" (Salinger 598). Also in April 1990, Bush sent a Ramadan message of hope to Hussein, saying, "…ties between the United States and Iraq would contribute to the peace and stability in the Middle East" (Salinger 598). On July 17, 1990, even as Hussein began to move Iraqi troops to the Kuwaiti border, the Bush administration did not show any signs of alarm, nor did it take any steps to warn Hussein about the consequences of his actions at any point before the August

2, 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Indeed, on July 25, 1990, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq April Glaspie told Hussein, "We have no opinion on Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait" (Salinger 599; Jacobs 145).

Others interpret the George H. W. Bush administration's communications with Hussein, or lack thereof, as a strategic move to guarantee war. Author Muhammad Hallaj, for example, suggests that the U.S. did not engage diplomatically with Iraq because the Bush administration viewed military confrontation as the most desirable outcome. U.S. Secretary of State Baker did meet with Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz in Geneva on January 9, 1991- six days before the United Nations (UN) Security Council's January 15 deadline for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait- but the negotiations stalled reportedly due to inflexibility on the Iraqi side and the issuance of ultimatums on the American side. Hussein also indicated to UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar during a meeting on January 13, 1991 that as early as August 5, 1990, Hussein had declared he would withdraw from Kuwait, but he suspended withdrawal efforts after Bush ordered the deployment of U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia. Hallaj concludes his argument saying that, having decided the military option was the most desirable outcome, the Bush administration deliberately failed to communicate its ever-changing objectives with regard to Iraq out of fear that Hussein might acquiesce to its demands. If Iraq acquiesced, the U.S. would be prevented from establishing a military presence in the region and exercising further control over the region's oil supplies. Again, Al-Radi hits the nail on the head when she observes on the 30th day of the war, "Our big mistake was not to move out of Kuwait by 15 January; that would have left the Allies in a hell of a dilemma" (38). Four days later, she comments, "Well, Mr. Bush said no to the overtures of Tariq Aziz. I never thought he would say yes anyway. It doesn't serve his

purpose" (Al-Radi 41; Hallaj 1, 2, 7, 9; Salinger 607, 608, 611; Jacobs 146; Ryan 466; Yetiv 164).

What of these changing objectives? What were the Bush administration's goals with regard to the war as it was carried out? And, were the goals sufficient and sufficiently articulated to justify the acute suffering of Iraqi civilians living in Baghdad that Al-Radi so plainly describes in her diary?

In her record of the variety of privations experienced during the 42 days of war, Al-Radi noted that she lost electricity on the first day of the war, and, therefore, all of the food she and her family and friends purchased and stored in their freezers in preparation for the war started to spoil within the week. By day three, she and her neighbors ran out of water, and by the tenth day Al-Radi observed people attempting to wash their laundry on the banks of the fast-moving Tigris River. Though Al-Radi eventually achieved intermittent water access throughout the war, the water pressure remained too weak to reach the storage tank on the roof. Thus, she and her family were forced to form a bucket brigade in order to fill the tank, all the while getting soaked with cold water in the middle of winter. Even so, the water required boiling to ensure its potability. Communication also proved difficult. Al-Radi's telephone service went down on the first day of the war, and the telephone only worked sporadically throughout the remainder of the conflict. When news did require circulation among family and friends, such as notification of the death of Al-Radi's uncle, Mundher Baig, on day fourteen of the war, family members each took a Baghdad neighborhood and visited by car in order to locate family and friends to inform them of the funeral face-to-face, despite the dangers they faced by the U.S.-led coalition's continuous bombing campaigns. Even this method of communication suffered as the war progressed as fuel resources ran out, and the destruction of bridges turned each neighborhood of Baghdad into an

isolated village, all but cut off from the neighboring areas (Al-Radi 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22, 23, 25, 33).

Of course, the societal breakdown and lack of basic necessities was the result of air raids and bombing runs that produced their own sorts of psychological trauma. Many of Al-Radi's diary entries begin with phrases like, "an awful night" or "last night was another horror, maybe the worst yet" or "nights and days full of noise, no sleep possible" (25, 34, 46). Though Al-Radi did not report losing any family members or friends as a direct result of the bombs and rockets, she noted the extensive damage to personal property they caused: in her mother's house, all the windows that faced the river were shattered on the first night of the war, and only the closed shutters saved the occupants from injury; day thirteen brought heavy damage to a friend's shop because of its location next to a bridge targeted for destruction; on day nineteen, two rockets destroyed an outside wall and garage belonging to friends living in the Masbah (an upper-middle class area of Karadah District, east of the Tigris River); and, on day 27, B-52 bombers put a bullet through the windshield of another friend's parked car. Al-Radi also recorded the damage to Iraqi infrastructure and industry: the choking black smoke rising from the destroyed Dora refinery that burned for weeks after it was bombed on the first day of the war; the "precision bombing" of "military targets" such as textile factories, flour mills, and cement plants; and the bombing of archaeological sites and other "collateral damage" sustained by museums and historic buildings (27, 29, 35). But, the destruction that seemed to bother her the most was the devastation of the city's numerous bridges. On day 26, Al-Radi observes, "the Martyrs' Bridge and the Suspension Bridge have been hit. I feel very bitter toward the West" (32). A few days prior to that event, Al-Radi had noted, "They have started hitting the bridges again. Jumhuriya Bridge is now apparently in three pieces" (29). The following day, she summarized why the loss

of bridges was so painful: “I saw the Jumhuriya Bridge today. It’s very sad to see a bombed bridge. A murderous action for it destroys a link. Everyone is very strangely affected by the sight of a bombed bridge. They cram along the sides, peering down into the craters and holes, looking very sad and crying” (Al-Radi 29; 11, 20-21, 28, 32).

Additionally, Al-Radi cannot help but note the impact the rockets have had on the animals around her and the environmental damage she sees. For example, she records the stress the noise of the rockets causes to her poor dog, Salvador Dali, writing on the first day that Sali “…was chasing frantically around the two houses looking up at the sky and barking furiously” (10). However, despite Sali’s nerves and anxiety, he still served as a source of comfort to the wild dogs that crowded close to him as they cried out in fear. On day eighteen, the day after a horrendous explosion rocked the entirety of Baghdad, Al-Radi observes a large number of dead flies on the floor of her house and wonders if the shock of the explosion killed them. But, says Al-Radi,

> The birds have taken the worst beating of all. They have sensitive souls which cannot take all this hideous noise and vibration. All the caged love-birds have died from the shock of the blasts, while birds in the wild fly upside down and do crazy somersaults. Hundreds, if not thousands, have died in the orchard. Lonely survivors fly about in a distracted fashion (27).

Al-Radi also observes that friends’ chickens have either stopped laying eggs or have resorted to attacking other domestic birds, necessitating the destruction of a crazed bird. Her beloved orchard with “its 66 palms and 161 orange trees” begins to dry up one month into the war, despite the fact that she attempts to save it by watering it with wastewater (7). Additionally, the blackened sky- the result of burning refineries and tires- caused her to cough incessantly and produced black puddles that looked like oil slicks in the streets after the rains (Al-Radi 26, 27, 29, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43).

After the conclusion of the war, Al-Radi not only expressed outrage about the quantity of missiles, rockets, and bombs used by the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq during the 42 day war, but also the fact that Iraqis seemed to be considered suitable test subjects for a variety of new types of weapons. In early 1994, Al-Radi attended a conference about the continued impact of the war on the environment. While at the conference, she expressed incredulity with regard to new information she received about the weapons used: "Baghdad and Basra got the worst of the bombing in an operation called Watertap when the USA experimented with Barite [*sic*] bombs. Apparently, these do not make a big bang but just let out a lot of smoke. Some die immediately from its effects, others linger on for years. They were experimenting" (Al-Radi 75). Later, she spoke with an environmentalist who suggested that it was the residual effects of these barium bombs that were causing the oranges to drop off the citrus trees in Al-Radi's orchard (123). In March 1994, she met an epidemiologist and facetiously asked him to send a cancer researcher to determine whether all the chemical components that had been introduced during the war really were slowly poisoning the Iraqis. "But," she said, "then I remembered that the USA experimented on its own soldiers, so why should they care if we survive or not. In fact, it's useful for them; they can check the results in total freedom and unhampered by any legal constraints" (Al-Radi 101). Five years later, she sees a new report on another type of weapon, one that she believed personally affected her health:

> Outlook Programme on the BBC says 300 tons of depleted uranium in the southern battle area in Iraq are causing horrendous defects, babies with no heads, no eyes- there are no computers to make an exact count. It has seeped through the earth into the water system, which means agriculture is also affected. What is on the ground can still be cleaned, but it's a very expensive exercise. What is in the air remains in the air blowing around. So it's a catastrophe for centuries to come. Hiroshima is still paying for its bombardment and we are far worse off. Both are victims of American technology. All the US soldiers who took part in the Gulf War, and who had shrapnel wounds, still show depleted uranium in their sperm. In the 250 'Gulf families', 60 percent of children have been born with congenital defects. So what of Iraq? (166-167).

So, what were the U.S.'s goals in bringing all this destruction to the people of Iraq? The Bush Administration's primary stated goals were the protection of Saudi Arabia and the liberation of Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion. However, as Al-Radi recorded in her diary, the people of Baghdad, 345 miles from the border of Kuwait, "…didn't have anything to do with the Kuwaiti take-over, yet we have been paying the price for it" (47). Quite rightly, Al-Radi asks on day thirteen, "Twenty-seven thousand air raids on us so far. Is the world mad? Do they not realize what they're doing? I think Bush is a criminal. This country is totally ruined. Who gives the Americans the licence to bomb at will? I could understand Kuwait doing this to us, but not the whole world. Why do they hate us so much?" (21). Six days later she asks, "The one thing that no one bet on was that Baghdad was going to be bombed and hit like this. They were supposed to be freeing Kuwait. Maybe they need a map?" (28). On day 34 of the war, Al-Radi produces the answer to her questions:

> Bush is fighting a dirty war…He will continue to hammer us 'til the bitter end, he doesn't care how many Iraqis he kills. The West seems to have only three images of Arabs – terrorists, oil sheiks, and women covered in black from head to toe. I'm not even sure that they know if there are ordinary human beings who live here (40).

Al-Radi hints that despite the assertions of the Bush Administration, the war was never really about the humanitarian goal of freeing Kuwait. It does seem rather unlikely that the U.S.-led coalition could have bombed non-military Iraqi targets so thoroughly (on day 31 of the war, Al-Radi says, "the score today is 76,000 Allied air raids versus 67 Scuds") in the absence of a dehumanizing thought process that created an animalistic "other" out of the Iraqis (38). The U.S.'s dehumanization of Iraqis appears even more problematic in light of the fact that Iraqis and Kuwaitis share many cultural and ethnic similarities. After the conclusion of the war, Al-Radi assesses that the war actually had little to do with Kuwaiti liberation and only ended when it did

because the American public could not stomach any more scenes of violence, not because the Allied coalition's bloodlust had been satisfied (Al-Radi 48; Jacobs 146, 147; Muscati 132-133).

A secondary goal of the war for the U.S. was the removal of Saddam Hussein from power, or at least ensuring his containment if he survived the war. However, this goal was even more nebulous than the goal of Kuwaiti liberation, especially given the inconsistency of the George H. W. Bush administration with regard to this issue. For example, just days after Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, news of a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)-led destabilization plan for Iraq leaked to the press. Five days after that, Bush urged the ouster of Saddam Hussein saying, "some countries around the world hope that the Iraqi people would rise up and overthrow Hussein" (Jacobs 4). Shortly after the conclusion of the war, Al-Radi muses about the prospect of Hussein's overthrow by internal forces: "We are told to rebel by the West, with what and how?" (54). Given the fact that it had become such a struggle just to meet the basic needs of daily life, it certainly was a fair question to ask how Iraqis could be expected to muster the energy and resources to overthrow a dictator at this time, even with the tacit support of the West. However, even as reports of revolts in Basra and demonstrations in as many as fifteen other Iraqi cities emerged, Bush formally announced on March 26, 1991 that the U.S. would not aid the anti-Hussein rebels in Iraq (Jacobs 161, 162).

Perhaps because Saddam Hussein had once been a sort of American ally in the days after the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, the George H. W. Bush administration may have retained hope that relations between the two countries could be salvaged and therefore did not actually want Hussein's ouster in 1991. More likely, though, given that Washington had provided Hussein military, economic, and intelligence aid after Iraq's invasion of Iran in 1980, the Bush administration may have assumed it could pressure Hussein into containing Iran on behalf of the

U.S. Not only that, the Bush administration knew that in the 1980s, the U.S. had supplied Hussein with much of the raw materials necessary for biological and chemical weapons programs, as well as with the components required for the development of missiles and nuclear weapons. Thus, it was in the U.S.'s best interests to ensure Hussein retained power, if in a more constrained capacity, so that these materials would not fall under the control of an even more radical and unpredictable leader. Therefore, even after equating Hussein with Adolf Hitler in order to give the impression that a political solution meant "appeasement," after exaggerating the strength of the Iraqi army (so convincingly that Al-Radi suggests Iraqis fell for it, too), after leading the most destructive bombing campaign and the fastest ground war in history, the U.S.-led coalition stopped short of marching on Baghdad and pursuing Hussein's removal. Upon assessing the prospective costs of regime change and the risks to U.S. relations with other major powers who had only signed on to the war effort to liberate Kuwait, Bush decided to forego efforts to replace Hussein and settled for a military defeat of the Iraqi army and the liberation of Kuwait (Bacevich 132; Hallaj 3-4; Al-Radi 51; Ryan 465-466; Salinger 604; Shifrinson 69; Zunes 70; Mahnken 143-145; Yetiv 217).

