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Empire and Resistance

An Analysis of the Occupation of Iraq and the Iraqi
Opposition and Armed Resistance

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Mission accomplished.

- George Bush on the war in Iraq

Abstract

In his thesis I have analyzed the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, as well as the widespread opposition and armed resistance against the former, starting off from the assumption that the actions and policies of the occupation in many ways fosters popular opposition and armed resistance. I have analyzed the actions and policies of the occupation since the invasion as well as the aims and underlying interests that governed the choice of Iraq as the target of regime change and occupation within a post-colonial an anti-imperialist theoretical framework. The thesis is a qualitative single case study with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the widespread resentment, as well as armed resistance, towards the American occupation of Iraq. My conclusion is that the widespread opposition and the armed resistance in Iraq, its evolvement and roots, can, in many respects, be understood and analyzed as a result and reaction to the mistakes and misbehaviours of the occupation and the Coalition forces. I have also argued that it is essential to understand the invasion and occupation of Iraq as part of a continuation of colonial/imperialist discourses and processes, most importantly in order to avoid reinforcing neo-colonial interpretations of our contemporary world.

Key words: Post-colonial theory, US-Imperialism, Occupation, Resistance, Iraq.

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1 Introduction

I became interested in the resistance against the occupation and the foreign forces in Iraq since I felt that the rising critique against the American occupation and presence in Iraq was mainly a consequence of the American administrations failure to correctly asses the situation that arose after the invasion. I was surprised by the fact that the legitimacy of the presence of American forces seemed to rest solely on their success or failure in relation to the occupation. The fact that the invasion and the occupation could be seen as an act of aggression was not taken into account, neither the legitimacy of actually invading Iraq in the first place, despite the fact that the invasion was deemed illegal by the United Nations. Another interesting aspect within the debate was that the resistance against the American forces was growing enormously but the image that was portrayed of the resistance was that of Islamist terrorists or former Ba'athist that were pushing the country towards civil war through inhumane terrorist activities. This general picture was however contradicted by many within the anti-war movement and the left who claimed that the resistance had to be supported from an anti-imperialist/colonial stand or at least understood as a popular response to occupation.

My initial aim with this thesis was to investigate if the Iraqi resistance could be defined as a legitimate resistance struggle for national independence and freedom from foreign control. Legitimacy should here be understood as popular support as well as characteristics in line with an anti-imperialist/post-colonial stand. However, the difficulties of trying to map out the resistance, its different groups, aims etc. proved to be an extremely difficult task, mainly because of the difficulties to asses the truthfulness and correctness of the information that was possible to obtain. Trying to estimate the legitimacy of an ongoing struggle proved to be a task not possible to carry out within the limits of this thesis. So after studying the available literature discussing events in Iraq I decided to try to understand the resistance by mainly analyzing the occupation and the actions and aims behind it. Several theoreticians claim that it is the actions of the occupation that, if not entirely, to a very high degree determines the resistance. It is this hypothesis that I will use as my starting point in this thesis. I have thus tried to approach the Iraqi resistance by analyzing what it resists; the occupation and its actions and aims with being in Iraq. The focus of this thesis is thus the invasion and occupation of Iraq and the Iraqi response to those events which can be argued to create the basis for the armed resistance. My aim is to analyze the actions and policies of the occupational forces and the Iraqi reactions towards it and thereby to try to contextualize the resistance properly, i.e. to distinguish how it should be understood and within what context.

Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003 the world has been able to witness a country descend into chaos and violence. The Coalition forces met a resistance in Iraq that they did not take into account while planning and carrying out the invasion and the following occupation. The overall impression given by the Bush administration was that the invasion of Iraq would be over quickly. The perception was that Saddam Hussein would be overthrown with the help of foreign troops and that the reconstruction of post-war Iraq would be a short-term endeavor without any major obstacles. Today it is clear that this analysis of “post-war” Iraq was terribly wrong. The occupying forces in Iraq have been met with a strong civil and armed resistance and the magnitude of this resistance grows as the situation gets more and more out of control. The current government does not enjoy any overwhelming public support; the country is ravished by violence, both between foreign forces and Iraqi militant groups, as well as violence between different fractions of the Iraqi population. The Americans have yet been able to show any ability to stabilize the country.

