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Sociology 274z
December 6, 2011

The Successes and Failures of U.S. Policy Concerning Iraq

Under the George W. Bush administration, the United States adopted an aggressive policy toward the Middle East and, more specifically, Iraq. Following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, the Bush administration developed several new policies which took an aggressive and preemptive stance against so called terrorists in the Middle East. There are many reasons why the United States adopted these policies towards Iraq, and the policies themselves had many successes and failures. Since their implementation, the policies adopted have been examined thoroughly by multiple authors and analysts who studied their effectiveness. Furthermore, the policies implemented in Iraq have had serious implications for U.S. foreign policy elsewhere; by examining these policies, we're able to have a better understanding of the current state of the world.

In order to understand why the United States has adopted its current strategy in Iraq, one must first understand what that strategy is and how it came about. The policy was developed following the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. This attack was seen as a way to develop a massive war against terror in the Middle East, and specifically in Iraq. Only a few hours after the attacks, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was noted as saying "sweep it all up, things related and not" (Weinberger 1). Essentially, the Bush administration was looking to use the September 11th attacks as a way to expand their foreign policy agenda beyond Afghanistan, regardless if they played

a role in the attacks that had occurred earlier that day. Following that event, the United States started moving enormous amounts of resources into the planning of an invasion of Iraq. This includes, but is certainly not limited to, \$700 million that was originally allocated for the war in Afghanistan into the development of another war in Iraq (Weinberger 1). Even though the Iraqi government played no role in the September 11th attacks, the Bush administration began drawing parallels between the attacks and Iraqi aggression, saying that there was “overwhelming evidence” connecting al-Qaida and Saddam Hussein. In addition to these “connections,” the Bush administration also claimed that Saddam Hussein had access or was trying to gain access to nuclear weapons (Weinberger 2). These allegations were the basis for an invasion of Iraq in 2003.

As mentioned earlier, many different authors and analysts have studied U.S. policy toward Iraq; because of this, there are many different theories as to why the United States adopted those policies and what contributed to their successes and failures. One of those authors is Eliot Weinberger, an American essayist, who in 2005 wrote “What I Heard About Iraq.” In the essay, Weinberger examines what the Bush administration said in regard to Iraq following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, prior to engagement with Iraq, and following the start of the war in Iraq. Specifically, he points out the Bush administration’s hyperbolization of Iraq’s involvement in the 9/11 attacks and their build-up of “weapons of mass destruction.” Though he never goes beyond quoting the administration through various sources, it’s clear Weinberger questions the tactics and actions of the White House. It appears Weinberger believes that a

preconceived agenda had been set by the Bush administration in regards to Iraq prior to the September 11th attacks, and that only following those attacks could the agenda be implemented. Again, it's challenging to interpret exactly what Weinberger is trying to convey as it's all done in a roundabout way. In regard to the successes and failures of the policy toward Iraq, I believe Weinberger ultimately leaves that conclusion up to the reader; however, in the way the information is presented, it's clear that Weinberger believes the Bush administration lied and exaggerated Iraqi aggression in order to push the Bush doctrine. Beyond that, Weinberger uses the administration contradicting themselves as a way to display the misinformation the Bush administration spread during this time. Due to this, the reader is led to believe that the Bush administration's policy in Iraq failed for several reasons; 1) the Bush administration had preconceived notions concerning Iraq and their nuclear ambitions, therefore clouding their judgement following the September 11th attacks, 2) the Bush administration lied in order to gain public support therefore tainting the entire policy, and finally 3) the Bush administration continued the policy even though it was clearly failing. It does not appear as though Weinberger sees any successes with the policy toward Iraq implemented under the Bush administration.

The second individual to comment on policy toward Iraq that we'll examine is Martin van Creveld, who wrote *The Changing Face of War*, though we'll be looking at specifically "Case III: The Americans in Iraq."

Works Cited

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