



# IRAQ

A LOST WAR

MOHAMED EL-SHIBINY



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Mohamed El-Shibiny

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IRAQ  
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*To Panayota, Aida, Mona, Nadia, and Shaden El-Shibiny*

## PREFACE

THE IRAQ OCCUPATION, IN ITS SIXTH YEAR AS OF 2009, has taken the lives of more than 3,800 American troops. An estimated 700,000 Iraqis, 2.6 percent of the population, have been killed and the cost of the war stands at over \$300 billion. In addition, two million Iraqi refugees fled their homes for other parts of Iraq, and one and a half million to the neighboring countries of Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. This has created a human tragedy without precedence. Most of these refugees are women and children. Many children have lost their parents in the violence and have been forced to live on the streets. Many of them have little or no access to education or necessities of life.

Iraqis are facing the most profound cultural, political, and economic challenges ever imaginable. Iraq is at present a traumatized and suffering society. Many military commanders have described the war in Iraq as “a nightmare with no end in sight.” In every conflict with too many casualties, a country becomes the loser even if it is on the winning side.

“Has Iraq posed a clear and immediate threat to world security to warrant the occupation and the suffering of its people?” For the last six years, the Islamic world has been searching for a convincing answer as to whether Iraq posed a real danger to the peace and security of the world, especially to the United States. The U.S. response to the 9/11 attacks has been primarily military; first, it was a war against Afghanistan, second, against Iraq. Many nations see no evidence for the key U.S. charges that Baghdad had possessed weapons of mass destruction or long-range missiles. They consider the war and the occupation of the country a grave error. It has not resolved, but complicated the situation of introducing democracy and security in the Middle East.

Even though Iraq was liberated from the thirty years of notorious dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, at present it is under military occupation, oppressed with sectarian violence, terrorism, and destruction. The seeds of reconciliation among the ethnic groups have vanished and been replaced with civil war among religious factions. Sectarian divisions between Shiites and Sunnis continue to escalate into a war of attrition. Consequently, Iraq at present is in an ethnic-political struggle for power. Both parties commit

atrocities despite their leaders urging them to resist a sectarian civil war. Moreover, there is no formulated strategy for placing a timetable on future U.S. combat troop withdrawal and no pressure made on Iraq's leaders to reach a political settlement.

Iraq is, indeed, a traumatized society facing the most profound ethnic, cultural, political, and economic tensions. Despite all efforts for reconciliation between the two ethnic groups, Shiites and Sunnis, aggression continues and the revenge mentality worsens. Iraqis believe that the only feasible way out of this dilemma is to disband all militias in the country, including progovernment Shiite groups. "Militias" means all those who are armed other than the Iraqi army and police.

Iraq needs a lasting reconciliation between factions and a halting of attacks on each other to enhance and preserve unity among its people. Many Sunnis and Shiites have rejected the call to divide the country into separate Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish federal regions. They oppose federalism dividing Iraq, as it would lead to further instability in the Arab region. Lately, there are renewed demands for an autonomous Shiite region in the south. This is due to an increased influence of the U.S. presence and empowerment of the Shiite majority in government and parliament.

Both parties are engaged in an ethnic and political power struggle. The constant strain between the two sects is affecting not just Iraq but the security of Arab Middle East neighboring countries. The removal of Saddam Hussein from power in 2003 by the U.S.-led invasion strengthened Iran's strategic position and increased its regional power, especially among Iraq's Shiite majority. The stability and prosperity of Iraq at large is mainly dependent on the policies and actions of Iraq's neighbors. Iraq's neighbors are perceived as not doing enough to assist Iraq to achieve peace in order to protect stability within the region.

An added complication is the presence of volunteer terrorists, suicide bombers, who are fanatic Islamists crossing the borders into Iraq from neighboring countries, using their sophisticated weaponry and intensive training against both the Iraqis and U.S. troops.

The solution toward peace lies not in excessive use of military and police force but in developing mutual political understanding, cultural awareness, and ethnic tolerance among the Iraqi people. While disarming Shiite militia and Sunni insurgents is a tactical priority, the challenge of attaining long-term peace and security is based on the promotion of cultural understanding, political conciliation, religious tolerance, and restoration of national solidarity among Iraqis.

Just after the Iraq occupation, the United States appealed to the Arab Middle Eastern countries to initiate political reform and reinforce democracy in their countries. In a free election, a new democratic parliament was

established in Baghdad representing the political parties and ethnic factions. A government elected by the people. The militant Islamists express their commitment to the democratic principles and values of Islam. Democracy is homegrown and gradually earning recognition among the Iraqi masses.