Despite these facts, the Iraqi resistance is often portrayed as being driven by an overwhelming influence of foreign Jihadist and Islamist extremists that want to create an Islamic state in Iraq and who detest the Western world. Alternative interpretations of the resistance or the contextualization of the resistance within a post-colonial or anti-imperialist framework is seldom visible in the dominant arenas of debate such as the media etc. The actions of the different groups within the resistance are more often being interpreted within the framework of the war against terrorism or global terrorism in general and the anti-colonial or nationalist aspects of the resistance are thus being downplayed as well as the strong public support which has rendered the armed resistance possible from the beginning.

Important to mention however, is that the focus of this thesis is on events that are immersed in ongoing struggles over interpretation. This means that the position one takes, and consequently the position I take in this thesis, in relation to the resistance and as a consequence, against the current occupation and presence of non-Iraqi forces in Iraq, will inevitably be influenced by ideological and (geo)political agendas and interests. Most importantly it will be influenced by the information that is possible to obtain, information that is in itself influenced by ongoing discourses and political agendas. The availability of information is also affected by the security situation, or lack of such, in Iraq since the invasion and thereby by the lack of independent journalists able to actively report from Iraq (see for example Palmer & Fontan, 2007).

1.1 Aim and Problem

My starting point in this thesis is that one way to understand the resistance in Iraq against the presence of foreign forces in the country is to analyze the actions taken by the occupational powers in Iraq. In line with this assumption, it becomes of great importance to include the American strategies and actions before, during and after the invasion in the analysis. My point here is that the resistance cannot be

analyzed separately from the actions of the occupational forces because there will inevitably be an interplay between these two during an occupation. According to many observers, the ethnic differences in Iraq as well as the economic and political state of the country, was not properly taken into account by the American government while planning their war. This resulted in a chaotic and incoherent occupation of Iraq where the lack of a plan/strategy for the reconstruction of post-war Iraq was missing. The current situation of violence and disorder in Iraq can therefore, in many respects, be seen as a direct consequence of the actions taken by the American government and its military in Iraq.

To understand the pre-war arguments for invading Iraq and carrying out a regime-change in the country as well as the actions taken by the American forces during the invasion and subsequent occupation is thus essential for understanding the resistance. Since reliable information of the various resistance groups in Iraq is difficult, if not impossible to obtain, I have chosen to focus on the discourse surrounding the invasion and occupation as well as the actual actions taken, from a post-colonial and anti-imperialist framework, to shed light on the current situation and contextualize it within what I consider to be a more justifiable light.

My questions are thus:

- How can one understand the rise of popular Iraqi resentment and armed resistance towards the foreign presence in Iraq after the invasion in 2003?
- How can/should one, from a post-colonial and anti-imperial perspective, position oneself in relation to the Iraqi resistance towards the American occupation?
- To what extent can an analysis of the actions of the occupation aid in understanding popular Iraqi opposition and armed resistance?

1.2 Material and Method

As a consequence of the current situation in Iraq, the fact that the dynamics in the country is constantly changing, as well as the fact that there is an ongoing armed conflict (war) which obscures the information that can be gathered, it is difficult to gather reliable and trustworthy material of use for my topic of study. The information about the situation in Iraq that one can obtain, through the media and through other sources, is in many cases embedded in propaganda from either side of the conflict. Therefore my results will, in some respects, be dependent on information that is unreliable and this is something that I have to take into account when drawing conclusions or making general statements based on my material.

Due to the current situation in Iraq I have no possibility of gathering first-hand information from any of the actors involved in the conflict. The use of methods such as interviews or participatory observations is therefore not viable. As a result, I have to rely on second hand sources as my main channel of information. The empirical literature will consist of second hand sources regarding the

resistance and the American invasion and occupation of Iraq. Examples of such literature are books and articles written by journalists or theoreticians that analyze and discuss the situation in Iraq from a more empirical standpoint. For example, which actions and policies has been carried out by the foreign forces and occupational authorities and what has the reactions and responses been from the Iraqi population? How has the responsibilities of the occupying power been met and what consequences has the failures of the American occupation had?