Embargo and Sanctions (1991-2003)

Because the U.S.-led coalition did not push to topple the Saddam Hussein regime in 1991, Al-Radi and the Iraqi people were forced to live for many years under extremely harsh conditions as a result of an embargo and sanctions imposed on Iraq by the UN. The primary purpose of the embargo and sanctions regime was to ensure Hussein's compliance with UN Security Council resolutions 687 and 699. Resolution 687 reaffirmed thirteen previous Iraq-related resolutions passed in 1990 and 1991, established an international border between Iraq and Kuwait, and demanded Iraq submit to inspections of declared weapons of mass destruction

production sites. Resolution 699 strengthened the authority of the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to inspect and destroy biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons, respectively. In addition, Resolution 699 mandated compliance with all inspection programs and also determined that Iraq would be held financially liable for inspections (Zunes 82-83).[2]

Although the George H. W. Bush administration opposed the imposition of all sanctions on Iraq as late as July 27, 1990, after Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990, Bush levied economic sanctions on Iraq and froze all Iraqi assets. The UN followed suit on August 6, 1990, when it passed Security Council Resolution 661, which imposed sweeping economic sanctions against Iraq. While Iraqis largely viewed sanctions against their country during the occupation of Kuwait as the fault of their own government's actions ("…we did the first wrong" as Al-Radi phrased it), Iraqis blamed the U.S. and the West for post-war sanctions and viewed them as

[2] UN Security Resolution 687, adopted on April 3, 1991, reaffirmed the following Resolutions: 660 (condemned Iraqi invasion of Kuwait), 661 (sanctioned Iraq for its invasion of Kuwait), 662 (condemned Iraq's annexation of Kuwait), 664 (demanded Iraq leave Kuwait), 665 (established additional sanctions against Iraq), 666 (clarified sanctions programs and established humanitarian aid for Iraqi civilians), 667 (condemned Iraqi attacks against foreign diplomatic personnel), 669 (addressed requests for assistance by coalition countries that had been indirectly affected by sanctions against Iraq), 670 (imposed civil aviation sanctions on Iraq), 674 (demanded protections for foreign nationals in territory under Iraqi control), 677 (condemned Iraq for destroying civil and demographic records in Kuwait), 678 (authorized the 1991 Gulf War to uphold the previous Resolutions by "all necessary means"), and 686 (suspension of military activities against Iraq contingent on Iraq's implementation of the previous Resolutions). In addition, it appointed a commission to demarcate the international border between Iraq and Kuwait and demanded Iraq respect the established border. Resolution 687 also demanded Iraq pay reparations to Kuwait, declare all weapons of mass destruction, and submit to inspections of these sites. The Resolution further reiterated that international sanctions against Iraq did not apply to foodstuffs or to medical aid for the civilian population, but, significantly, it reaffirmed all previous Resolutions related to sanctions, including those that limited exports and froze assets. Resolution 687 also confirmed that sales of weapons and other related material to Iraq would be prohibited. Resolution 699 was adopted on June 17, 1991 ("United Nations Security Council Resolution 687;" "United Nations Security Council Resolution 699").

intentionally punitive and politically motivated (Al-Radi 9, 101; Jacobs 146, 147; Ryan 470; Zunes 82-83).

Despite the fact that UN Security Council Resolution 687 explicitly exempted food and medical support for civilians from sanctions, the embargo on Iraqi oil meant that Iraq could not sell its oil on the international market to raise funds to pay for the food. In 1992, the UN sanctions committee determined there to be great humanitarian need among the civilian population in Iraq; however, despite the growing humanitarian crisis, the committee recommended that Iraq's own resources be used to provide for essential civilian needs. As a result, Iraq was allowed to export $1.6 billion worth of oil to purchase emergency food rations under a program known as "Oil for Food;" but Iraq only received $1 billion of the proceeds to purchase food items, far short of the amount required to support its population for the year. The balance of the sale, or 30% of the total, was diverted to the Compensation Fund for Kuwaiti reparations, to pay for UN operations in Iraq, and to pay the oil's transport fees to Turkey. The program was revisited in 1995 with the authorization raised to $2 billion worth of oil every six months; however, because the program still diverted 30% of the sales to the Compensation Fund and because the UN Security Council retained the right to monitor the exchanges, Iraq rejected the proposal. Hyperinflation forced Hussein to reconsider the program in 1996, but by this point even the increased sale value of the oil proved insufficient to meet even the minimum needs of the population (Alnasrawi 210-213).

In the chapter called "Embargo" from *Baghdad Diaries*, Al-Radi described the various ways that economic sanctions impacted every aspect of her life and the lives of her family and friends in Iraq. One of the starkest comparisons was that of the high price of goods during sanctions as opposed to their pre-1990 prices, or even their wartime prices. For example, during

the war, one dozen eggs cost four dinars, but during post-war sanctions one egg cost 60 dinars.[3] The high price of eggs created additional burdens on the poor; Al-Radi gave one example of a family who agreed to pay their rent in eggs and chickens only to find skyrocketing prices made the contract unsustainable. She noted that in March 1995, the price for tomatoes reached four hundred dinars for one kilogram. Al-Radi also mentioned that she was forced to remain homebound because the cost of a new battery for her car reached 16,000 dinars. Additionally, as new tires became unavailable, she watched cars creep around Baghdad on bald tires since the only replacements available were used tires imported from Jordan. She also noticed that her newspapers were shrinking in size as the publishers economized on paper, and that the government was printing new prices on old stamps to reuse available materials. Even the formerly luxurious Rashid Hotel had to cut bars of soap in half in order to provide minimally for its guests (Al-Radi 62, 63, 75, 76, 82, 102, 105).

In her wry way, Al-Radi also described the ways people recycled or repurposed items and products in an attempt to recreate the relatively high standards of living to which they were accustomed prior to the war and sanctions. Women in particular demonstrated a commendable resiliency in the face of extreme hardship. For example, she saw women mending their nylon stockings, something that would never have occurred prior to the sanctions. Additionally, she noticed a friend who, in the absence of facial tissues, used a doll's dress that belonged to her daughter and also an old massage towel as handkerchiefs because of the limited availability and expense of Kleenex. Al-Radi also noted the challenges women faced in trying to maintain their beauty regimens. For example, she described a friend who used vinegar and eggplant skins in

[3] Throughout the 1990s, the Iraq dinar (IQD) sustained an exchange rate with the U.S. dollar (USD) of 1 IQD = 3.22 USD, despite rising debt. The U.S. introduced a new dinar after the 2003 invasion, which was valued as low as 1500 IQD = 1 USD. As of April 2018, the exchange rate is 1185 IQD = 1 USD (http://www.economywatch.com/exchange-rate/dinar.html).

place of hair dye, who washed her hair with laundry detergent since she could no longer afford shampoo, and who finally resorted to shaving her head so that she would only have to pay to visit the hair salon once every four months (Al-Radi 63-64, 65, 71, 79, 96).

Al-Radi also recorded the way the lived experiences of the embargo and sanctions negatively impacted the social fabric of Baghdad and created ripples in society that will continue to be felt for years to come. During the war, Al-Radi's observations painted a picture of a strong social network full of people who looked out for the welfare of family and friends. However, during the sanctions years, Al-Radi notes that, "People are living by stealing and cheating" (62). She went on to describe numerous instances of theft of cars and other personal property such as food prepared for a funeral, electric panels, and handles for flush toilets. In addition, the Rashid Hotel's staff earned notoriety for routine theft of their guests' property. Even the Qatari, Polish, and Mauritanian Embassies were not immune, as each became victims of automobile theft. Moreover, Al-Radi observed that simple pleasures such as meeting with family and friends became impossible to pursue because people could not afford to conduct the culturally expected reciprocal hospitality (Al-Radi 62, 63, 72, 73, 78, 79, 80, 81, 89, 90, 122, 127).

More troubling, however, are Al-Radi's records of sacrificed potential. While she noted that schoolteachers and ex-ambassadors worked as automobile mechanics in an effort to make ends meet, it was the impact on the children that was most disheartening. Al-Radi stated that many children could not afford the basic materials to attend school; however, even if they procured notebooks and pencils, the schools lacked computers and other resources to facilitate learning. Instead of school, many children- even those as young as six years old- begged for jobs to help their families meet daily living expenses or sold Chiclets or shined shoes in the streets. Al-Radi also relayed a troubling story about parents who reportedly assaulted their children so

that their children would be hospitalized and cared for (and fed) for up to three weeks (Al-Radi 64, 67, 79, 102, 106, 115).

Unfortunately, the hospitals themselves often lacked basic items. For example, doctors were forced to reuse disposable products such as gloves and syringes, and materials such as surgical thread and anesthetic were so poor in quality as to be virtually unusable. Al-Radi also relayed the story of a friend who went to the hospital for a hernia operation. Upon arriving, he learned he was expected to furnish his own sheets to cover the filthy mattress, plates to receive his sparse meals, and light bulbs to illuminate his dark room. This lack of quality medical care was even more problematic given that many Iraqis, including Al-Radi herself, suffered from odd ailments attributed to weapons used during the war. Al-Radi writes that, "Everyone seems to be dying of cancer" and "…many babies are being born dumb" (67, 70). She also reported that doctors diagnosed many lumps in lymph nodes and linked the lumps to materials used in the bombings. Additionally, Al-Radi observed that many teenagers experienced fainting spells or coma that often led to death. She also noted the fall in men's sperm count and the high infant mortality rate linked not only to malnutrition associated directly with the sanctions but also to the mineral fallout from the war. Unfortunately, many deaths remained unexplained because there were no pathology labs to complete autopsies (Al-Radi 64, 88, 91, 92, 93, 125, 128).

The question remains whether the sanctions program, which Al-Radi describes in such vivid and horrifying detail, even achieved its aim of enforcing Iraq's compliance with UN Security Council Resolutions and limiting Saddam Hussein's possession of weapons of mass destruction. Sadly, the answer is probably no. However, it is not because Hussein continued to produce chemical, biological, or nuclear materials despite sanctions. Rather, the bombing campaigns of the war followed by UN inspections of designated sites throughout the 1990s

destroyed most of Hussein's caches and made the production of new materials virtually impossible, thus rendering the necessity and results of the sanctions generally debatable. Although Al-Radi does note that Hussein was found to be hiding a Chinese radar installation, "chemical germ warfare stuff," and 30 kilograms of uranium, she also fairly points out that Iraq was the most heavily scrutinized country in the world for over a decade, so it would have been unthinkable for Hussein to be able to acquire additional prohibited materials or to use weapons of mass destruction against targets of strategic interest to the West (77, 97, 127). Not only that, Hussein had resisted using weapons of mass destruction on an invading coalition against which Iraqi forces were no match. Thus, it was illogical to assume that Hussein was prepared to use chemical or other weapons on his neighbors, as he would have gained nothing by doing so. Rather, failing to comply fully with inspections created the illusion of possession of weapons of mass destruction, and this was sufficient for Hussein's purposes of balancing Israel and acquiring status and influence in the Arab world (Ryan 474-5; Zunes 73).

However, Hussein's unwillingness to cooperate fully with inspectors and the U.S.'s response to this lack of cooperation had the unfortunate effect of prolonging the sanctions. Despite the fact that Hussein's nuclear program was disabled rather quickly after the 1991 war, and no credible reports about Iraq's possession of biological or chemical weapons appeared after October 1995, the U.S. intelligence community (IC) became obsessed with worst-case scenario analysis that focused almost exclusively on the small number of unknowns associated with Iraq's weapons programs. Hussein's lack of cooperation and the IC's presumption of the existence of weapons of mass destruction despite the absence of evidence led to the view that Iraq was a "rogue state." By the mid-1990s, the U.S. became committed to regime change in Iraq and linked lifting of the sanctions directly with Hussein's ouster. However, Hussein had already

demonstrated that he was more interested in power than in moral authority over Iraqi citizens, so once the U.S. publicly acknowledged its desire for regime change in Iraq, Hussein saw no need to continue his cooperation with the seemingly open-ended inspection programs (Ryan 458, 460; Mazaheri 255-256; Alnasrawi 205; Fawcett 328).