As mentioned in the report of the Iraq Study Group headed by James Baker, there is no magic formula to solve the numerous problems facing Iraq and its people. However, there are actions to improve the deteriorating events and provide peace, security, and democracy. This book intends to throw light on the major problems facing Iraq and means to help promote peace and security in a devastated country.

Having touched in this preface on the various complications of the Iraqi war, we now proceed to more detailed analyses in the chapters to come; each of the twelve chapters covers a different angle of the war, thus making each one on its own a complete entity.

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# THE IMPACT OF 9/11 ON WAR IN IRAQ

THE 9/11 ATTACKS ARE STILL CASTING THEIR DARK SHADOW. More than three thousand people were killed in a matter of hours in the United States when four American planes were hijacked by Islamic terrorists. The planes crashed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field in Pennsylvania.

The final report of the congressional 9/11 Commission concluded that the United States could not protect its citizens from these attacks because it failed to appreciate the threat posed by al-Qaeda operatives, who exploited that failure and carried out the deadliest assault ever on U.S. soil. It was clear from the investigation that the fanatic, fundamentalist Islamic group al-Qaeda was responsible. Since 9/11, al-Qaeda and its militias have been implementing in Iraq acts of terror against Islamic and non-Islamic innocents. The insurgents sought support from al-Qaeda leaders to spark a religious animosity between Sunni and Shiite sects in order to promote sectarian violence and civil war. In this battle between sects, Iraq lost. In such a battle, al-Qaeda struggled for power and influence within Iraq. Today, al-Qaeda is a regional and global menace. Meanwhile, the fact remains that nowadays terrorism is a global aggressive threat without differentiating between nationalities or religions.

Innocent people killed on 9/11 were not the only victims of this tragedy. Since then, millions of victims suffered globally as well. There has been worldwide suffering and death, and an incalculable number of persons have suffered because of loss of family members, intimates, friends, and colleagues. These are the victims of international terrorism. The events of 9/11 and beyond showed the absence of universal human compassion, lack of global ethical values, unawareness of international humanitarian order, and misinterpretation of teachings of religions. Universal freedom, global peace and order, and legitimacy have suffered.

After the 9/11 events, both the Arab region and the United States remained in turmoil. The project to democratize and introduce political reform in the Middle Eastern countries ended poorly. Holding an election does not create democracy or stimulate reform. In the Arab countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, and Morocco, democratic elections brought the forces of Islamic activists and further political instability despite the fact that true Islam and democracy do not clash.

The Iraqi occupation also proved to be a disastrous venture, resulting in the United States losing its strong political influence in the Arab countries. Most of the world's oil-rich countries in the Arab region formed new alliances with other powers in both Asia and Europe. China and Russia became new economic and financial allies with the rich oil-producing countries in the Arab region. It became evident, after the Iraq occupation, that the real war is not military but political and economic.

What President Bush realized after 9/11 is that unless he could change the conditions in the Middle East, countries could give rise to terrorism, and new recruits of jihadists and fanatics would simply follow those who were eliminated. He envisaged that aggressive promotion of democracy and political reforms in these countries were the solution. Nineteen identified hijackers of 9/11 were from the Arab region: fifteen from Saudi Arabia, two from the United Arab Emirates, one from Lebanon, and the last from Egypt. These are all countries friendly to the United States.

#### **U.S. DECLARATION OF TWO WORLD CAMPS**

After the events of 9/11, and in the atmosphere of pain and shock among world citizens, President George W. Bush declared that there are two worlds: one that is pro-America and the other that is against it.<sup>1</sup> This statement was interpreted by the Western mass media as a division of the world into two camps: one with the United States, the Christian camp, and the other, the Arab and Islamic world. The president compared 9/11 as a clash with the Islamic world: a revival of the confrontation of the crusaders with Muslims in the twelfth century over Jerusalem and the holy places in Syria and Palestine.

The Islamic world was shocked by the president's statement. The Crusades, as known in history, were the first major clash of two civilizations between the Islamic East and Christian West, lasting for over two centuries. The crusaders had killed more than one million Muslims in their unholy mission. The crusaders were told by the church that if they died in battle, they would achieve the status of martyr. President Bush later explained that his statement should not be understood as bearing such meaning of religious confrontation between Islam and Christianity.

The clash of civilizations, in our global contemporary world, is the greatest threat to world peace and security. Religious faiths and beliefs are for individuals, not governments, to judge as an integral part of their human rights. Global religious revival and conflict among nations would take us back into the dark ages.