In addition to the more empirically focused literature I will also use theoretical literature departing from a post-colonial and anti-imperialist stance. Of special interest is of course theoretical literature that discusses resistance against occupation and how one can understand the interplay between occupier and occupied. I will also focus on literature that discusses the discourses and structures of neo-colonialism and imperialism in “general” terms as it allows me to contextualize the current situation in Iraq within a theoretical framework that I consider to be the most appropriate for understanding the complex reality which is Iraq today. Post-colonial theories can provide a framework for understanding the discursive practices and processes taking place, and the theories starting off from an anti-imperialist stance can aid in understanding the more material aspects of the topic of study.

This thesis is going to be performed as a qualitative single case study and textual analysis will be the method that I am going to deploy for analyzing my material. The aim of my thesis is not to make empirical generalizations in relation to other resistance struggles. My aim is rather to nuance the current portrayal of the events taking place in Iraq. I want to provide a deeper and more complex understanding of the resistance struggle in specific and the overall situation in Iraq more generally. A more extensive case study approach is thus not preferable. Rather, an in depth qualitative case study of the occupation and resistance in Iraq allows for a deeper and more complex understanding of the phenomena. It also gives room for understanding and analyzing the interplay and relation between the actors in the conflict rather than just scraping the surface which might have been the only possible way to approach the subject within a multi-case study.

An additional methodological aspect is that I have a limited time-aspect in this thesis. Since I am studying a phenomenon that in many respects is ongoing I have chosen to focus on events reaching up to approximately 2005, the year the elections of the current Iraqi government took place. This has been a result of primarily practical concerns since the inclusion of a longer time-period would not be possible to grasp within the limits of this thesis. The elections can be said to be a breaking point in contemporary Iraqi history and I therefore chose this point in time to mark the end of my period of investigation.

Furthermore, I have chosen to focus on the Shia and Sunni communities (which constitute about 80-85 % of the Iraqi population) in my analysis and thereby, in many respects, excluded the Kurdish community from my analysis. This has also been mainly a practical decision since the inclusion of the Kurdish community would entail two parallel analyses because the situation of the Kurds differs enormously in relation to the Shia/Sunni communities.

2 Theoretical Perspectives – Approaching the Subject at Hand

To understand the issue at hand in this essay, i.e. the resistance in Iraq towards the occupation, I have chosen to start off from postcolonial theory as well as anti-imperialist theories/theoreticians such as Tariq Ali (Historian, Novelist and Political Commentator) and Patrick Cockburn (Middle East correspondent of *The Independent*). Post-colonial theories can aid in understanding the implications of the invasion and the occupation of Iraq since it entails an understanding of how the colonial past influences contemporary politics and events. A post-colonial analysis of current events in Iraq can help to contextualize the Iraqi response towards the invasion and occupation within a continuation of colonial processes. Postcolonialism provides the historical and theoretical framework for understanding contemporary discourses and tendencies within international relations by emphasizing how colonial domination and imperialism still affects events today and also to see what reactions and actions an imperial occupation provokes. The theoretical framework also aids in understanding how we, within the West, are immersed in an ongoing neo-colonial/ post-colonial depiction of the rest of the world that deeply affect our understanding and perception of such issues that are central in this thesis.

In relation to the kind of analysis and empirical focus I have chosen for this thesis, I find it necessary, especially as a Western scholar, to depart from a critical and emancipatory perspective which entails a critical position towards both imperialist and colonial tendencies within western culture and also nationalist tendencies within the resistance struggle that may subordinate marginalized groups interests for the greater good. According to my opinion, post-colonial theories as well as critical theories against imperialism encompass this aspect and starts off from a critical as well as emancipatory position. It inevitably entails a critical and emancipatory aim of knowledge production and takes the experiences of subjugated groups as a starting point and as a basis for knowledge production. It also entails a responsibility towards the subjects under study and those individuals and groups that are affected by the results.

2.1 Critical Positioning – Objectivity/Subjectivity

The questions that I pose in this essay presuppose a value-bias, i.e. that the theoretical perspective deployed is not value-neutral in the traditional sense and does not adhere to a strict definition of objectivity. I would argue that it is not

possible to study this kind of phenomenon from an objective standpoint since one has to consider geo-political, economic, and political interests among others and to be able to make any conclusions one has to take a stance.