Moreover, despite the George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton administrations' hopes that sanctions would ultimately infuriate Iraqis to the point that they would spontaneously rise up and overthrow the Saddam Hussein regime on their own, sanctions may have had the perverse effect of strengthening Hussein's hold on the seat of power and over the Iraqi people. For example, Hussein used the funds produced by the "Oil for Food" program to develop a rationing system that expanded government control over the Iraqi people. Although the system was never designed to provide fully for the caloric needs of each individual Iraqi, the rations nonetheless were essential to the survival of many. Because of the relentlessness of the sanctions in terms of both severity and duration, the crisis demanded an authoritative system of allocation that Hussein fully used to his advantage by creating conditions of dependency. Thus, the sanctions-inspired rationing system also eliminated popular revolt as a viable option. The sanctions frustrated many potential destabilizing movements in Iraq and eliminated the social forces necessary to produce change because the politically powerful middle class was essentially destroyed under sanctions. At the same time, Hussein ensured that those closest to him in terms of social status and family ties escaped most of the pain of sanctions. Hussein also used every opportunity to propagandize the sanctions, reminding the Iraqis that their difficult situation was the result of Western brutality and imperialism. In doing so, Hussein chose specific language to appeal to Iraqi nationalism and a sense of common Islamic identity to encourage Iraqis to rally around his leadership (Mazaheri 256-257, 258, 259, 261, 263, 264; Alnasrawi 213).

Operation Desert Fox and Bombing Campaigns (1998-2003)

After the end of the 1991 Gulf War, popular rebellions sprang up in northern and southern Iraq and lasted for about one month. The Iraqi Kurds and the Shia viewed Saddam Hussein as a repressive and ineffective leader after the Iran-Iraq War stalemate and the loss of the 1991 Gulf War, and they considered Iraq ripe for regime change. Termed the National Uprising by the Kurds and the Sha'aban Intifada by Arabs, the unorganized rebels managed to capture many of Iraq's major cities. However, Hussein retained control of Baghdad and used the Republican Guard to brutally push back the rebels, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians and the displacement of as many as two million Iraqis. In response, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 688 on April 5, 1991, which condemned Hussein's oppression of the Iraqi population and demanded Hussein respect human rights. This Resolution was somewhat controversial from its adoption because it appeared to violate a fundamental UN charter principle concerning domestic jurisdiction and a sovereign state's right to manage its internal affairs. Even more controversially, although Resolution 688 did not authorize military action, the U.S., the United Kingdom (U.K.), and France used the Resolution to establish "no-fly zones," ostensibly to protect the Kurdish population in northern Iraq and the Shi'ite population in southern Iraq from oppression inflicted upon them by the Saddam Hussein regime in the immediate aftermath of the war. The U.S., the U.K., and France patrolled these zones of questionable legality without the expressed support of the UN almost continuously from the shooting down of the first Iraqi plane venturing into the northern no-fly zone on March 20, 1991 to the U.S. invasion of Iraq exactly twelve years later (Salinger 613; Jacobs 13; Zunes 74; Glen 313; Yetiv 2).

Additionally, because Iraq formally agreed to adhere to the terms of the cease-fire agreement outlined in UN Security Council Resolution 687, it also agreed to invasive monitoring. According to the terms of the Resolution, Iraq was required to dismantle and destroy all weapons of mass destruction in its possession as well as the means to deliver the weapons. To ensure compliance with Resolution 687, the Security Council established the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) to inspect and verify the destruction of Iraq's chemical and biological weapons programs and to work in concert with the Iraq Nuclear Verification Office (INVO) from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which inspected Iraq's nuclear capabilities. Suspension of sanctions and Iraq's invitation to return to active participation in international commerce were contingent upon Hussein's cooperation with the inspection teams as well his elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and termination of aspirations for future weapons of mass destruction (Condron 118-19; Ryan 460).

According to reports published by INVO at the time, the office's work proceeded with little disruption from Saddam Hussein and was understood to have achieved rapid and complete success in eliminating Iraq's nuclear weapons program. UNSCOM met with less success because it faced some concealment and deception efforts by the Iraqis. However, the majority of UNSCOM's inspections were uncontested and highly successful, and UNSCOM produced no evidence that Iraq continued to maintain prohibited weapons after October 1995. In general, the differing success rates between INVO and UNSCOM seem to have been personality-driven rather than for reasons of Saddam Hussein's intentional deceptiveness as contended by UNSCOM. Whereas INVO consisted of a team of international nuclear experts who worked respectfully with their Iraqi counterparts, UNSCOM was made up largely of Americans who Saddam Hussein suspected to be more interested in the overthrow of his regime than in the

elimination of Iraq's chemical and biological weapons programs. Richard Butler, the head of UNSCOM, in particular was singled out for derision if Al-Radi's assessment of him can be generalized across the regime and Iraqi population: "Butler was looking even more shifty than usual. He is a real snake in the grass, and no offence to snakes" (Al-Radi 164; Ryan 461; Zunes 72; Condron 120).

By the late 1990s, INVO and UNSCOM had been inspecting Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs for over seven years with no apparent end in sight and thus no end to economic sanctions. Saddam Hussein grew increasingly impatient and distrustful of the inspection teams, especially after learning of President Bill Clinton's backing of CIA-supported covert operations in 1995 and 1996 to overthrow Hussein and replace his regime with a pro-western one. In October 1997, Hussein claimed UNSCOM teams were biased in their composition because they were not representative of the international community, and he expelled the American members of the inspection teams; Butler pulled the remaining UNSCOM team members from Iraq in protest. Russian diplomats smoothed over the tension in November 1997, and Iraq allowed American inspectors to return to Iraq. However, the following month, Hussein declared certain additional "presidential sites" off limits to inspectors. Because the U.S. made no secret of its calls to oust Saddam Hussein, it should come as no surprise that Hussein wanted to restrict the inspection team's access to certain sites, particularly those serving as personal residences for Hussein, his family, and members of the regime (Zunes 76; Ryan 467; Condron 121).

Despite the fact that Saddam Hussein had restricted access to specific "presidential sites" for many years, this only became intolerable to the U.S. as a violation of Resolution 687 in January 1998 when the U.S. threatened an extensive bombing campaign. The following month,

the UN brokered a deal with Iraq to open the sites to inspectors, provided that an additional diplomatic presence joined the inspection teams in recognition of the sites' special status. Tensions flared again in August 1998 and October 1998 when Iraq declared an end to its cooperation with UNSCOM; both times, the UN intervened to avert a threatened U.S. military strike for violation of Resolution 687. However, in November 1998, Iraq imposed new restrictions on UNSCOM after it was revealed the U.S. was using UNSCOM as a vehicle to spy on the Iraqi government (Zunes 76; Condron 122-123; Yetiv 218-219).

On December 15, 1998, Butler provided the UN Security Council with a detailed report of what he believed to be Iraq's low level of cooperation with UNSCOM during the previous month. As a result, all inspectors were pulled out of Iraq, and the U.S. and U.K. launched the long-threatened bombing campaign code named Operation Desert Fox the following day. The U.S. and U.K. justified the campaign on the basis of UN Security Council Resolutions 1154 and 1205, which had been adopted the previous year in response to Hussein's noncooperation with inspectors; however, neither Resolution authorized the use of force to induce Iraqi compliance. According to Al-Radi, Iraqis referred to the operation as "Operation Monica," due to the coincidental timing of the strike (165).[4] The air campaign consisted of strikes by cruise missiles, fighters, and bombers on command centers, missile factories, and airfields. According to Al-Radi's accounting, the operation involved, "325 Tomahawks, 90 Cruise Missiles, about a

[4] President Bill Clinton had maintained an inappropriate sexual relationship with White House intern, Monica Lewinsky, from 1995-1997. Details of the affair came to light in January 1998 when Lewinsky provided misleading information in an affidavit filed in relation to a civil suit brought by Paula Jones in which former Arkansas state employee Jones accused former Governor of Arkansas Clinton of sexual harassment. On December 19, 1998, the House of Representatives voted to issue Articles of Impeachment against Clinton for perjury and obstruction of justice related to his testimony concerning sexual liaisons with Lewinsky. After a 21-day trial in the Senate, Clinton was acquitted of all charges on February 12, 1999 (Larson and Wagner-Pacifici 741-745).

hundred important sites bombed. In Baghdad today there was a funeral for 68 people" (164). The U.S. and U.K. reportedly avoided bombing suspected weapons of mass destruction manufacturing sites for fear that toxic materials could be released into the atmosphere. After four days, Clinton declared victory on December 19, 1998 in degrading both Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction programs and Iraq's capacity to attack its neighbors (Condron 123; Ryan 472; Zunes 78; Salinger 612; Glen 313).

However, the "victory" was quite limited in scale. The same day that Clinton called off the attacks, members of his administration admitted to the limited effectiveness of the air strikes in diminishing the capacity of Iraq to produce weapons of mass destruction; biological weapons labs in particular could be very small in size and simply reconstituted with easily replaceable supplies of biological agents. More significantly, after Operation Desert Fox, inspectors did not return to Iraq until 2002, and the CIA acknowledged that losing the inspection teams' on-the-ground access was detrimental to the U.S.'s and the UN's efforts to assess the state of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs. Al-Radi herself pointed out the absurdity of this action: "UNSCOM have spent all these years installing expensive cameras and listening devices at all the sites they thought could be used for war production, naturally paid for by Iraqi money. Then they bombed all the places they had put them in! What was the point of the whole exercise?" (164). The potential for degradation of the U.S.'s ability to assess Iraq's weapons programs in the event of the loss of inspectors on the ground was well understood as early as 1996 when Richard Haass testified before a congressional committee in his capacity as Director of Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution about the importance of human intelligence to

developing foreign policy toward Iraq (Haass 6).[5] Good intelligence, rather than firepower, was the most effective means of countering any threat that may have remained, and the U.S. squandered its opportunity for access in four days (Zunes 73, 74; Condron 123-124; Ryan 472).

When the U.S. sabotaged its own intelligence-collection capabilities through Operation Desert Fox, it likely did so illegally. The U.S. initially rationalized the operation on the grounds that Iraq violated UN Security Council Resolution 687. However, the UN charter limits the ability of member states to act unilaterally in the application of military force. The U.S. seemed unwilling to accept that the conflict regarding the contested access of UN inspectors was between the Iraqi government and the UN, not between Iraq and the U.S. In 1999, U.S. Army lawyer Captain Sean Condron wrote a lengthy assessment of the legality of the U.S.'s waging of Operation Desert Fox. The title of his brief, "Justification for Unilateral Action in Response to the Iraqi Threat: A Critical Analysis of Operation Desert Fox," demonstrated his favorable view of the operation. However, even he faced challenges describing the legal basis for the operation (Zunes 77; Condron 179-180).[6]

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[5] Haass has enjoyed a long career in and around government. Previously, he worked in President Carter's Defense Department and President Reagan's State Department. From 1989 to 1993, Haass was Special Assistant to President George H. W. Bush and National Security Council Senior Director for Near East and South Asian Affairs. In 1991, Haass was awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal for his efforts in developing and explaining U.S. policy during Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. Haass later worked as the Director for the Office of Policy and Planning in George W. Bush's Department of State. As of April 2018, Haass serves as president of the Council on Foreign Relations ("Richard N. Haass, Expert Bio").

[6] Condron acknowledged that there was no consensus as to whether the U.S. and the U.K. were justified in resorting to military action to enforce UN Security Council Resolutions. Condron analyzed three theories supporting the validity of the military air strikes under both international agreement law (treaty law) and customary international law (general consensus on the legality of an action in the absence of written law). Of the three theories- anticipatory collective self-defense, reprisal, and material breach of Resolution 687- Condron concluded that the U.S. had legal standing to strike weapons of mass destruction targets under the reprisal theory; targets unrelated to Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program (such as command centers) invalidated the attack. However, according to Condron, the UN- but not explicitly the U.S. or the U.K.- was

Operation Desert Fox may have been the "most robust military action against Iraq since the end of the Persian Gulf War in 1991," but it was neither the first nor the last (Condron 115). For example, in 1996, Saddam Hussein had deployed 40,000 troops to the Kurdish north. This was perceived as a violation of UN Security Council Resolution 688, which called for an end to Hussein's repression of the Iraqi people. In response, Clinton used cruise missiles to destroy several air defense sites south of Baghdad, extended the southern no-fly zone one degree north, and suspended implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 986 which allowed for limited Iraqi oil exports under the "Oil for Food" program. While Al-Radi had nothing to say about this particular bombing campaign as she was living in self-imposed exile in Beirut at the time, the periodic bombing raids that continued after the conclusion of Operation Desert Fox played on her mind.[7] In February 1999, she noted that there were 42 air raids on Iraq; the following month she claimed they were "non-stop" (168, 169). On April 23, 1999, Al-Radi identified similarities in the U.S.'s bombings of Iraq and Serbia: "The Serbians are saying the same thing as us: why are you hurting the people? And the USA says, we have nothing against Iraqi or Serb people- its Saddam and Milosevic. But it's the ordinary people who suffer and have nowhere to go" (170). Three days later she notes, "They have started worrying about who will pay for the Serbian bombing. For continuity, we are getting bombed too- lest anyone forget Iraq" (Al-Radi 170). In February 2001, Al-Radi writes, "It is like a refrain: Iraq is being bombed again.

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justified in conducting the operation because Iraq clearly breached Resolution 687 by prohibiting inspection of certain sites. According to Condron, the legality of U.S. unilateral action lies in limited historical precedent and the UN's apparent acquiescence to previous unilateral action toward Iraq, specifically in the creation of the "no-fly zones" after the UN's adoption of Resolution 688. Condron's conclusions are not convincing.