The anniversaries of 9/11 are remembered in Islamic worlds with empathy. The terrorists who claimed Islam as their faith committed the unforgivable crime of murdering three thousand innocent people. Muslims shared the trembling voices of parents, grandparents, and the loved ones of those killed at the World Trade Center.

#### **MUSLIMS SUFFERING FROM 9/11**

Muslims all over the world were as severely affected by 9/11 as the people of the United States. In particular, the Arab Muslims suffered the most despite their condemnation of the attack and called the tragic event un-Islamic, inhuman, and against all world ethical values and universal principles. The aftermath of 9/11 had a disastrous economic and cultural result especially on the non-oil-producing Islamic nations.

On an economic front, tourism was affected, a main source of income for some countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and even the Mediterranean region. Businesses were also affected as foreign and international investors suspended projects in Arab nations. Arab airlines also suffered enormous losses. Furthermore, prices of commodities became unstable, causing massive budget deficits in the oil-producing countries.

Islamophobic sentiments and a general misconception of Islam and Muslims increased after 9/11. America's largest Islamic civil liberties group, Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), recorded increasing discrimination complaints against Muslims in many states. Complaints involved attacks, unreasonable arrests, detentions, interrogations, and workplace discrimination. Complaints even involved governmental agencies.

#### **FIGHTING TERRORISM IS NOT A WAR BETWEEN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY**

Due to the increasing bitterness and growing hostility of certain U.S. offices and institutions against Islam and the Islamic people after 9/11, President Bush broadcasted every year a message on the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan to the Islamic world assuring his respect for the Islamic faith. He emphasized that Islam is a religion of peace, mercy, and compassion. President Bush further emphasized that the Muslims have contributed to world civilization. America, he continued, is the country

of religious freedom and respects all forms of worship. Our responsibility, he added, is to work together in order to reinforce liberty, mutual understanding, and compassion among all people.<sup>2</sup>

To reinforce the position of President Bush, his national security adviser insisted that the U.S. fight against terrorism was not a war declared between Christianity and Islam. The war was ultimately between the United States, with the collaboration of the free world countries, and international terrorists, regardless of their beliefs, ideologies, or nationalities. Muslims feel that they have suffered the most from this event: Afghanistan is occupied by an international force, Iraq is under an Anglo-American occupation, and the Palestinian dispute has been left unresolved. The Arab countries became associated with international terrorism as the target of Western mass media, which also spread ill-conceived information against the Arab culture and Islamic civilization.

The media has exploited the 9/11 attacks to deform the image of Islam and its civilization. They failed to distinguish between the genuine Islamic tolerance, ethical values, and compassion, and the terrorist acts practiced by some rebel groups disguised under the cloak of Islam, of which Islam itself was innocent. Such misrepresentation gradually deepened hatred among Muslims toward the United States and its policies. That is what President Bush sensed during his visit to Indonesia in October 2003. During his meeting with all groups of Muslim leaders in Jakarta, Bush was surprised by the amount of hatred these leaders expressed toward the United States. He assured them that his country bore no enmity to Muslims and the United States only abominates terrorists. Indonesia has a population of 250 million Muslims. The United States, President Bush reiterated to the Indonesians, is the country of religious freedom and embraces all beliefs. Our responsibility, he added, is to work together in order to reinforce liberty, mutual understanding, and compassion among all people.<sup>3</sup>

Muslims still suffer from discrimination in the United States and Europe after 9/11. Islamic countries requested their delegations abroad to respond to these claims. From a media standpoint as well, the world needed to stay aware of the true nature of Islamic civilization: that Islam had greatly contributed to world culture and that terrorism is un-Islamic.

It is the political Islamists together with Islamic fundamentalists that most threaten the established orders and security in most Islamic countries, even more than harming Western interests. Islamic fundamentalism has been the single most antimodern force over the past decades. Such fundamentalism sparked the rise of Islamic extremism that called for reverting to their ancestral cultures. Fundamentalism and terrorism are not Islam. Islamic and Western civilizations do not clash. Islam, history shows, has never been hostile to innovation, modernization, or globalization.

### HAS IRAQ POSED A CLEAR AND IMMEDIATE THREAT TO WORLD SECURITY?

The question explored is whether Iraq posed a real danger to the peace and security of the world and especially to the United States. The U.S. response to the 9/11 attacks had primarily military value. First, there was a war against Afghanistan and second, against Iraq. Many nations opposed the war in Iraq, not seeing sufficient evidence for the U.S. charges that Baghdad possessed weapons of mass destruction.