Critical and emancipatory aspects are a central focus in post-colonial theories and the normative departure is often criticized as being value-laden and therefore non-scientific. The theoretical departure and the focus for scientific knowledge production within this theoretical framework are the rights of subjugated groups such as former colonized people, or peoples currently living under occupation. It is a normative departure and an emancipatory agenda with the objective of criticizing and deconstructing oppressing structures and practices.

The standards of objectivity and value-neutrality are central to an idealized picture of physical science. Objectivity is equated with a disinterested approach to observable subject matters that are regarded as separated from knower's/observers and requires the rejection of any personal claims in relation to the subject(s) under study. Hence, the knowers are value-neutral and have no vested interest in the objects of knowledge and thus no motivations beyond pure inquiry. From a critical standpoint this kind of objectivity is only possible if the researcher is able to achieve a "view from nowhere" and as a result escape a specific location (Haraway, 1988:582). According to Donna Haraway (Professor of Feminist Theory and Technoscience) this view from nowhere is impossible, rather objectivity requires positioning, the assumption that knowledge claims can be made from a distanced and neutral position is a way to mask those specific interests involved in knowledge production such as masculinist or ethnocentric assumptions. The seemingly value-neutral scientific perspectives are in reality value-laden and ideologically biased but these characteristics are hidden under the guise of neutrality and universality. Thus it is of great importance that the researcher positions her/himself in relation to the subject under study in order to be able to make any knowledge claims and it is also crucial that the researchers' pre-understandings are made visible in the research process.

One important aspect however in adopting a critical stance which takes the view of the subjugated as a starting point is to avoid regarding the positions of the subjugated as innocent positions that are to be exempted from critical re-examination and interpretation (Haraway, 1988:584). To prioritize the standpoint of the subjugated does not constitute grounds for ontology, it should according to Haraway rather be considered as a visual clue. This because it is not identity itself that produce science, it is critical positioning (ibid. p.586).

2.2 Post-colonial Theory

Post-colonial theories can aid in understanding the historical context of colonialism and imperialism that is crucial in understanding both the resistance struggle(s) in, and the occupation of, Iraq. Post-colonial(ism) should in this context be understood as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism. According to Ania Loomba (Professor of Literature), this

definition allows the incorporation of the history of anti-colonial resistance with contemporary resistances to imperialism and dominating Western culture. It also includes an opposition to imperializing/colonializing (subordinating/subjectivizing) discourses and practices (Loomba, 2005a:16).

The theoretical field of postcolonialism, as mentioned above, is based on an understanding of colonialism and its consequences for our contemporary world. Colonialism was not a project limited to the conquering of large parts of the world, its logic also demanded a demarcation and portrayal of the colonized peoples as subordinate “races” and “cultures”. According to Masoud Kamali (Professor of Social Work), the colonial projects strengthened the division of the world’s population into “we” and “them”. “We” came to represent the civilized and “them” the uncivilized, barbaric and primitive. The colonial endeavour was as a result of this divide, portrayed as a civilizing mission where the uncivilized peoples of the world were to be saved by the colonial powers (Kamali in Loomba, 2005b:009-010).

The portrayal of the benevolent colonizer legitimated the extreme exploitation and abuses that colonized nations and peoples suffered under colonial rule. Violence was “the well known language of the colonial powers” through which the colonial powers forced millions of people around the world to a life of subordination (ibid, 010). Modernity, development and democracy was according to Kamali exclusive for the colonial powers which he argues continuously have destroyed attempts at modernization and democratization that was perceived as counterproductive in relation to the interests of the colonial powers. The self-interests of the colonial and imperial powers created the foundation for their political and military actions around the world. However, a central tenet within post-colonial theory is that colonialism cannot simply be attributed as a thing of the past. Rather it is claimed that the colonial crusades have to be seen as a part of the socio-political map of our times, a “map” that is continuously being drawn and modified by the same powers as before. Thus, the colonial heritage is still alive, but in new shapes and forms. For example, colonial racism which was based on the categorization of peoples and races in hierarchic dichotomies has, according to Kamali, outlived the fall of colonialism and is now clearly observable and expressed in the “free world”, a theme that will be discussed in depth in coming chapters (ibid, 010-011).