[7] The first edition of *Baghdad Diaries* was published by Saqi's of London in October 1998, and Al-Radi was still in London after the book's launch party when the U.S. and U.K. commenced Operation Desert Fox. The London *Observer* asked Al-Radi to write a piece about Desert Fox in the style of her diaries; the newspaper published it on December 17, 1998. The article appears in the 2003 version of her book (Al-Radi 161-163).

Thirty-four British and US planes hit five different areas in Iraq because [George W.] Bush says Iraq poses a big threat to their airplanes. Never mind that they are in Iraqi airspace, and that the no-fly zones are not a UN order…And they call it routine. Since when can you call bombing a country routine?" (193-194). In February 2002, after commenting on U.S. activity in Afghanistan, Al-Radi observes, "Iraq, meanwhile has not been let off the hook. They have tried very hard to find a connection between Iraq and al-Qaeda, but with no success. But every now and then they bomb Iraq just to keep it in line, and also as a reserve for when they next need to bomb for some political pretext or other" (Al-Radi 202-203; Haass 4; Zunes 78).

By the end of March 2002, Al-Radi sees the writing on the wall: "[U.K. Prime Minister Tony] Blair has gone to see Bush because they are going to join up for an attack on Iraq. Bin Laden has not been found, so it's back to Iraq again: the Weapons of Mass Destruction Syndrome – it's all such a sham one wants to cry, but where does crying get one?" (203). And, thus began another chapter of U.S.-Iraq relations.

Iraq War (2003-2011)

Much ink has already been devoted to taking the U.S. to task over its disastrous handling of an unnecessary war waged under false pretenses against an "enemy" nation weakened by twelve years of economic sanctions. Because of this, this paper will not focus on the war years (2003-2011) directly, especially since Al-Radi filed her last report in what became *Baghdad Diaries* in March 2003, eighteen months before she passed away from leukemia. However, some attention must be devoted to the pre-war planning period as well as to the conduct of the 2003 Iraq war for two reasons. First, Al-Radi continues to serve as a voice for the Iraqi civilians and offers several astute observations in the final pages of her book about the U.S. and its singular obsession with Saddam Hussein and Iraq. Second, decisions made with regard to the way the war

was initiated in 2003 and halted eight years later arguably contributed indirectly to the worsening crisis as it unfolded in Syria after the start of the demonstrations there in 2011.

In *Baghdad Diaries*, Al-Radi noted on September 15, 2001, "They know the names of the hijackers now, and they are all Arabs. God help us. The USA is preparing for war, but against whom? Iraq, I guess; it's always an easy target…" (197). One month later, during the height of the U.S.'s anthrax scare, she stated that some in the George W. Bush administration blamed Iraq for the distribution of the anthrax. Once again, Al-Radi's offhand observations proved perceptive. Even as the dust literally settled around them after the 9/11 attacks, members of the George W. Bush administration were already looking to pin the blame for the attacks on Saddam Hussein. For example, only minutes after escaping his office at the ruined Pentagon on the morning of 9/11, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz informed his aides that he suspected Iraqi involvement in the attacks. Later in the day on 9/11, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told General Richard Myers, the acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that his "…instinct was to hit Saddam Hussein at the same time- not only Bin Laden" (*9/11 Commission Report* 334-335). As a result of the 9/11 attacks and the closure of U.S. airspace, Douglas Feith, the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, became stranded in Europe. On the flight back to the U.S., a senior military officer traveling on the flight expressed his belief in Al Qaeda's involvement in the attacks; Feith countered with his conviction that the military campaign should be directed at Baghdad (Tenet 306). Thinking retrospectively, General Tommy Franks, commander of Central Command (CENTCOM) and thus militarily responsible for most of the Middle East, reported that he had advocated for tougher military responses to Iraq during the summer of 2001. Franks reinvigorated this request after 9/11, indicating that he felt Iraq and Al Qaeda must be linked. He further worried that Saddam Hussein would take advantage of the

situation in the no-fly zones of Iraq where the U.S. military flew regular patrols (*9/11 Commission Report* 336; Pillar 43; Yetiv 225; Packer 40; Al-Radi 199).

The belief in a link between Iraq and the 9/11 attacks was not limited to members of the Defense Department. Richard Perle, a prominent neoconservative and chairman of the Defense Policy Board Committee, observed to Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet, "Iraq has to pay a price for what happened. They bear responsibility" (Tenet xix). Even the U.S. President proposed the possibility of a connection between Iraq and the 9/11 attacks. On September 12, 2001, President George W. Bush queried his leading counterterrorism official, Richard Clarke, about Saddam Hussein's link to the attacks. According to Bush's line of thinking, the complexity of the 9/11 attack plan as a whole and Hani Hanjour's maneuvering of American Airlines Flight 77 into the Pentagon in particular suggested a level of sophistication that only a state actor could oversee (Packer 40; *9/11 Commission Report* 334).

Also on September 12, 2001, the first foreign plane to enter U.S. airspace since the grounding of all aircraft over the U.S. the previous morning landed, carrying representatives of the U.S.'s oldest allies. Chief of MI6 Sir Richard Dearlove, Deputy Chief of MI5 Eliza Manninghan-Buller, Prime Minister Tony Blair's foreign-policy advisor David Manning as well as other British foreign policy experts arrived to offer condolences and to share expertise. They also made the journey to gauge America's response to the attacks, knowing full well that many of George W. Bush's foreign policy advisors seemed fixated upon Iraq (Mayer 29).

The question is why the obsession with Iraq and where did it come from? The short answer may be old dogs, old tricks. As Andrew Bacevich observed in his book, *America's War for the Greater Middle East*, George W. Bush counterbalanced his inexperience with national security issues by surrounding himself with known commodities such as Vice President Dick

Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz who Bacevich describes as a "new team of old hands [that] had neither the time nor the inclination for any fresh thinking. They arrived knowing everything they needed to know" (219). Especially about Iraq, it seems; Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and many others in the Bush administration seemed to view Iraq as unfinished business (Tenet 305).

Though he arrived to the George W. Bush administration from the private sector, Donald Rumsfeld's previous government experience as Gerald Ford's Defense Secretary seemed to suggest he would be a natural fit for another round as head of the Defense Department. During his years as a businessman, though, Rumsfeld maintained contacts in the government and even performed in roles that perhaps kept Iraq on his mind. Such roles included serving as President Ronald Reagan's Special Envoy to the Middle East (Rumsfeld appears in a famous December 1983 photograph smiling and shaking hands with Saddam Hussein) and acting as Chairman of the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States which concluded in 1998 that Iraq (among others) could develop intercontinental ballistic missile capabilities within a decade and deploy such systems with very little warning (*Report of the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States*; Tenet 302).

Additionally, Cheney's many years of experience in the public sector as Gerald Ford's Chief of Staff, as a Republican Congressman from Wyoming, and as George H. W. Bush's Defense Secretary likely recommended him highly for the office of Vice President. As the first President Bush's Defense Secretary, Cheney presided over the popular, successful, and short Operation Desert Storm to remove Saddam Hussein from Kuwait in 1991. The following year, *The New York Times* published excerpts from a 46-page long Defense Planning Guidance document, commissioned by Cheney and overseen by Wolfowitz, which outlined the U.S.'s post-Cold War political and military strategy. According to the document, the U.S. must remain sole

global superpower for its own national security. According to George Packer in *The Assassins' Gate*, this document foreshadowed President George W. Bush's National Security Strategy of 2002 where the invasion of Iraq became the strategy's first test (Packer 13-14; Bacevich 115-116).

Moreover, after 9/11, Cheney settled on an Iraq invasion for a more pragmatic reason: to provide a "demonstration effect" for the rest of the world (Gellman 229-230; Pillar 19-20). According to Cheney's own accounting of the world, four other countries were of more immediate concern to the U.S.'s national security interests, including North Korea who had recently admitted to building a nuclear program.[8] However, according to Cheney's view, the U.S. could do nothing about North Korea or the other countries for a variety of political reasons. That left Iraq to serve as a warning to others and as a demonstration of America's will and capacity to address regimes supporting terrorism. Al-Radi herself noted these frustrating inconsistencies in U.S. policy when she observed in October 2002,

> …North Korea has now admitted to developing its nuclear capabilities. But the USA wants to deal with them through dialogue. [National Security Advisor] Condaleezza [*sic*] Rice says the difference is that North Korea has no money and might listen (they haven't so far), and Iraq has a lot of oil…or is it that North Korea has nuclear power and Iraq doesn't? It is well-known that Iraq's nuclear facility was bombed in the 80s by Israel, and even the International Atomic Agency has cleared us. It's safer to bomb Iraq: less dangerous, fewer body bags come home (208).

Of the Cheney-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz triumvirate, Paul Wolfowitz is probably the most significant, or at least the most persistent with regards to Iraq. Wolfowitz began contemplating Iraq during the 1970s when, as a mid-level official in President Jimmy Carter's Pentagon, he was

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[8] Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran were the other worrisome countries. Pakistan was a nuclear state whose intelligence service backed the Taliban and whose northwest frontier served as a refuge for Al Qaeda fighters. Saudi Arabia was problematic in that the majority of the 9/11 operators were Saudis, as was America's public enemy number one, Osama Bin Laden. Iran maintained more advanced nuclear capabilities than did Iraq, and its leadership was avowedly anti-American (Gellman 229-230; Bacevich 242).

tasked with reviewing threats to American interests outside Europe. Ultimately, Wolfowitz focused on Persian Gulf oil and the possibility of Iraq acting to cut off the U.S.'s access to the region's oil. Later, after the first Gulf War, during which Wolfowitz had served as Undersecretary of Defense in a Cheney-led Defense Department, Wolfowitz kept returning to the perceived unfinished business of Iraq. Wolfowitz seemed to take as a personal affront what he saw as a squandered opportunity to help the Iraqis free themselves from a dictator in 1991 (Packer 24, 28; Pillar 16, 26).

After 9/11, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz served as the conductors for the Bush administration's orchestrated redirection toward Iraq; but, because of their backgrounds and interests, they worked to set the stage much earlier than that. For example, shortly before George W. Bush's inauguration as the 43rd President of the U.S., Cheney asked departing Secretary of Defense William Cohen to provide the incoming President with a briefing on Iraq. Additionally, at one of the new administration's first national security meetings in January 2001, officials suggested plans to the newly sworn-in president for the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. Thus, when the President looked for guidance in a post-9/11 environment, he found himself surrounded by people who had an intellectual history with Iraq and who had been pushing the President toward action in Iraq since the earliest days of the administration. Given this, the President's pivot to Iraq so soon after the 9/11 attacks seems no real surprise (Packer 39, 41; Pillar 24; Tenet 301; Engel 64).

Thinking back on her experiences, Condoleezza Rice remembers that the administration first engaged the subject of Iraq as a possible target while at Camp David in the days after the 9/11 attacks. According to Rice, Rumsfeld asked what the administration should do about Iraq, and Wolfowitz made the case for striking Iraq during "this round" of the war on terrorism (*9/11*

Commission Report 335). Wolfowitz addressed the topic again in October 2001 during a meeting in the White House Situation Room intended to discuss the administration's Afghan policy. However, according to Henry Crumpton who directed the CIA's Afghan campaign in 2001-2002, "… it got weird. With no prelude, prompt, or reference point that I could fathom, Wolfowitz launched into a monologue. 'Iraq. We must focus on Iraq- 9/11 had to be state-sponsored. Iraq is central to our counterterrorism strategy'" (Crumpton 188). After President Bush included Iraq as part of the "axis of evil" in his 2002 State of the Union address, the push toward war in Iraq gained momentum (Packer 45). In May 2002, Sir Richard Dearlove of MI6 again traveled to Washington, D. C. and observed that war with Iraq already appeared inevitable. In July 2002, Director of Policy and Planning at the Department of State Richard Haass said that Rice told him war with Iraq was a foregone conclusion unless Iraq gave in to American demands. By August 2002, Cheney was warning other Republican leaders about Saddam Hussein saying, "it's the judgment of many of us [in the administration] that in the not-too-distant future he will acquire nuclear weapons" (Gellman 216; Pillar 28; Bacevich 224; Tenet 306, 309-310).

The rush to dispose with Saddam Hussein in 2003 created the perception that the Bush administration failed to devote adequate time to developing a post-invasion plan for securing and reconstructing Iraq. It appeared that after deciding on this war of choice, a lack of sufficient foresight represented the most significant error that later contributed to the rise of Sunni jihadist movements that continue to destabilize the region today. However, declassified reporting shows that the White House devoted a massive number of man-hours to its *Future of Iraq Project* fully a year before the March 2003 invasion; the project resulted in over 2000 pages of planning for administrative reforms to all levels of Iraqi government despite international laws that prohibit

an occupying force from imposing legal and institutional reforms upon the occupied territory. Thus, it was not a failure to plan, but a failure to plan effectively. Despite the vast number of years of collective personal and professional interest in Iraqi affairs, members of the George W. Bush administration charged full steam ahead into an invasion of Iraq using faulty assumptions based on misunderstood realities confronting regular Iraqi citizens, and they did so in the absence of contingency planning (Bejesky 254).