The military response was on the pretext that the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein posed a clear and immediate threat to world peace and security. The U.S. administration insisted to the world that the key drive for its forces was to track and destroy Iraq's purported weapons of mass destruction. The U.S. military experts have not yet found, as of the date of this publication, any single proof of such weapons, or even attempts to produce such weapons after Saddam Hussein's conquest of Kuwait and his subsequent defeat in 1991. The Islamic world saw no evidence to back up the allegation for war.

Some politicians and economists insist that the war in Iraq was primarily and totally to control the Middle East oil. Iraq is the second largest producer after Saudi Arabia. Iraq produces 1.8 million barrels a day that could be increased to two million. More importantly, it has one-third of the world's oil reserves.<sup>4</sup>

A few months after the U.S. troops began their occupation of Iraq, no weapons of mass destruction were located in any part of the country. As lack of security in Iraq intensified for its people and the Islamic world, the U.S. and coalition forces changed the reasons for the invasion. The U.S. administration hurriedly declared that the ultimate aim for the invasion was fostering democracy and modernization in Iraq as well as in the Arab Middle East countries.

Critics of the Iraq invasion claim it was highly unethical to bypass the United Nations (UN) and infringe on the independence of a sovereign member state, destabilizing the region. Iraq is sliding deeper into chaos and disorder as insurgents continue to attack the U.S.-led forces and their collaborators, government forces, and civilians.

### REMOVING SADDAM HUSSEIN BY MILITARY FORCE

Islamic intellectual thinkers are still wondering about the inherent reasons for the United States to remove Saddam Hussein by military force. The U.S. administration's reason was that Saddam Hussein was dangerous to world peace and security. As President Bush said, "A free Iraq will

make it easier for children in our own country to grow up in a safer world, because in the Middle East is where you find the hatred and violence that enables the enemy to recruit its killers.”<sup>5</sup>

The Islamic thinkers were astonished by the U.S. administration and the mass media swiftly associating Saddam Hussein with 9/11 terrorism claiming close collaboration with al-Qaeda. There were massive arrests in the United States and Europe of Muslims from various Islamic countries and particularly from the Middle East. This was despite a lack of evidence to indicate that Saddam Hussein was involved in the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Those who accused Saddam of being a collaborator of al-Qaeda ignored the known fact that Saddam was the head of the Ba’ath Party, which is a secular political body calling for the separation of state and religion. Saddam followed the model of secular Turkey, the only secular Islamic country.

Collaboration between Saddam, a committed secularist and Ba’athist, and Bin Laden, a deep-rooted Islamic ultrafundamentalist, should have been unthinkable. After a long FBI investigation, President Bush declared that there was “no evidence to suggest that Saddam Hussein was involved in the terrorist attacks of 9/11.”<sup>6</sup> This contradicted what many Americans had been previously led to believe.

#### **HAS SADDAM HUSSEIN HAD ANY KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WITH AL-QAEDA?**

The U.S. independent commission investigating the terrorist attacks of 9/11 released a statement in July 2004 indicating that it stands by its conclusion that al-Qaeda and Iraq had only very limited connection. The commission said it had seen no evidence to suggest that then-Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein’s government was involved in the attacks.

Thinkers and politicians all over the world questioned whether a military invasion of Iraq in order to remove Saddam from power was considered lawful in the UN charter. Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General, in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation emphasized that the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq did not conform to the United Nations charter. The charter, he emphasized, allows a nation to take military action only with a Security Council resolution approving the invasion.<sup>7</sup>

Annan added that in February 2003 the United States dropped any attempts to get Security Council approval for the invasion of Iraq. From the UN charter point of view, the invasion was illegal. Sharing the opinion of Annan, the Arab Muslims were surprised at the insistence of the United States to invade Iraq unilaterally without the UN Security Council’s approval.

### REACTION OF ISLAMIC COUNTRIES TO A UNILATERAL INVASION OF IRAQ

The French reacted to the illegal U.S. invasion of a UN member state. President Jacques Chirac shared the sentiment of Arab states by saying that the war had put the United Nations through one of the most severe crises in its history.<sup>8</sup>

As the military situation deteriorated and security worsened in Iraq, the Islamic nations urged an effective role for the UN in the Middle East. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) held a one-day emergency meeting in Malaysia in April 2004. The main aim of the conference was to discuss the situation in Iraq and to tackle the mounting outrage and alienation in the Islamic world over U.S. policies in the Middle East.

A declaration at the end of the conference, attended by fifty-seven delegates from the Islamic world, stated, "We recognize and stress the importance of the United Nations in playing a central role to establish peace, security and stability in Iraq."<sup>9</sup> The conference urged the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution restoring sovereignty and full independence to the Iraqi people and empowering the United Nations with the necessary mandate and authority to ensure the achievement of this goal. Consequently, Washington prepared a resolution asking the Security Council to give its concurrence to a new Iraqi interim government, a multinational force and a UN role in the country, after the handover of power on July 2004.