2.2.1 Colonialism/Imperialism – Central Concepts

Colonialism and imperialism are two central concepts within post-colonial theory. According to Anne McClintock (Associate Professor of English), colonization involves

“the direct territorial appropriation of another geo-political entity, combined with forthright exploitation of its resources and labour, and systematic inference in the capacity of the appropriated culture (itself not necessarily a homogenous entity) to organize its dispensations of power” (McClintock, 1994:295).

Imperial colonization on the other hand involves large-scale, territorial domination which can include domination over more than one country (ibid.).

When it comes to imperialism “in itself” there are definitional ambiguities. Should it be defined as a purely economical system or does it include colonial-like political characteristics? Loomba defines American imperialism as an enormous economic and military exercise of power across the globe without having any direct political control (Loomba, 2005b:027). However in the context of Iraq the exercise of direct political control is highly evident which makes the occupation by definition, if one accepts the above definition by McClintock, colonial rather than imperial.

2.2.2 The “post” in Postcolonialism – Linear Developments?

The colonial within post-colonialism is assumed to be, not a part of history, but rather something that still affects our contemporary world. It is thus argued that postcolonial theory can be seen as a critique against the claim that contemporary cultural processes are placed outside and beyond the history of colonialism (Eriksson et al., 2002:16). However, even if many theoreticians emphasize the fact that the prefix post should not denote a temporal break, there is an intense debate within the field regarding this issue. Some claim that the term postcolonial is a politically ambivalent term since it erases the clear distinction between colonizer and colonized, concepts that has been associated to such terms as colonialism and neo-colonialism, which postcolonial is supposed to replace. These critics claim that the term postcolonial makes a politics of resistance impossible since it does not require a specific centre of power and therefore cannot evoke a clear and unambiguous resistance (Eriksson et al. 2002:81).

Ella Shohat (Professor of Women's Studies and Cultural Studies), for example, argue that the prefix post positions the field in the period after colonialism which entails an ambiguous spatio-temporality. The lack of a historical specificity in the "post" leads to the blurring of diverse chronologies (Shohat, 1992:101-03). The implied assumption that we all live in postcolonial world downplays linkages between "postcolonial" theories and contemporary anti-colonial, or anti-neo-colonial struggles and discourses (103-04). As Shohat argues, formal independence for colonized countries has often entailed neo-colonial hegemony rather than an end to First World hegemony. Thus, the implication that colonialism is in the past undermines the economic, political, and cultural deformative legacy that we have inherited from colonialism today. Shohat argues that postcolonial, when compared with the term neo-colonialism, is less useful as a tool to analyze contemporary power relations. The concept postcolonialism can therefore be said to lack the political content necessary to account for the U.S. militaristic involvements in Central America and Kuwait-Iraq in the eighties and nineties. The existence of clear colonial patterns among racial and national oppressions, with Palestinians as a clear example, also renders a temporal break with past colonialism problematic, as well as in relation to the situation in Iraq today (ibid, 104-05). McClintock has a similar argument as she claims that

inhabitants in many parts of the world may claim that there is nothing post about colonialism at all and Iraq could be used as an illuminating example in this context (see Aspengren below). Thus, the discipline runs the risk of obscuring the continuities and discontinuities of colonial and imperial power (McClintock, 1994:292-294). By placing colonialism/imperialism securely in the past, and/or by suggesting a continuous line from that past to our present one therefore risks serving the production of neo-colonial knowledge (Spivak, 1999:1).

2.2.3 Neo or –Post?

Another problematic implication with the concept post-colonialism, according to McClintock, is that it is the axis of time, rather than power that becomes the basis of the binary. As a result it does not contribute to a distinction between the beneficiaries and casualties of colonialism as for example the binary colonizer/colonized does. The historical break that is suggested by the preposition ‘post-‘becomes a contradiction to both the continuities and discontinuities of power that have shaped the legacies of the formal European and British colonial empires. The term neo-colonialism in comparison, while implicating a passage, simultaneously emphasize a repetition with difference, a focus on the “the new modes and forms of the old colonialist practices, not on a ‘beyond’” (Shohat, 1992:106).