First, the assumptions- above all, the Bush administration assumed the Iraqi people would view the U.S. military forces as their liberators from an oppressive regime. According to the administration's way of thinking, the Iraqi people would throw off the shackles of authoritarianism under which the majority of the population had lived for a lifetime and immediately exercise their freedoms of choice and individuality in order to turn Iraq into a shining light of democracy in an otherwise autocratic region. However, as Al-Radi pointed out numerous times since beginning her *Baghdad Diaries* in 1991, from the bombing campaigns that started in early 1991 and occurred nearly continuously for the following two decades to the skyrocketing inflation and unavailability of basic consumer goods or medical care resulting from sanctions, to the constant vilification of Iraq on the international scene, the U.S. never gave even the western-educated Iraqis reason to trust the U.S. or to look upon it in any positive light, let alone those Iraqis with no western contacts (Al-Radi 143, 150, 158 177, 194, 215; Tenet 309).

The Bush administration further assumed the victory over Saddam Hussein would be so decisive and quick that the U.S. military would be in and out of Iraq in a matter of months with very little impact on Iraq's physical infrastructure. Al-Radi pointed out the ridiculousness of this assumption when the U.S.- once again- targeted non-military infrastructure such as bridges and government buildings in 2003. The basis for this assumption was rooted in recent military

history. Beginning with Operation Desert Storm in 1991, the U.S. began to expect that wars would be fought at lightening speed with a minimum number of ground troops and a maximum of supporting air power, resulting in few American casualties. Ever perceptive, just before the 2003 invasion, Al-Radi observed the likelihood of what was to come for Iraq: "The shock-and-awe tactic will mean there are no body bags to send home to America. The Iraqi dead will be called 'collateral damage' again and quickly forgotten" (214). The expeditions in the Balkans in the mid-1990s and the 2001 victory over Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan likely fueled the U.S.'s expectation for a speedy regime change and probably created the illusion of the possibility of an "easy" war with Iraq. To be fair, the administration was half correct- the invasion started on March 20, 2003, and the symbolic end of Saddam Hussein's regime came three weeks later on April 9, 2003 when a group of Iraqi civilians attempted to pull down the 39-foot tall statue of Saddam Hussein in Firdos Square with ropes and sledgehammers.[9] However, the decisiveness of previous military engagements combined with Donald Rumsfeld's obsession with nimbleness and speed caused the proposed troop strength of the invasion force, outlined in CENTCOM's OPLAN 1003, to shrink from 500,000 to 170,000 service members (Al-Radi 216; Bacevich 247-248; Packer 147; Goldsmith 147).

When these two assumptions proved faulty, the effects combined and resulted in a descent into chaos. When the Iraqi people failed to embrace their freedoms as expected, and some criminal elements took to the streets to loot and destroy property, the U.S. military's inadequate troop numbers failed to provide sufficient security, resulting in catastrophic damage

[9] United States Marines reportedly encouraged Iraqi civilians to destroy the statue; the Marines ultimately pulled down the statue several hours later using a M88 armored recovery vehicle. Many have argued this event was staged for the benefit of the international media; a large cohort of journalists was staying at the Palestine Hotel, conveniently located in Firdos Square. See Peter Maass's "The Toppling" in *The New Yorker* for more on this view.

to infrastructure. Electricity, telecommunications, water, and transportation systems all suffered substantial damage because of bombing runs, theft of vital equipment, and neglect. However, since the Bush administration failed to even consider this course of events prior to the invasion, no plan existed to address the problems (Tenet 396, 420; Packer 137).

Unfortunately, prior to the start of the war, the Bush administration declined specific offers to help with post-war planning. The Council on Foreign Relations proposed to work in conjunction with the Heritage Foundation and the Center for Strategic and International Studies to provide facts and options for post-war Iraq. Initially, Condoleezza Rice appreciated the offer saying, "We'll be too busy to do it ourselves" (Packer 111). Ultimately, the administration decided it could not work with the Heritage Foundation because the Foundation had expressed critical views of the war. Leslie Gelb, president of the Council on Foreign Relations at the time, eventually suggested "they [the administration] thought all those things [planning for post-war operations] would get in the way of going to war" (Packer 112). Additionally, in the summer of 2002, Drew Erdmann of the State Department, who later worked for the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq, wrote a lengthy memo analyzing post-war reconstruction efforts throughout the twentieth century at the request of his boss, Richard Haass. The memo specifically touched on issues of security and troop strength. While Secretary of State Powell passed the memo to Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Rice among others in the fall of 2002, looking back Erdmann suggested, "It may have been irrelevant. Maybe it wasn't read" (Packer 104).

The Bush administration also failed to acknowledge the views of those with specific expertise during the pre-war planning phase or to consider alternative analyses. For example, the administration systematically excluded officials within the Pentagon Office of Stability and Peace Operations from planning meetings on Iraq and consistently ignored the office's memos.

Additionally, the Bush administration marginalized the opposition and favored a constellation of like-minded officials who toed the party line. “The cost of dissent was humiliation and professional suicide;” key examples of this are General Shinseki, the Army Chief of Staff, whom Wolfowitz attacked for the General’s assessment about troop strength and Lawrence Lindsey, an economic advisor to President Bush, who was fired for suggesting the war would cost much more than the administration wanted to admit (Packer 107, 116, 117). Cheney in particular sought to “discredit or destroy anyone given to contrary views” (Bacevich 245; Pillar 52; Packer 114).

Because of the administration’s failure to plan effectively for post-invasion efforts as well as their surprising lack of understanding of Iraqi society and culture, members of the administration made poor decisions when forced to address the declining security situation. This crystalized under Paul Bremer’s leadership of the CPA. Bremer was a Washington insider and favorite of both Rumsfeld and Cheney. Bremer and the CPA essentially replaced Jay Garner and the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) in May 2003. Where Garner had lacked both guidance and authority as head of the hastily organized ORHA, at least Bremer brought command authority to his position. However, within days of arriving in Iraq, Bremer made three fatal decisions- with the blessing of Vice President Cheney- that dramatically altered the U.S.’s involvement in Iraq and the region for years to come. First, on May 23, 2003, Bremer dissolved the Iraqi army which produced two immediate and unfortunate results: given the already unsteady nature of the security situation, dissolution of the Iraqi army turned the U.S. military from liberators into occupiers while simultaneously worsening the security situation by loosening armed and trained Iraqi military personnel upon the public with no pay and no prospects. Second, Bremer “debaathified” the top four levels of government service. This

draconian measure stripped the civil service of the bureaucrats Iraq needed during the reconstruction process. Debaathification efforts further demonstrated a misunderstanding of Iraqi political life by failing to consider that many Iraqis joined the Baath party for professional advancement rather than for ideological reasons. Finally, Bremer chose control over legitimacy when he halted the formation of an interim Iraqi government (Packer 97, 144-146, 153, 190, 195, 213; Pillar 59-62; Bacevich 256; Tenet 426-428; Engel 94; Gellman 333).

The dismantling of the entire Iraqi security force contributed to the creation of an angry Sunni demographic which fueled a rising insurgency. Beginning in early 2007, the U.S. deployed an additional 20,000 U.S. troops to Iraq- primarily to Sunni areas of Baghdad and Al Anbar Province- "to help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods, to help them protect the local population, and to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security" (Bush, "Address, Jan. 2007"). When George W. Bush signed the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) late in 2008, the U.S. had just concluded "successful" surge operations in Iraq. From the U.S. perspective, Iraq was much improved. Saddam Hussein had been tried and executed in 2006. In his place sat a democratically elected Kurdish President, Jalal Talibani, and Shi'ite Prime Minister, Nouri Al-Maliki; according to the U.S.'s view, a government led by these men would ensure that Iraq's Kurdish and Shi'ite populations who had faced oppression under Saddam Hussein would enjoy additional protections under the government. Thus, in 2008 when George W. Bush signed the SOFA that committed to the withdrawal of U.S. Forces from Iraq three years later, he likely assumed Iraqi security and self-reliance would be at an even more assured place (Fordham 1; Bejesky 313).

Unfortunately, the rosy picture that George W. Bush imagined and passed on to Barack Obama did not match reality. The U.S. military's intentional and inadvertent breaches in justice

and respect during the occupation often led affected Iraqis to retaliate violently. To many, the worst affront was the way the U.S. carried out detention operations. Because the identities of suspected insurgents were often unknown, the U.S. military conducted broadly intrusive and indiscriminate security sweeps in which many Iraqis were detained for only assumed or indirect associations to the U.S.'s "high value individuals" or for simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Prior to July 2009, U.S. forces could capture individuals without warrants and hold detainees indefinitely without bringing charges against them, all in the name of security. However, these operations had the unfortunate consequence of not only perhaps turning the detained individual from indifferent to insurgent but of also inflaming the relatives and friends of the detained individuals, sometimes leading to the creation of new networks actively working against the U.S. occupation. One particularly glaring example of this is Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, the current leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). He was detained in Fallujah in 2004 while visiting a friend from his school days and spent the following five years in medium-security U.S. detention centers in Iraq (Bejesky 261, 268-269, 285).

Nor did the U.S.'s high hopes for a government for all Iraqis come to pass. Even before the U.S. finished it's troop withdrawals in 2011, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Saleh Al-Mutlag expressed dismay at "…witness[ing] President Barack Obama address Al-Maliki as 'the elected leader of a sovereign, self-reliant and democratic Iraq,' when Maliki had been ignoring power-sharing institutions and when the U.S. left Iraq 'with a dictator' who systematically suppressed dissent with impunity" (Bejesky 234). Shias discriminated against Sunnis in all sectors of society, and Sunnis maintained that tens of thousands of innocent Sunnis were imprisoned by Al-Maliki's regime long before hostilities broke out in Sunni-inhabited areas. (Fawcett 330; Williams and Popken 60; Bejesky 235).

It is true that neither U.S. policies in Iraq since the 2003 invasion nor the anti-Sunni activities carried out by the Al-Maliki regime inspired the 2011 uprising in Syria. The inspiration for the Syrian revolution was Al-Assad regime's March 2011 detention and torture of fifteen teenage boys in who had written graffiti on the walls of Dar'a, Syria in support of the Arab Spring; Al-Assad's killing and imprisonment of hundreds of peaceful protestors who had requested only the return of their children shifted the narrative and goals of the demonstration swiftly. Arguably, however, the U.S.'s wartime policies and Al-Maliki's treatment of Iraqi Sunnis contributed indirectly to the increasingly violent situation in Syria. That is, Syrian Sunnis observed an Iraqi resistance to war and occupation that was sharpened by Iraqi Sunnis protesting Al-Maliki's tactics. In addition, Saddam Hussein's earlier humiliation and capture demonstrated that removal of an unpopular strongman was possible- an empowering idea. Moreover, the U.S.'s arms-length foreign policies toward Syria, as contrasted with its focused and prolonged involvement in Iraq, contributed in varying degrees to the rising violence in Syria as events there unfolded (Fawcett 330; Williams and Popken 60; Gordon and Trainor 688).

The Syrian Revolution (March 2011-)

Samar Yazbek's two books about events in Syria since the earliest days of the uprising in 2011 are not nearly as explicit as Al-Radi's *Baghdad Diaries* in drawing attention to U.S. activities within the country, thus making assessment of U.S. foreign policy toward Syria through the eyes of a Syrian citizen more difficult but still a worthwhile endeavor. There are several reasons for this difference. First is the length of time covered. In *Baghdad Diaries*, Al-Radi writes intermittently from January 1991 to March 2003. On the other hand, Yazbek's first book, *A Woman in the Crossfire*, covers the first four months of the Syrian uprising from March to July 2011; Yazbek's second book, *The Crossing*, includes commentary on three follow-up

visits Yazbek made to Syria between August 2012 and August 2013. Given the slow pace of governmental bureaucracy, Yazbek's books cover too limited a time period to capture major changes in foreign policy, especially given that the events described in her books took place during only one U.S. presidential administration. Second is the nature of the events discussed. Whereas Al-Radi primarily concentrates on wars and sanctions that were imposed on Iraq by the outside world, Yazbek focuses on events that are generally internal to Syria. Only in *The Crossing* do we start to see the ways outside actors influenced the course of events in Syria. Third are the differences between the women themselves. Al-Radi was a visual artist, not a writer; though her book is extremely engaging, the specific language she uses and the tone it conveys seems generally languid, meticulous, and reflective. It is clear Al-Radi writes after-the-fact observations of her day, of events that occurred earlier, of her considerations of things she has seen and heard. Yazbek, on the other hand, is a novelist and a journalist who writes with far greater immediacy. While she does not limit her reporting to her own personal observations of events as they evolve, she gives the impression that she is writing in the moment without outside information and in the absence of deliberation. Where Al-Radi's writing might be compared to a historical drama, Yazbek's writing is more similar to a media clip. Finally and most significantly are the real differences in U.S. foreign policy toward both Iraq and Syria from 1990 to 2014. While the U.S. remained preoccupied with Iraq almost continuously from August 1990 to December 2011, U.S. foreign policy toward Syria can generally be characterized as "benign neglect," with bilateral interaction limited to the times when the U.S. needed Syrian support for specific missions.