Meanwhile, Islamic nations hailed the one-day meeting under the leadership of Norway's prime minister held in New York in September 2003, in which a large number of world thinkers, from France to Afghanistan, participated. They met to seek ways to give the United Nations the lead role in fighting global terrorism. The meeting emphasized that in the same way as the UN should have the leading role in social and economic development in the world, it should also lead the fight against terrorism. The meeting stressed that military measures may not be the solution. Education and social reforms could help defuse the causes of terrorism.

The U.S. administration accuses the UN of being irrelevant to world affairs: The Islamic world was shocked when the United States argued in the General Assembly in 2003 that the United Nations needed to meet its global responsibilities toward Iraq or risk being irrelevant. Arab nations expressed through the media their shock and anger that the UN was threatened by a powerful member state and at the place where the UN headquarters is hosted.

Accusing the UN of being irrelevant to world affairs just because a rich and powerful nation disagrees with the rest of the member states

was a source of world political inconvenience to the Third World and ethical unrest in the Islamic world. More than 190 member states have ultimately put high hopes in the international justice, wisdom, and global integrity of the UN.

#### **U.S. DEMOCRATIZATION OF IRAQ AND ARAB NATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

After a few months of the unilateral invasion of Iraq, the Arab Islamic nations were surprised at the proclaimed commitment of the United States to democratize not only Iraq but also all the Arab countries in the Middle East. The response of the Middle East was not a welcoming one as such democracy is envisaged to be imposed on them from a Western superpower without previous mutual understanding, dialogue, or exchanging of opinion as required by any democratic communication. The Islamic intellectuals expressed their opinion that introduction of democracy to any given society should come from within the people, their culture, their social values, and their institutions. In the reform movement people in the Islamic communities realize that they can be democrats and remain faithful Muslims. In addition, Arab intellectuals had no intention to redesign the Islamic culture according to Western civilization.

Overlooked in this case was the fact that Islam has its own form of democracy that may differ from Western democracy. In his speech at the National Endowment for Democracy, President Bush opted to make global democracy the focus of his foreign policy with special emphasis on the Arab Middle East nations.<sup>10</sup>

Bush emphasized that establishing a democratic and secular Iraq would serve as a model for transforming the Arab Middle East into democratic nations. In stressing introducing American-style democracy to the troubled region, he sought to send home the message that in invading Iraq the ultimate aim was to free the Iraqi people from Saddam Hussein's tyranny and spread liberty in the Arab countries. Today, Iraq is neither a democracy nor a safe place to live. Secretary of State Colin Powell faulted the terrorists who have been trying to sabotage the process toward self-rule and democracy.

The Arabs are still confused at the relationship of occupying Iraq and spreading democracy in the rest of the region. There was no substantial sign from the Arab countries in the Middle East to engage actively in changing their political directions to become truly democratic in accordance with Western standards. Very few in the Muslim world see any good reason for the U.S. administration to insist on fostering Western democracy at gunpoint in the Middle East countries.

In the known history of humankind, there is no witness to democracy blossoming or political reform flourishing at the point of a gun. History taught us that democracy and reform must develop from within the people and their cultural values. An absolute requirement for democratic reform is to carry out dialogues with the people, to share its benefits, and to demonstrate how democracy could improve societies.

Islam and democratization do not oppose each other. A dynamic Islamic culture requires a dynamic democracy. This does not necessarily mean that democratization of Iraq and other Middle East countries leads to westernization. Democratic values are universal whether Islamic, Western, or Eastern. This is the ideological clash with the Islamic fundamentalist extremists. The Sunni al-Qaeda insurgents in Iraq emphatically reject democracy on the account that it calls for Western values. They are unaware that democracy has global ethical values, social principles, human rights standards, and cultural understanding among nations regardless of religions, beliefs, or faith. Democracy fosters peace, security, and understanding among nations and civilizations.

In Iraq, at present, the world witnesses a democratic government elected by the people. It is historically true that for the first time in half a century, a free election took place after the ousting of Saddam Hussein. Iraqi voters chose a 272-member transitional national parliament committed to putting together a permanent constitution, which was submitted to voters in a referendum in 2005. This step was ultimately a step toward democratic reform and a stable nation. Iraq is changing politically, economically, and culturally despite the al-Qaeda Sunni insurgency and Shiite militia aggression. It is hoped that a new democratic world order is emerging in the Middle East.