The points that McClintock and Shohat emphasize are of great importance for my own analysis since the case of Iraq is a clear example of the continuity of imperial and colonial power being exercised. Without those connections, the analysis of the current situation would be ahistorical and simplified. As McClintock argue, different forms of colonization have resulted in different forms of decolonization, and in some cases formal colonization, in the form of territorial occupation, has given way to more imperialist forms of colonialism. The Second Gulf War is according to McClintock rather a new form of interventionism than a sign of the end of imperial interventions and Latin America is evidence of the normalcy of regime change by the US around the world. According to McClintock, the term postcolonial thus becomes difficult to use in order to theorize these complex dynamics since it obscures the continuities and discontinuities of US power around the globe (McClintock, 1994:295-97).

Loomba however argues that one should use the term “post-colonial” in a more limited, historically and theoretically specific way that “situates it in a relational context vis-à-vis other (equally problematic) categories” (Loomba, 2005b:028). By understanding postcolonialism as a theory that questions colonial dominance and the consequences of colonialism, rather than focusing on its temporal implications, the term renders it possible to connect the historical anti-colonial resistance with today’s resistance against imperialism and the domination of western culture (ibid, 032). The concept postcolonial should thus be understood as a descriptive, rather than an evaluating, concept (ibid, 037).

2.2.4 Post-Structuralism and Post-Colonialism

Post-colonial studies were largely developed from within the field of literary studies. This heritage is important to emphasize in order to understand the specificity of the field of study that is postcolonialism today. According to Loomba the postcolonial field is strongly influenced by post-structuralism, a perspective that emphasizes the importance of language for the construction of identities, institutions and politics. Within post-structuralism the world, both social relations and the objective world, is assumed to be constructed through linguistic practices. Binary dichotomies are seen as the central component in language and the binaries are regarded as asymmetric, one of the poles in the dichotomy is subordinated and the other is dominant. As a result of this characteristic they are seen as active in the construction and preservation of social hierarchies (Eriksson et al., 2002:17-18). The critical aspect of analyzing these oppositions is to make the hidden power relations visible and to show that they are simplified. They are part of a reductionist way of creating meaning which does not reflect the complexity of the world.

The focus within postcolonialism on language and the idea that historical processes and practices can be analyzed by looking at them as 'texts', which is a result of the post-structural influence has, however, proved to be both enabling and problematic for the field. There is an ongoing tension between Marxist and post structural perspectives, where the textual influence of the latter perspective is in conflict with the more materialist critical tradition within postcolonialism. (ibid, 21). According to Loomba, some critics claim that literary texts have begun to stand in for all social processes. Analysis's of representation and discourse replaces all discussion of events and material reality and the result becomes a neglect of colonial rule by concentrating on colonial representations (Loomba, 2005a:82-84). Thus the critique is that the textual features of colonialism and imperialism are prioritized in the analysis while the analysis of actual practices of violence and domination becomes less important (ibid, 106). Some theoreticians argue that the influence from post-structuralism has reduced the field of post-colonial studies to a mere interest in texts and theories and thereby isolating the field from the "real" post-colonial problems and the political struggle (Eriksson et al., 2002:22). For example, Edward Said (Literary Theorist, Cultural Critic and Political Activist) criticizes contemporary theory because of its detachment from the problems and constraints of the real world and thus its failure of challenging the status quo or bring about change (Kennedy, 2000:3). These discussions are related to the above debate on how to conceptualize our current world as post-colonial or neo-colonial. It is a question of how to visualize power and how to include historical continuities and discontinuities that still affect our contemporary world within our theoretical work.

Loomba argues for a more nuanced approach to postmodernism as she argues that the local and the global does not have to be seen as mutually exclusive perspectives, but rather as aspects of the same reality that can complement each other. To be able to combine revisions of the past and analyses of our present within the field, Loomba argues that closed paradigms are a hindrance (Loomba,

2005a:209-11). An example of how open paradigms can aid the analysis is that, within the colonial context, economic looting, knowledge production and strategies of representation were intimately dependent on each other. Hence, the discursive and cultural aspects of colonialism should not be regarded as separate from its economical, political or even military dimension. The use of weapons goes hand in hand with the use of pictures. Loomba therefore argues that there is a deeply symbiotic relationship between the discursive and material practices of imperialism (ibid, 107-09). This will be a central focus of my own analysis, i.e. the combination of material and discursive processes to gain a more nuanced picture of the situation in Iraq. For example the aggression directed towards the Iraqi population in general, and suspected resistance fighters in particular, is legitimated by portraying the resistance as illegitimate and indiscriminate in their attacks. Iraq thus represents an example of how representations, images and stereotypes can be understood as integrated parts of the neo-colonial violence and I will try to defend this assumption throughout this thesis.