Unlike its efforts in Iraq, U.S. foreign policy toward Syria in recent history was based on arms-length engagement. Between 1975 and 1979, the U.S. extended half a billion dollars in

foreign assistance to Hafez Al-Assad to persuade him to negotiate peace with Israel after the October War of 1973; but, after Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel, which Syria rejected, the Department of State during the Jimmy Carter administration added Syria to its list of state sponsors of terror in 1979. However, Ronald Reagan believed Syria to be too regionally powerful for Washington to snub it; rather than isolating or bullying Syria, the U.S. under Reagan remained minimally engaged with Syria to prevent Soviet overreach in the Middle East. Under George H. W. Bush, Syria continued to be viewed as a critical partner in maintaining the balance of power in the Middle East. Additionally, Syria's status in the Arab world required Syria's inclusion in the U.S.-Arab coalition to drive Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait in 1991. Despite domestic criticism of the setting aside of ideological concerns in favor of strategic ones, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker met with Hafez Al-Assad in 1990 to gain Syria's support for U.S. actions against Iraq with respect to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Bill Clinton followed a similar approach toward Syria. The dominant issue in the Middle East during the Clinton administration was the Arab-Israeli peace process. Despite the fact that the Hafez Al-Assad regime conducted many of the same types of activities for which the U.S. had censured Saddam Hussein, it was convenient to overlook the authoritarian nature of the Syrian regime when it was within the U.S.'s national interest to seek its help (Sadat and Jones 94, 95; Rabil 65, 73-75, 89, 128; Tabler 6-7, 8; Bacevich 114).

A subtle shift in the U.S.'s approach to Syria occurred during the George W. Bush administration. Despite the fact that Bashar Al-Assad's regime provided useful intelligence after 9/11 and desired to continue a collaborative relationship with the U.S., the neoconservatives in the George W. Bush administration demanded political reform of the Syrian regime; "opposition through isolation" rather than engagement became the central tenet of the U.S.'s approach

toward Syria (Tabler 62). On May 11, 2004, George W. Bush signed Executive Order 13338, which blocked U.S. exports to Syria and banned Syrian flights to the U.S. The reason given for the sanctions was the Syrian government's reported support of terrorism, its occupation of Lebanon, its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and missile programs, and its undermining of the U.S.'s efforts to stabilize Iraq. Unfortunately, the sanctions and other policies of isolation proved problematic throughout the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq when the George W. Bush administration faced a lack of both leverage and established relations to elicit Bashar Al-Assad's cooperation in stemming the flow of foreign fighters across the Syrian border into Iraq (Sadat and Jones 95-96; Gordon and Trainor 63, 461; Tabler 63, 127; Rabil 176, 179).

The U.S's approach toward Syria shifted once again under Barack Obama in response to the perceived wrong-headedness of the George W. Bush administration's overreliance on foreign policy conducted by military efforts through unilateral action. Under Obama, the U.S.'s approach to security in the Middle East was centered on U.S. vital interests- if vital interests were not directly concerned, mobilization of partnerships allowed for the sharing of the strategic and operational burdens with human and technological surrogates such as foreign armies and militias and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs or "drones"). Because of American war weariness and the trillion dollar debts the U.S. accrued during its 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq, even the worsening humanitarian crisis in Syria did not mobilize sufficient public pressure on the Obama administration to justify the deployment of U.S. troops. The Obama administration also expressed concern about arming rebel groups, fearing that U.S. weapons would end up in the hands of extremists. Additionally, though Obama called for Bashar Al-Assad's ouster and threated to use force if Al-Assad used chemical weapons, Obama deferred to Congress at the last minute knowing full well he would not receive Congressional support for action in Syria.

Besides, during the earliest days of the uprising, the Obama administration had assumed Syrians would force out Bashar Al-Assad just as other Arab Spring nations had forced out their leadership. However, once the regime stabilized, Obama argued against intervention by asserting that there was no military solution to the Syrian crisis. Obama also expressed concern that any open and direct support for the Syrian opposition, even forms of non-lethal support such as improving communication networks and shaping effective insurgent strategy, would generate public resistance at home in the face of Americans' skepticism about direct U.S. intervention in the Syrian civil war. Instead, Obama deferred to regional partners such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar to equip and arm the Syrian opposition (Krieg 97, 108, 109; Williams 92-93, 94; Danahar 375-376, 379; Fawcett 326, 337, 340; Wittes [2012] 3; Bacevich 326-327, 330, 331; Engel 181; Rabi and Friedman 424).

Despite the U.S.'s historic lack of interest in Syrian affairs and President Obama's apparent reluctance to become entangled in Syria's conflict, Yazbek observes that the Bashar Al-Assad regime repeatedly tried to place the blame for the demonstrations-turned-civil war in Syria on American-inspired foreign actors. In Bashar Al-Assad's first speech on the demonstrations, given on about March 25, 2011, he emphasized the existence of a conspiracy against Syria conducted by "infiltrators." During the first month of the demonstration, Yazbek writes that the regime framed the protests in Baniyas as a treasonous activity conducted by armed men conspiring with foreign elements. The regime falsified state television reports about the events in Baniyas, and some Syrian citizens- even residents of Baniyas- began to believe the regime's stories about infiltrators and conspirators. As an Alawite, Yazbek was viewed as a traitor to her sect when she failed to support the regime's activities. The regime worked to tarnish her reputation and turn her family and public opinion against her when they published reports stating

she was part of a foreign conspiracy and paid to write. In response to two articles Yazbek published about the violent practices of the security forces, the regime explicitly linked Yazbek with American agents, which she described as "…a ready-made excuse the security apparatus would always resort to in order to clamp down on people who have their own opinions" (*A Woman* 33). Additionally, people who expressed sympathy for those killed during the protests were accused of serving as foreign spies. The regime's security forces even passed out leaflets in Jableh explaining that the reason the army had moved in and opened fire on the village was that the security forces claimed to have captured three Israeli officers operating in the area (Yazbek, *A Woman* 23, 24, 29, 50, 59, 63, 82, 89, 185).

Interestingly, while the regime blamed the demonstrations on foreign elements, it was the regime itself that actively employed foreign substitutes to fight on its behalf. For example, Yazbek recorded an interview with an activist in Dar'a about the earliest days of the protest. The man stated that on March 24, 2011, regime supporters were bussed into the town to demoralize the protestors, but when the supporters departed, they left behind Persian graffiti. The man also reported that two snipers the protestors captured that day did not even speak Arabic. In addition, in early May 2011, Yazbek witnessed the terrible beating of a protestor by security forces in Damascus. As she looked on in horror, the man who had just beat the head of the protestor against the side of a van turned to look at her, and she observed, "The man's complexion was dark and his features hinted at a kind of foreignness we were all starting to wonder about" (Yazbek, *A Woman* 54). Moreover, defecting army Lieutenant Colonel Hussein Harmoush confirmed in June 2011 that the regime relied on manpower supplied by Hezbollah and Iran. By February 2013, anti-regime fighters knew the support the regime drew from Iran was costing them the fight (Yazbek, *A Woman* 122, 136; Yazbek, *Crossing* 69).

Of course, the regime was not the only group to rely on foreign support during the Syrian uprising and civil war. Unfortunately for the secular opposition, the anti-regime efforts were "…hijacked by well-funded extremists…" when the rebels "…continued to get no Western help…" (Yazbek, *Crossing* viii). Although she had little to say about fundamentalist Islamists in *Woman in the Crossfire*, Yazbek cannot help but notice the increasing numbers of foreign jihadist fighters being smuggled across the Turkish-Syrian border during her later visits published as *The Crossing*. The foreign fighters also received additional assistance from Turkish border guards in the form of the guards' turning of a blind eye to the jihadist fighters' crossings and their smuggling of weapons. Unlike the Syrian refugees who could only venture across the border at night in the hopes of remaining unseen, the fighters flowed back and forth across the border in broad daylight. However, the issue that most incensed Yazbek during her brief returns to Syria was being forced to stop at ISIS checkpoints and searched by foreign fighters. Just after she crossed back into Syria for the third time in July 2013, her car was "…stopped once, at an ISIS checkpoint, which was manned by five dark-skinned fighters from Mauritania and Iraq dressed in black robes and turbans…How could these strangers occupy our land? I felt outraged at them stopping us and making us identify ourselves when they were in our country!" (Yazbek, *Crossing* 123). Later in August 2013 as she is traveling to the village of al-Bara to meet Abu Hassan, an emir of Nusra Front, her car is forced to stop at another ISIS checkpoint: "Sometimes waves of anger overpowered me, especially whenever we were stopped at an ISIS checkpoint where all its members were foreigners – from Tunisia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Chechnya. We were just another bunch of Syrians to them, and this made me feel a pang of rage…" (Yazbek, *Crossing* 51, 115, 116, 241, 266).

However, Yazbek and the original anti-regime protestors did express some ambivalence about American and western participation in and influence on the Syrian conflict. Just like the Americans, the Syrian activists expected events to unfold in Syria in a way similar to that in Tunisia and Egypt, believing, "…Syria's turn was coming" (Yazbek, *A Woman* 195-196). Indeed, as Yazbek noted in early July 2011, "The Americans say they support the Syrian people in their transition to democracy" (*A Woman* 247). However, with the regime still standing, Yazbek conceded, "As far as the outside world is concerned, the situation seems different from Egypt and Libya and Tunisia…The whole world is in agreement: Syrians must die alone" (Yazbek, *A Woman* 137).[10] By the time Yazbek returned to Syria in August 2012 after fleeing the country the previous year, she noted that poorly equipped secular fighters were doing everything possible to avoid having to join the better-funded Islamist battalions, even ingeniously building their own weapons from scrap. The fighters almost universally agreed that if they had received direct support from the U.S. in the form of lethal aid- especially anti-aircraft guns- quick victory over the regime would have been theirs. However, despite the desire for weapons, there seemed to be a general reluctance to invite a foreign presence onto Syrian soil, even one supposedly supportive of the anti-regime activists. Although some anti-regime fighters felt abandoned by the international community, in February 2012, Yazbek recorded one of the activists saying, "…we want justice for our people. But we don't want other countries interfering in our affairs. We'd be better off if they left us to face Bashar alone, without interfering. Their interference only works

[10] The anti-regime activists probably calculated that, like in Libya, NATO would ensure them a swift victory against the Bashar Al-Assad regime. Activists even filmed the regime's bombardment of civilians in the Baba Amr district of Homs in February 2012 in an effort to recreate the "Benghazi moment," upon which the international community would be forced to react in defense of unarmed civilians under the principle of "responsibility to protect" (R2P). However, the U.S. decided that the regime in Syria was so unpopular that the rebels would overthrow it without a NATO-led bombing campaign, thus forcing the rebels to see they were generally on their own (Glass 37; Danahar 381; Williams and Popken 53).

in his favour" (*Crossing* 65, 213). Still others believed the international community did not just fail to support the anti-regime activists but actively supported the regime: "We know the whole world wants Bashar al-Assad and that he won't fall, not because he's strong, but because he's backed by Iran, Russia, America and China" (Yazbek, *Crossing* 246). Some identified a proxy war taking place on Syrian soil between the great powers who waged ideological battles unrelated to the Syrian conflict and were disgusted at being used like pawns. Others believed the outside world saw Syrians as savages who relished the bloodletting. Still others held that the global community assumed that everything that had taken place in Syria from the beginning of the uprising concerned religious extremism; they believed the world took pleasure in watching what it presumed to be sectarian Syrians waging jihad amongst themselves (Yazbek, *Crossing* 22, 29, 62, 69, 86, 96, 223-224, 245, 251, 263, 269, 272).

That final point leads to a second feature that Yazbek observed during her time in Syria: the rise in sectarianism. In the 1920s, most Syrian Sunnis and Christians had opposed French rule and refused to serve in the armed forces in support of France. Instead, the French recruited the impoverished minority Alawites to serve, thus giving the Alawites a foothold in the Syrian armed forces. When Alawite Hafez Al-Assad came to power in 1971, the Alawite sect's status changed, even if their access to economic power did not. Alawites became the officer corps in the Syrian armed forces commanding the Sunni majority conscripts, but Hafez Al-Assad also created conditions to promote a strong Sunni merchant class that lacked political power. Thus, Hafez Al-Assad shaped the circumstances that Bashar Al-Assad later used to his advantage during the Syrian uprising and revolution. Sunnis lacked the political power to effect the reforms they sought to improve their quality of life; on the other hand, Bashar Al-Assad linked the well-being of the Alawite sect to the survival of his regime and "…turned the Alawites into its own

human shield" (Yazbek, *A Woman* 50). Even in cities as traditionally diverse as Aleppo, fear forced people into the ostensible safety of their own ethnic and sectarian enclaves. At the same time, non-Alawite minorities questioned whether they would be safer under a new regime; they only had to look across the border to Iraq to see government-sanctioned ethnic harassment at work (Glass 50, 105; Danahar 374-375, 385-390; Yazbek, *A Woman* 58, 81; Yazbek, *Crossing* 276).