#### **REQUEST FOR REDUCING RELIGIOUS ISLAMIC INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS**

The U.S. request to a number of Muslim nations to reduce religious instruction in school curricula astounded the Islamic world. Experts in the United States believed that reducing Islamic religious instruction in schools would prevent the spread of extremists to escalate their terrorism in the name of Islamic faith.

The U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, Liz Cheney, assured country leaders that the U.S. administration is seeking change in the school curricula in the Arab states in order to eliminate hatred and violence in the region. She added that the United States is ready to assist the countries in the Arab region to introduce such change, assuring them that such initiation has no connection with changing

religious statements stated in the Quran. The United States, she continued, aims at reinforcing tolerance, goodwill, and conciliation among nations of the region and the world. In support of the U.S. direction, the U.S. and British newspapers and magazines have in fact published many essays and studies attributing Islamic fanaticism to Islamic instruction in schools and the media.<sup>11</sup>

#### WAVES OF REBEL BOMBING AND KIDNAPPING

The Nasiriyah episode in Iraq in March 2003 was the first start of a series of waves of rebellious bombing, killing thousands of Iraqis, allied troops, and personnel working in foreign companies. For the first time, a suicide bomber blew up a truck at an Italian paramilitary base, killing twenty-six people. This attack was the deadliest against an American ally and just after the occupation started. It sent a message that international troops were not safe anywhere in Iraq.<sup>12</sup>

Since then, a series of suicidal attacks shook all parts of Iraq. The second major blast at the UN headquarters was an indication of indignation toward the war. The attackers claimed that the UN was biased, prejudiced, and being led by the United States. The slogan carried by the rebels was “death to collaborators.”

Saleem, a Shiite Muslim in his sixties, holding the rotating presidency of a twenty-five-member interim Governing Council, was the second member slain by the Arab Resistance Movement, an unknown group of insurgents. He was considered a traitor by being an active member of the interim Governing Council appointed by the U.S. administration. Abductions of foreigners and Iraqi “collaborators” were practiced daily, with a series of kidnappings taken place in a bid to drive foreign companies out of the country and to obstruct the U.S.-led reconstruction plans.

A few months after came the devastation of the Red Cross headquarters. The rebels shouted anti-occupation slogans and chanted “freedom for Iraq and death for enemy collaborators.” Resistance against the U.S. forces and allies intensified, wounding and killing American and allied troops. Muqtada al-Sadr, the charismatic Iraqi Shia leader and cleric, his followers, and Sunni clerics called for a holy war, jihad, against occupying troops by all means possible, including financial and terror tactics. The occupiers have not been able to restore law and order in the country.

A UN mandate allowed U.S.-led forces to continue in Iraq: the UN Security Council agreed to continue the mandate of the U.S.-led forces in Iraq as requested by the Iraqi interim government. The government told the council that they were facing a destructive campaign of terror and violence aiming at derailing any progress toward carrying out democracy

and reform in the country. Therefore, the country still required help from U.S.-led forces to maintain security as the Iraqi forces could not yet defend the country against insurgents and Islamic militia rebels. This meant that the 160,000 U.S. forces and the 20,000 from twenty-seven other nations would remain in Iraq until further notice.<sup>13</sup>

In the first three years of the war, over 3,500 Americans were killed. More than three-quarters of those killed died in combat. In addition, a large number of coalition troops from fifteen countries also died in the Iraqi conflict. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld acknowledged the death toll of the U.S. and allied troops, laying stress on the fact that the offensive against terrorism had its cost.

#### ISLAM ABHORS KIDNAPPING AND STRANGULATION IN IRAQ

Muslims find it hard when they hear of the atrocities happening in Iraq in the name of Islam. An example is a group called the Jaish Ansar al-Sunna, which proudly declared that it had murdered twelve Nepalese hostages on the account that they came to Iraq to fight Islam by means of Buddha. Many other group insurgents bearing Islamic names went murdering, kidnapping, and beheading foreign civilians associated in the reconstruction of the country, regardless of their faiths, religions, or nationalities.

In the history of Islam there have never been such examples of brutal terrorism imposed on a society as what was going on in Iraq. Kidnapping, strangulation, and beheading of civilians regardless of their nationalities or faiths are indubitably not Islamic. Islam denounces such actions as they indeed defy the laws and true values of Islamic law, *Sharia*. As a result, the image of Islam in the world is suffering terribly because of such behavior from unguided Islamic rebels and militiamen.

The insurgents reason that their acts will eventually stop the rebuilding of Iraqi infrastructure by collaborators with the Americans and the Iraqi interim government. In most cases of abductions, the insurgents belong to underground groups claiming Islamic titles. There is a growing conviction that their deeds and objectives are motivated by greed rather than patriotism, as ransoms are usually claimed. In some cases, the victims are beheaded, a primitive act that cannot be justified under any circumstances.