2.3 Orientalism – Irreducible Differences and Western Hegemony

The book *Orientalism*, written by Edward Said in 1978, has been highly influential within the field of post-colonial studies. In this book Said focuses on the Anglo-French-American experience of the Arabs and of Islam and makes an in depth analysis of the discourse of Orientalism that he argues has shaped the encounter between the “Occident” and “Orient” and the construction of the Orient as inherently inferior to the Western world. Orientalism is a construction that we will see is still highly influential in the understanding and construction of the Arab and Muslim world today (Said, 2003:17).

The Orient that appears in *Orientalism* is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, consciousness, and later, Western imperialism (ibid, 203). The British and the French have, unlike the Americans, had a long tradition of Orientalism as a means of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience. The Orient is the place of Europe’s greatest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. The Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, and experience (ibid, 1-2).

Thus, to speak of Orientalism is to speak mainly, although not exclusively, of a British and French cultural enterprise according to Said. However, since World War II America has dominated the Orient and since then approaches it as France and Britain once did (ibid, 4-17).

Orientalism is defined by Said as a style of thought which is based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most

of the time) “the Occident” (ibid, 2). With the late eighteenth century as a roughly defined starting point Said argues that Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as “the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient, by making statements about it, authorizing views about it, describing, teaching, settling and ruling over it”. In essence, Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient where the relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power and of domination (ibid, 3-5). Said focuses on Orientalism as a discourse, however a critical point that he emphasizes, as does Loomba when she argues for the openness of paradigms, is that Orientalism as a phenomena is not restricted to discourse, it also has close ties to the enabling socio-economic and political institutions, and its redoubtable durability. Orientalism can therefore be regarded as a constructed body of theory and practice in which there has been considerable material investment (ibid, 6).

During the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries it was assumed, in the West, that the Orient and everything in it was either inferior to, or in need of corrective study by the West. This can be said to be the essence of Orientalism. It is a political vision of reality which promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the strange (the Orient, the East, “them”) (ibid, 40-44). There are Westerners, and there are Orientals, the former dominates and the latter must be dominated. The Orientalist discourse is based on this fundamental dichotomy in which westerners are regarded as rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion; and Arab-Orientals are none of these things (ibid, 36-49). Rather the Orient(al) is portrayed as under-humanized, antidemocratic, backward, barbaric as well as intellectually subordinated to the West in itself (ibid, 150-52). Thus the major component in European culture is according to Said precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures (ibid, 7).

Another essential feature within Orientalism is the unchanging Orient. It is a depiction of an Orient whose existence has remained fixed in time and place for the West and entire periods of the Orient’s cultural, political, and social history are considered mere responses to the West (ibid, 109). It is Europe who has taught the Orient the meaning of liberty, an idea that was constructed during modern Orientalism, and Orientals, especially Muslims, were assumed to know nothing about liberty beforehand. Because of this lack of understanding of ideas such as liberty, rationalism etc, it was further established that the Orientals require conquest. However, a Western conquest of the Orient was considered as liberation, a construction that was repeated during the upbeat of the invasion by the Bush administration (ibid, 172-73). The premise was, and is, that since the Orientals are ignorant of self-government, it is best that they are kept that way for their own good (ibid, 228).

2.3.1 Modern Orientalism, Islam and the Arab Stereotype

Modern Orientalism (developed in the late eighteenth century/early nineteenth century), according to Said, carried within itself the imprint of the great European fear of Islam (ibid. 253-54). Islam became the very essence of an outsider against which the whole of European civilization from the middle Ages was founded and it came to symbolize terror and devastation (ibid, 59-70). Furthermore, Islam became the all-encompassing framework for understanding and constructing interpretations of the Oriental mind, society and emotions and it was used to signify all at once a society, a religion, a prototype and an actuality. Thus, Islam is seen as unable to separate politics from culture as “we” are able to do, a view that still colours contemporary depictions of Arab countries where Islam is seen as something that affects every aspect of modern Arab societies (ibid, 299).