Yazbek notes the increasing sectarian tensions as early as May 7, 2011, when she mentions that the regime's efforts to feed sectarianism in Baniyas would likely lead to sectarian war. Two days later, she interviewed an activist from Baniyas who confirmed that recent violence in the area was not sectarian in nature but directed against the Syrian regime; however, "It's the practices of the state that feed sectarianism. The state is responsible for whatever sectarian strife is taking place…We must recognize that sectarian tension has become a reality ever since the state started nourishing it" (Yazbek, *A Woman* 75). She also notes the regime's use of mutual suspicion to inflame sectarian tensions in Jableh, Hama, and Latakia. After her return to Syria in July 2013, Yazbek finds that sectarian strife has shifted and grown more prounounced. The appearance of Islamist fighters since her previous visit had only made matters worse, as had the Bashar Al-Assad regime's invitation to Iran and Hezbollah to interfere in support of the regime. The last activist she interviewed before she crossed back into Turkey at the end of her third visit in August 2013 expressed a very dismal view of Syria's prospects in the future: "[The activist] felt we had now entered a phase of sectarian conflict that would last for the next twenty years, and still Assad's family wouldn't lose. The losers would be the rest of the Alawites, he argued, because the crimes committed by Assad's lot would be committed against the Alawites in turn" (Yazbek, *Crossing* 254, 212, 221; Yazbek, *A Woman* 58, 186, 214, 229).

Arguably, the U.S. inadvertently contributed to the rise in sectarianism in the region, which promoted an increase in Islamic fundamentalism and eventually led to the establishment of ISIS as a declared caliphate with territorial control over areas in both Iraq and Syria. ISIS started as a terrorist insurgency against the U.S.-backed Shia government in post-invasion Iraq that fed on the reciprocal violence Iraq's Sunnis and Shias inflicted on each other under Al-Maliki. Feelings of marginalization were very strong among Iraq and Syria's Sunni populations who were primed for an empowering Salafi-jihadi identity that embraced sectarian violence. For many Sunnis, sectarian violence was a legitimate response during the transition from Sunni to Shia ascendancy in Iraq triggered by the geopolitical upheaval created by the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Additionally, the occupation policies of the George W. Bush administration- particularly as they related to detention operations- discriminated against Sunnis, and these policies of discrimination continued under Al-Maliki. Many- from foreign leaders to Iraqi Kurds, Sunnis, and even Shias- eventually called for Al-Maliki's resignation. However, the U.S. was unwilling to examine the underlying details of the calls for Al-Maliki's resignation. Instead, the U.S. linked the unrest in Iraq exclusively to ISIS's rise because of ISIS's assumed direct association with latent Al Qaeda elements. This linkage presupposes that the insurgency spontaneously arose from a relatively small group espousing bloodthirsty jihadist ideology that was subsequently able to spread across individual predominantly Sunni villages and cities to ultimately pose a threat to an Iraqi government protected by over one million security personnel (Bejesky 226, 262, 315-316; Fordham 3, Engel 191; Fawcett 327; Rabi and Friedman 424, 427; Danahar 383; Gordon and Trainor 629).

However, between the U.S.'s departure from Iraq in 2011 until ISIS gained global distinction in 2014 after it drove the Iraqi army from several key cities in western Iraq, the U.S.'s

interest in the Middle East waned. The "Obama Doctrine" questioned the utility of great military power in the twenty-first century and called for "strategic absence" from the Middle East and North Africa in the belief that, in foreign affairs, sometimes it was more advantageous to be absent than present. As far as Obama's Syria policy was concerned, Obama determined it was in the U.S.'s best interests to limit exposure, see which group prevailed, and deal with the results as they revealed themselves. Major downsides to this approach are the decline in the U.S.'s ability to shape events on a global scale, a loss of control and oversight, and the potential for crisis escalation. Unexpected outside actors, such as ISIS, for example, may fill the void created by U.S. inaction. Despite the fact that Yazbek had observed ISIS elements in Syria during her third visit to the country during the summer of 2013, it was not until ISIS threatened Iraq- the U.S.'s great preoccupation in the Middle East- in 2014 and captured sensitive U.S. military equipment from the retreating U.S.-trained Iraqi army that the U.S. dragged its attention back to the region (Williams and Popken 55; Wittes [2012] 4; Krieg 104, 109, 111-112; Williams 84-85; Bacevich 331).

But, even with renewed interest in the region and despite it's technological superiority, the U.S. failed to coordinate a unified coalition to defeat ISIS in Syria and Iraq. The primary reason for this was the unimaginable complexity of the battlefield in Syria as it matured in 2012. Not only were anti-regime activists still battling the unpopular regime and seeking its overthrow, fundamentalist Islamists had joined the fight and waged battles against both the rebels and the regime. Additionally, foreign states battled each other in proxy wars on Syrian soil to assert their own objectives for a post-conflict Syria; for most of these states, defeating ISIS was not the top priority. For example, the U.S.'s Arab partners, especially Saudi Arabia and Qatar, were more unified in fighting Iran. Turkey fought the Kurds and Arab nationalists, which Turkey viewed as

a different but no less important terrorist threat to its own national security, in order to weaken Kurdish calls for autonomy and independence. The U.S. and Russia theoretically battled ISIS in Syria in partnership, but each country envisioned a different end state with Russia supporting the Bashar Al-Assad regime while the U.S. seemed to passively favor anyone but Al-Assad (Rabi, Friedman 427; Wittes [2015] 5; Glass 54-55; Fawcett 333).

U.S. actions in Iraq and Syria with regard to ISIS did little to add clarity to the situation or reassure the Syrian rebels or the U.S.'s international partners. When Obama outlined his anti-ISIS strategy in September 2014, he failed to address the Syrian opposition's preexisting war against the Bashar Al-Assad regime. By avoiding war with Bashar Al-Assad, the U.S. also created a situation where its own interests were out of line with key partners in its war against ISIS. This, plus the U.S.'s air support of Shia militias in Iraq's fight against ISIS- not to mention the Obama administration's negotiations with Iran surrounding Iran's nuclear program- fed the suspicion that, since the U.S.'s 2003 invasion of Iraq, the U.S. was intentionally empowering the Shia in the region. Saudi Arabia in particular believed the U.S. had ceded too much power to Iran in its fight against ISIS in Iraq. However, the U.S.'s attacks on ISIS in Iraq are largely pointless without also addressing ISIS's safe havens in Syria; yet doing so might inadvertently assist the Bashar Al-Assad regime whose atrocities against his own citizens were the primary cause of instability in Syria in the first place. The unintended consequences of the U.S.'s implementation of its anti-ISIS strategy in Syria were two-fold. First, the U.S.'s failure to aid the Syrian opposition and follow-through on its calls for Bashar Al-Assad's removal were viewed as a betrayal that was internalized in sectarian terms. Second, the divergent priorities of the allies in the anti-ISIS fight as outlined above allowed Bashar Al-Assad and his Russian and Iranian supporters to let the U.S. bear the greatest burden in the anti-ISIS struggle in eastern Syria while

regime forces suppressed the mainstream rebellion in western Syria. The U.S.'s failure to support the rebels combined with Russian and Iranian support for Bashar Al-Assad's killing of the opposition created the false choice between Al-Assad and ISIS as leaders in post-conflict Syria (Rabi and Friedman 428, 429, 433, 434; Fawcett 336; Pollack 5-6; Wittes [2015] 5).

Of course, even this is an overly simplified view of the state of affairs in Syria by the end of 2014, especially in terms of fundamentalist Islamist activity in Syria. But, this type of simplification is typical of the U.S. where Islamic fundamentalism is equated with terrorism and Al Qaeda (or Al Qaeda's "JV team," ISIS). But, as Yazbek shows in her books, things are far more complicated than they already appeared. In the early days of the uprising, Yazbek watched the news on June 12, 2011 and noted,

> Now I hear Muslim clerics with long beards from Lebanon and I am afraid of their presence, as one of them venomously calls on the Syrian regime to stop the massacres. I shudder at the sight. I have been terrified for days now, ever since Shaykh al-'Ar'ur went on one of the satellite networks with his sectarian talk…The fundamentalist Islamists are scary and what al-'Ar'ur is doing is no doubt going to do more harm to the Syrian uprising than if he were to stand side by side with us. The Syrian regime says that the people going out to demonstrate are fundamentalist Islamists and these media images will only confirm their story (*A Woman* 142).

She has little to add about fundamentalists or jihadi fighters until she returns to Syria in February 2013 and notices their increasing numbers. According to one of the editors of a liberation newspaper Yazbek interviewed in Saraqeb, "The biggest challenges are not financial backing and continuous bombardment; no, the most dangerous thing is the way the *takfiris*, the Islamic extremists, are edging their way in and starting to control people's lives and interfere in their businesses" (*Crossing* 63).[11] Yazbek distinguishes between the Jabhat al-Nusra (Nusra Front), which is allied to Al Qaeda and designated as a terrorist group by the UN, and Ahrar al-Sham,

[11] Saraqeb served as Yazbek's home base during her three return visits to Syria between August 2012 and August 2013. The city is located in northwestern Syria in the Governorate of Idlib. In 2012, its predominately Sunni population was estimated to be approximately 34,200.

which is believed to be linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, and she sees graffiti in the town of Saraqeb that supports both groups. According to her guide in Saraqeb in February 2013, the Nusra Front is "…a new faction made up of young men with long beards. The existence of the Nusra Front hadn't become public knowledge until recently; early on, they had been an invisible underground movement, and their presence hadn't been tolerated in the villages" (Yazbek, *Crossing* 51). In February 2013, the Nusra Front and Ahrar al-Sham coexisted, with the Nusra Front controlling the judges and clerics of the Sharia Court and Ahrar al-Sham so enmeshed within the social fabric of the town that they owned a bakery in order to exert control over food supplies. The town of Binnish had been completely taken over by the Nusra Front in the interim between her first and second visits after the regime bombed the town and forced the majority of its residents to flee (Yazbek, *Crossing* 52, 54, 277, 279).

But, not everybody was against the Islamists. When Yazbek visited the rebel headquarters in the city of Maarat al-Numan, which had been a front line in the fighting against the regime, she recorded a young man voicing his support for Nusra Front, describing them as "…the best group that's fighting" because "…they actually got arms" (Yazbek, *Crossing* 87). Another man in the same conversation registered his support for Ahrar al-Sham "because they don't steal like the other brigades" (Yazbek, *Crossing* 87). On another day, she visited a media center in the town of Kafranbel. One of the volunteers there described for her the vacuum filled by either the Nusra Front or Ahrar al-Sham after the Syrian army forces leave an area. He acknowledged that many people had started to consider the benefits of establishing an Islamic caliphate in Syria "as a response to the excessive violence of the regime; people felt safe with the Nusra Front and their piety, because while their only option was death, according to the Front at

least they would be blessed in the life hereafter. The population had developed from a Sufic to a Salafist mentality" (Yazbek, *Crossing* 97).

By the time of Yazbek's third and final visit recorded in *The Crossing*, the ISIS presence in the area near Atma on the Turkish border near where she crossed into Syria was obvious. In fact, ISIS had built a large base near a refugee camp on the border; many desperately poor families living in the refugee camp married their young daughters to ISIS fighters in an effort to overcome poverty. She also met widows who considered marrying foreign jihadist fighters in order to receive income to support their children. Yazbek noted that there was little difference between ISIS and the Nusra Front in terms of ideology, but ISIS fighters had been generally unpopular with Syrians due to their tendency toward extremism and militancy in the application of Sharia law; however, Yazbek also noted that, by August 2013, ISIS had begun to successfully integrate throughout Idlib. A primary reason for this was that popular support for the anti-regime revolution was in decline because the of the rebels' inability to respond to the regime's aircraft bombing runs. At the beginning of the revolution, the people had believed in the Free Army, but their weapons were limited so they could only do so much. As it appeared the conflict would drag on indefinitely, some started to turn toward the Islamists because they possessed money, weapons, and faith. The terrible regime had presented itself as secular. Attempts to overthrow it through peaceful demonstrations conducted by civil activists went nowhere quickly. Thus, it appeared to many in Syria that the Islamists, including ISIS, were the only ones who could free the Syrians from the Bashar Al-Assad regime. Many were willing to accept living under an Islamic emirate if it meant the end of the regime and the violence (Yazbek, *Crossing* 121, 122, 123, 130, 131, 157, 222, 223-224, 230, 233).

Conclusion

One must acknowledge that conducting foreign policy is an extremely complicated affair. Policy makers must consider bilateral, regional, and international implications of policies as they apply to a given country, and they should (but do not always) consider the ripple effects of even small alterations to policy. Many societies, if not countries, have longer historical memories than does the United States, and historical grievances, traditional alliances, and the importance of certain symbols must be taken into consideration. At the same time, policy makers must apply a degree of intellectual rigor and recognize that even countries with long histories change and adapt their policies based on their own interpretations of foreign and domestic priorities. Allies and enemies transform, and so should policy analysts' outlook toward them.