Muslim scholars from all over the world stress the fact that such acts of aggression and destructiveness are fundamentally immoral and truly un-Islamic. They are contrary to the laws of the Quran and the genuine Islamic culture and traditions. Condemnations have poured in from Muslim scholars all over the world indicating that such acts are religiously punishable.

**WHY ARABS ARE ANTI-AMERICAN**

According to an opinion survey released in 2004 by the Arab-American Institute in Washington, very few Arabs think of America in positive terms: only 2 percent of Egyptians, 4 percent of Saudis, 11 percent of Moroccans, 14 percent of Emirates, 15 percent of Jordanians, and 20 percent of the Lebanese.<sup>14</sup>

A few days after the attack on the twin towers, the final report of the American fact-finding committee concluded that the main motive of the al-Qaeda attacks of 9/11 was American bias toward Israel in its conflict with the Palestinians and other Arabs. The deputy chairperson urged the start of a serious and sincere dialogue with the Arab and Islamic world.

In a controversial program to try to prevent potential terrorists from slipping in through its borders, the United States began fingerprinting and photographing visitors.

Federal officials said the measures ordered by Congress would tighten security without causing any undue inconvenience to travelers. However, all indications showed that such obstacles intended to restrict Muslim travelers from entering the United States regardless of their nationalities. Muslims felt that they were being discriminated against because of their faith.

An example of Muslim scholars denied U.S. visas is the case of Professor Tariq Ramadan. Acting at the request of the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. government revoked the work visa of a Muslim scholar, Professor Tariq Ramadan, a Swiss citizen, who had been scheduled to teach at the University of Notre Dame at its invitation. He had been criticized for doubtful links to Islamic militants and branded anti-Semitic.

Caroline Fredrickson, Director of the Washington Legislative Office for the American Civil Liberties Union, cited the Immigration and Nationality Act, part of which deals with aliens who have used a "position of prominence within any country to endorse or espouse terrorist activity." She cited another section that bars aliens whose entry may have "potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States."<sup>15</sup>

"We don't know a reason why either of those should apply to Tariq Ramadan," said a Notre Dame University spokesperson. "He's a distinguished scholar. He's a voice for moderation in the Muslim world."<sup>16</sup> Noteworthy to mention, in 2004 *Time* magazine named him one of the world's top one hundred scientists, thinkers, and innovators of the twenty-first century as he called for bridges to be built, and confidence be restored, between the West and the Muslim world.<sup>17</sup>

Notre Dame University appointed Ramadan to be its Henry R. Luce Professor of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. "In many ways he has defined what it

means to be a European Muslim,” said Muqtada Khan, a political scientist at Adrian College in Michigan. “He has essentially tried to bridge the culture gap.”<sup>18</sup>

In addition to such incidents, anti-U.S. sentiment had already risen in the Arab world because of prisoners’ abuse at Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad. The U.S. media uncovered sadistic, criminal abuse by U.S. soldiers of Iraqis held at a prison that was already infamous under Saddam Hussein’s regime. The photographs broadcast on the CBS program showed Iraqi prisoners stripped, hooded, and tormented by their U.S. captors. Torture and abuse were part of daily routine. The images sparked anger and condemnation among Muslims around the world for the mistreatment of Iraqis.

The United States was also arresting indiscriminately Muslims in various parts of the world and shipping them away to Guantanamo Bay on the island of Cuba, under the pretext of protecting the United States from Islamic terrorists. No one knows who is who in the Cuba prison. This is in addition to the number of Iraqis in U.S. prisons in Iraq estimated at over fourteen thousand. Their families were not given reasons as to why they were detained, their whereabouts, or living conditions. Such a situation has certainly fueled anti-American feeling among Muslims and especially the Iraqi people.

The Quran desecrations at Guantanamo tarnished the image of the United States in the Islamic world after a U.S. news magazine reported that the Muslim holy book was flushed down the toilet at the prison. Muslims around the world felt that the United States had been humiliating Muslim detainees by offending their religious beliefs. In addition, the U.S. administration revealed eventually that many other Muslim prisoners were held in other countries, including European ones, on the pretext that they were Islamic terrorists.

Afghan Muslim clerics threatened to call for a holy war against the United States unless it properly investigated the incidents and punished those who desecrated the Quran. This added to the growing resentment of the U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan of eighteen thousand, most of them Americans. Sixteen were killed in Afghanistan and one hundred wounded in demonstrations against the United States for the Quran desecrations. In other Islamic countries, after Friday prayers, people carrying copies of the Quran marched in protest. In Iraq, demonstrations appeared outside mosques in Baghdad, in the holy city of Najaf, and in many other Iraqi cities.

Again, the Islamic world was surprised and angered at the worldwide publication of the pictures of Saddam in his underpants in his prison cell under U.S. custody. Other pictures showed him washing his clothes in a

bucket in his cell. The pictures were a violation of the Geneva conventions, which call for respect to prisoners. Some Muslims argued that the incident meant to dehumanize the Islamic faith. The incident was further damaging the reputation of the United States.

The *New York Times* in November 2004 reported “the United States is failing in its efforts to explain the nation’s diplomatic and military actions to the Moslem world.”<sup>19</sup> Although the report did not constitute official policy, its analysis aimed to raise government awareness of the reasons why Muslims in the world are not happy with the U.S. policy toward their nations and especially in Iraq.

#### MUSLIMS’ HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATED

Post 9/11, Muslims have been suffering from a fierce anti-Muslim campaign. Amr Moussa, the Director General of the Arab League, requested that the Arab delegations in the UN and its international conventions respond to the campaign by stressing the Arabs’ adherence to global human rights, peace, and security of all countries.<sup>20</sup> He emphasized that the Arabs and Muslims should prove to the whole world that they are a relevant part of the globe’s human civilization, contributing greatly to its progress and achievements.

Children’s games against Arabs started to be popular in some American states, such as playing “Murder the Arabs” or “Learn how to kill Iraqis.” The spread of the new game among young Americans expresses hatred against the Arabs, especially the Iraqis, who are murdering American soldiers sent to “liberate” Iraq.<sup>21</sup> These games sparked anger among Arabs and Muslims living in the United States. They said it was provoking hatred against them, in general, and the Iraqis, in particular. Such games violate the values of justice, equality, and human rights propagated by the United States worldwide. Many Muslims think anti-Islamic sentiment—under the label “war against terror”—was always present, and merely surfaced with 9/11.

*USA Today*, in its issue dated March 9, 2004, published on its front page an article titled “Muslims See New Opposition to Building Mosques Since 9/11.” A Muslim group proposed to turn an old building into a mosque in a suburb of Philadelphia. Building a mosque led critics to distribute fliers that warned residents that extremists “with connection to terrorists” might worship in their community. The fliers also claimed that the mosque would attract hundreds of its worshipers for prayers five times a day and would harbor terrorists.<sup>22</sup>

Discrimination groups in Britain have reported an increase in anti-Muslim assaults and prejudiced attitudes since 9/11. The Moslem

Council for Britain and other leading Muslim organizations in the United Kingdom made it known that Islamophobia was becoming institutionalized. The council is concerned about a generation of Muslim youth in the United Kingdom feeling they are discriminated against. The council feels that some politicians and elements of the media were also promoting Islamophobia.

Even Muslim students at American universities and science research centers suffer discrimination. Reports from universities and research centers reveal that the number of Muslim graduate students has sharply dropped since 9/11. In the *New York Times*, Joseph S. Nye, Jr., a professor at Harvard University, threw light on the sharp enrollment decline in the number of foreign students admitted.<sup>23</sup> He estimated the costs to the American economy are significant as educating foreign students in the United States is a \$13 billion industry. Equally important, he emphasized, those foreign students return home carrying American ideas with them. Getting an American visa has been a red-tape nightmare that deterred many Muslim student applicants. Islamic human rights organizations, governments, educational institutions, and parents expressed their indignation toward such policies that discriminate against the Muslim students in the United States.<sup>24</sup>

#### **ANNAN'S WARNING OF MOUNTING WEST-ISLAM TENSIONS**

Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned that tensions were mounting between Westerners and Muslims and urged people to seek out common ground between their traditions. It was right to condemn attacks such as those by al-Qaeda on the United States on September 11, 2001, but people must be aware of polarizing the West and Islam.

Annan, according to the text of a lecture to University of Tübingen in southern Germany, said, "It is wrong to behave as if Islamic and Western values were incompatible . . . They are not, as millions of devout Muslims living here in Germany, and elsewhere in the West, would be the first to tell you." Annan continued, "Yet many of those Muslims now find themselves the objects of suspicions, harassment and discrimination, while in parts of the Islamic world anyone associated with the West or Western values is exposed to hostility and even violence."<sup>25</sup>

Following this synopsis of the events leading to the Iraqi war and its impact on the world in general, we now attempt to throw light on the extended terrorism attacks on Iraq, its reasons, and the reaction of Islam toward them.

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