U.S. foreign policy toward Iraq and Syria is complicated by events that took place even before either Iraq or Syria declared their independence in the twentieth century. The secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 carved up the former Ottoman Empire in a post-World War I world and handed spheres of influence to Britain, France, and Russia. The three countries took it upon themselves to draw rather arbitrary borders between the countries over which they exerted control. As a result of the agreement, Britain took control of the area that became Iraq, and France exerted its influence over the area that became Syria. After establishing these various spheres of influence, Britain and France developed their own respective foreign polices toward each other and toward the new protectorates in the region, despite the fact that the arbitrary borders created subjective divisions amongst the traditional inhabitants of the area with which many neither agreed nor abided (Bacevich 112; Haass 1; Engel 138).

When many European nations faced economic ruin and political crises as a result of two World Wars and an economic depression, they recognized they could ill-afford to continue management of far-flung protectorates. Furthermore, the west's nineteenth century empires

began to crumble in the face of twentieth century nationalism and anti-colonialism. It was during this time period that Iraq gained independence from Britain in 1932 and Syria from France in 1945 (McMahon 2-5; Rabil 1; Yetiv 18).

However, the mid-twentieth century also witnessed the ascendency of the U.S. as a global power. Though the U.S. faced many of the same challenges that Europe faced during the global economic depression, with the exception of Japan's December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, U.S. sovereign territory was entirely untouched by either of the World Wars. In fact, the U.S. actually benefited from World War II in that it quickly became the world's issuer of bonds, grants, and loans for economic and infrastructure recovery, as well as the primary producer of all manner of consumer goods for the global economy. Arguably, it was at this time that the U.S. learned that war could be a profitable economic driver. It was also around this time that a joint U.S.-Saudi Arabia endeavor discovered oil near Dhahran, Saudi Arabia; President Franklin Roosevelt's 1943 declaration that defense of Saudi Arabia was vital to U.S. national security solidified the U.S.'s economic link to the region (Haass 1; McMahon 6-10).

Because of the long history of the U.S.-Britain alliance, as well as the booming U.S. economy and the U.S.'s rising importance on the international stage, when Britain declared it would be stepping back from direct control over the territories still under its purview, the U.S. largely assumed Britain's former role. At the same time, global economic policies endorsed by the U.S. in the post-World War II era created tensions in France that developed into full-fledged French anti-American sentiment, culminating in the election of President Charles de Gaulle, an ultimately reliable but assertive ally. It is perhaps in this history that the stark differences in U.S. foreign policy toward Iraq and Syria found their roots (Haass 1; McMahon 8-10).

Of course, foreign policy is not conducted in a vacuum. Domestic policy and the views of a nation's citizenry toward taxation, war, immigration, and aid to foreign countries all play a role in a country's ability to create practical- and practicable- foreign policy. It is true that some of the particulars can be managed by the careful application of propaganda. An otherwise pacifist population, for example, may be prevailed upon to support a war in the name of national security. But, broader foreign policy decisions follow longer-term trends within the country. In the U.S., for example, mid-twentieth century liberalism gave way to a rising conservatism that, with the exception of a virulent anti-communism that permitted international engagement for the purposes of containing Soviet expansion, generally tended toward isolationism (Haass 1; Yetiv 82-85; Story and Laurie 12-15).

Moreover, foreign policy decisions are also impacted by the personalities making the decisions, and the U.S.'s two-party political system and constitutionally-established presidential term limits mean that foreign policy priorities and the methods of their implementation may change markedly every four to eight years. Looking only at the U.S. presidents from 1990 to 2014 and their policies toward Iraq and Syria, this becomes evident. George H. W. Bush, for example, with his experience as U.S. Ambassador to the UN and his work as the chief of the liaison office with China and as CIA director, was the last U.S. president to gain real foreign policy experience before becoming president. Despite some unfavorable views of Hafez Al-Assad, Bush recognized the importance of gaining Syria's support for the 1991 war to force Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. However, at the conclusion of the 1991 Gulf War, Bush resisted the urge to march on Baghdad to topple the Saddam Hussein regime; Bush chose to go no further than his international coalition had agreed to go. Bill Clinton, on the other hand, expressed some impulsivity in his continuous push to bomb Iraq throughout the 1990s for Hussein's perceived

lack of compliance with UN Resolutions, even while Clinton overlooked similarly problematic activities conducted on the part of Hafez Al-Assad. Perhaps some of this impulsiveness was intrinsic to Clinton's character, if the publicized details of his personal life are any indication. But, Clinton was the first post-Cold War president, and he also presided over a booming U.S. economy; these factors provided both the need and the wherewithal to assert the U.S.'s global hegemony. George W. Bush was a born-again Christian who saw the world in a black and white, us versus them manner, particularly after 9/11. When Bush sought a target for unilateral punishment for the 9/11 attacks, his cabinet, which was filled with men who had worked for Bush's father during the 1991 Gulf War, successfully directed his attention to Iraq. Finally, Obama, perhaps in direct response to George W. Bush's "cowboy attitude" or perhaps falling back on his experiences as a constitutional lawyer and professor, chose a more deliberative approach toward foreign policy to the extent of intentionally absenting the U.S. from specific foreign engagements (Sadat and Jones 94, 95-96; Rabil 65, 73-75, 89, 128, 176, 179; Tabler 6-7, 8, 63, 127; Bacevich 114; Gordon and Trainor 63, 461; Krieg 97, 108, 109; Williams 92-93, 94).

Foreign policy decisions are further complicated by policy-makers' understanding of the purpose of foreign policy, or the "why" in what governments do, as well as their ethical approaches to the decision-making process itself. Broadly speaking, there are three schools of thought related to the purpose of foreign policy. First, idealism seeks to spread American ideas of freedom and democracy abroad. Second, realism endeavors to secure U.S. national interests regardless of the cost. Third, egoism strives for protecting the lives and rights of American citizens and no more; egoism does not prioritize the advancement of ideals or interests. The "ethics triangle" is a three-part tool that can be used to weigh the ethical foundations of the decision-making process of policy makers; such a tool underscores the complexity of choice

(Glen 310). The legs of the ethics triangle are virtue-based ethics, consequence-based ethics, and principle-based ethics. Virtue-based ethics focuses on the character of the individual making the decision as the key element of ethical thinking. Principle-based ethics prioritizes conformity to universal moral norms; what is right takes precedence over what is good. Consequence-based ethics judges the morality of an action in terms of its results and concerns bringing the greatest good to the greatest number. Although none of the four presidents from 1990 to 2014 mentioned above fit neatly or perfectly within any one foreign policy school of thought, tendencies are apparent: George H. W. Bush's idealism, Clinton and George W. Bush's realism, and Obama's egoism informed the foreign policy choices each made. Assuming the presidents each based their foreign policy decisions on what they believed to be ethical grounds, we see that policy decisions are further confounded by the decision-maker's own definition of "right" or "correct" thinking (Biddle "U.S. Foreign Policy; Glen 310).

Despite the competing factors of history, context, domestic policy, and the individual personalities and views of policy-makers that may complicate foreign policy decisions, this does not mean that policy-makers should neglect examination of the implications of U.S. foreign policy on the countries toward which it is directed. This is especially true when the decisions involve war, sanctions, and the provision of humanitarian relief programs that heavily impact civilian populations who lack the ability to influence their own countries' foreign policy decisions. Typically, foreign policy is perceived as high-level engagement between state leaders that focuses directly on matters of diplomacy and trade. However, as Nuha Al-Radi and Samar Yazbek's books demonstrate, U.S. foreign policy toward Iraq and Syria affects the average citizen, too. When foreign policy unavoidably touches upon civilians and may lead to their harm, thorough and continuous assessment of the policies and the objectives they seek to achieve must

be conducted. If the objectives are unclear or they change, and/or undue damage to civilian populations and infrastructure results, the foreign policy decision should be reevaluated on the grounds of both moral obligation toward fellow humanity and pragmatic considerations of one's standing in the world.

Both Nuha Al-Radi's *Baghdad Diaries: A Woman's Chronicle of War and Exile* and Samar Yazbek's *A Woman in the Crossfire: Diaries of the Syrian Revolution* and *The Crossing: My Journey to the Shattered Heart of Syria* reveal the unintended consequences of U.S. foreign policy toward Iraq and Syria from 1990-2014 and contribute additional voices that add nuance to a broader geopolitical debate. Al-Radi's *Baghdad Diaries* is a powerful portrayal of the life of Iraqi civilians living through the Gulf War of 1991 and the long era of sanctions and "routine bombings" that followed (194). It also serves as a living history of the U.S.'s policy implications with regard to its borderline obsession with Saddam Hussein and Iraq. Similarly, Yazbek's *Crossfire* and *Crossing* expose the equally damaging effects on the civilian population of Syria of the U.S.'s overall policy of disengagement with Syria.

Examination of the U.S.'s pre-1991 decisions and activities with respect to Iraq suggest that the 1991 Gulf War had little to do with Iraq specifically and was more a reflection of the U.S.'s real and imagined image of itself and its place in international affairs. Additionally, it is clear that the 1991 war was not inevitable; had the U.S. fully analyzed its desired end state with regard to Iraq and taken comprehensive steps to communicate truthfully and in good faith with Iraqi and Arab leadership, the 1991 war, which caused such devastation to the Iraqi civilian population as recorded by Al-Radi in her diaries, may have been avoided. Additionally, the toughest sanctions regime in history, designed to enforce Iraqi compliance with UN Security Council Resolutions and to prevent Iraq's importation of any material or equipment that could be

used to produce weapons of mass destruction, also ensnared medicines and medical equipment in its list of prohibitions and led directly to far greater suffering and death than the 1991 war itself caused. The bombing campaigns, the most extensive of which was conducted in 1998 and known as Operation Desert Fox, brought further destruction to Iraq's physical and social infrastructure. The U.S.'s 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq finally brought about the long-desired downfall of Saddam Hussein but failed to establish the expected free and democratic Iraq, in part because the years of war and sanctions destroyed the will and ability of Iraqi civilians to do so. Moreover, as a result of its policies during the war and afterward, the U.S. ensured an economically depressed environment in Iraq where anti-Western sentiment and Islamic radicalism found fertile ground (Ryan 470; Salinger 611; Zunes 79).[12]

At the same time, the U.S.'s policy of detachment with regard to Syria indirectly supported the oppressive Hafez and Bashar Al-Assad regimes through the U.S.'s failure to discredit them or to pressure them to support human rights and civil freedoms. When protests over the Bashar Al-Assad regime's oppressive practices against Syrian citizens broke out in 2011, the U.S.'s words of support encouraged the protestors. However, the U.S. failed to follow its words with actions, and the U.S.'s continued disengagement with Syrian affairs caused the anti-regime demonstrators to lose hope and momentum. Fundamentalist Islamist groups, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which had formed in response to U.S. activities in Iraq and flourished after the U.S. occupation forces departed Iraq in 2011, capitalized on the U.S.'s

[12] According to one estimate, as many as 200,000 Iraqis (soldiers and civilians) died during the 1991 Gulf War. Approximately 1.7 million Iraqis died as a direct result of economic sanctions, including about 750,000 Iraqi children. In addition, another 1.4 million Iraqis died as a result of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Additionally, according to Red Cross statistics Al-Radi recorded in 1996, two million Iraqis had emigrated since the beginning of the 1991 Gulf War; a 2016 estimate suggested the 2003 Iraq war produced four million Iraqi refugees, two million of whom went to Syria and Jordan (Boyle 91; Al-Radi 142; Bejesky 318).

inaction in Syria and added to the problematic and deadly reality of daily life for Syrian civilians.[13] The rise of ISIS drew the U.S.'s attention back to the region at precisely the time the U.S. wished to disengage further. Paradoxically, ISIS, as an international terrorist organization with both systematic recruitment networks and sympathetic individual operators that terrorize in its name around the globe, brought the threat to the U.S. homeland and to U.S. strategic interests in ways that Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Hafez and Bashar Al-Assad's Syria never could.

As Andrew Bacevich noted in the prologue to his book, *America's War for the Greater Middle East*, the U.S. repeatedly fails to learn from the mistakes it has made during each successive incursion into the Middle East. Perhaps in an attempt to change this perceived overreach, the Obama administration sought to limit its involvement in the Syrian revolution that began in 2011. Sadly, as has been demonstrated, that approach proved to be no more effective. In fact, the U.S.'s development and implementation of vastly divergent policies with regard to Iraq and Syria has had the perverse effect of linking the countries more closely together in terms of the U.S.'s foreign policy approach to managing ISIS and its threat of global jihad. Although the U.S. has not yet learned from the past, perhaps giving voice to those whose lived experiences illustrate the ramifications of American policies- such as the stories of individuals recorded in Nuha Al-Radi's *Baghdad Diaries* and Samar Yazbek's *A Woman* and *The Crossing*- will eventually change the dialogue (Bacevich xix-xxii).

[13] According to the Syrian Center for Policy Research, the death toll in Syria reached 470,000 by February 2016. Additionally, the conflict produced 6.1 million internally displaced people and 4.8 million refugees abroad, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. By mid-2016, an estimated one million people lived in besieged areas and lacked medical assistance and humanitarian aid ("Syria: Events of 2016").

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