Islam is seen as antihuman, incapable of development, self-knowledge, or objectivity. It is regarded as an authoritarian religion within which revenge is seen as a virtue (ibid, 296). Within Orientalism it is assumed that the Arab need for vengeance overrides everything. If revenge is not carried out, the Arab will feel “ego-destroying” shame, similar to current interpretations of the honour culture in Iraq (ibid, 49).

This construction of the Orient(al) and Muslims have resulted in the deprivation of the Orient(al) to represent itself (ibid, 283). Said argues that if the Arab occupies space enough for attention it is always as a negative value. He is seen as the disrupter of Israel’s and the West’s existence, and insofar as he has any history, it is part of the history given, or taken from him by the Orientalist tradition. Aside from his anti-Zionism, the Arab is an oil supplier and in movies and television he is associated either with “lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty” (ibid, 286). He appears as an oversexed degenerate, which is capable of cleverly devious intrigues, but who is essentially sadistic and treacherous. Furthermore, the Arab is always shown in large numbers, lacking individuality, personal characteristics or experiences. Most of the pictures represent mass rage, misery and/or irrational gestures and behind all of these images is, according to Said, the fear that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world (ibid, 287).

Since World War II the Arab Muslim has become a figure in American popular culture and the American imperium has displaced France and Britain from centre stage in world politics. According to Said, the Arab has gone from being a vaguely outlined stereotype as a camel-riding nomad to an accepted caricature as the embodiment of incompetence and easy defeat. However, after the 1973 war between Israel and Syria/Egypt, Said argues that the Arab has begun to appear as something more menacing (ibid, 284-85). After the attacks on 11/9 2001 this menacing picture, it can be argued, has reached its peak position.

Said argues that the purpose of the American awareness of the Arab or Islamic Orient since World War II has been to keep the region and its people conceptually emasculated, reduced to “attitudes,” “trends,” statistics: in short, dehumanized. This American concern for the Orient in many ways, according to Said, prepared for its later, overtly imperial concern (ibid, 290-93).

The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, and dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is and has been very strong (ibid, 27). The principle dogmas of Orientalism, the absolute and systematic difference between the West which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior, still exist in their purest form today in studies of the Arabs and Islam in for example the U.S. (ibid, 300). The Orient is at bottom something either to be feared or to be controlled and according to Said, the extraordinary thing is that these notions persist without significant challenge in the academic and governmental study of the modern Near Orient (ibid, 301). Orientalism has been successfully accommodated to the new imperialism, where its ruling paradigms confirm the continuing imperial design to dominate Asia (ibid, 322).

2.3.2 Neo-Orientalism

The invasion and occupation of Iraq is defined by Said as an illegal and unsanctioned imperial invasion and occupation (Said, 2003:xiii). He argues that the war could not have been carried out without an underlying sense that these people over there are not like “us” and do not appreciate “our” values, a view that is at the very core of traditionalist Orientalist dogma (ibid, xv). Thus, the invasion and occupation of Iraq once again makes the question of whether modern imperialism ever ended a topic of immediate interest. Arab and Muslims are according to Said told that dwelling on the negative effects of empire are only ways of escaping responsibility in the present, assertions that both disregard what imperialism has done, and what Orientalism continues to do (ibid, xvi-xvii). In comparison with earlier centuries and decades of Orientalist discourses, Said argues that the general understanding of the Middle East, Arabs and Islam, in the U.S., has not really improved. Rather there has been a hardening of attitudes and demeaning generalizations and clichés (ibid, xiii).

Thus, we can observe a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed, something that has only increased in the new era of the war against terrorism. Shohat and Robert Stam (University Professor at New York University) argue that with the ‘war on terror’, a discourse of the Arab and Muslim East as fundamentally alien has been constructed. This neo-Orientalist discourse as they define it portrays the ‘Islamic world’ as inherently incapable of adjusting to globalized, democratic “modernity.” The invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq was justified by promising to ‘democratize’ the very same societies that are denounced as inherently undemocratic. Then, when those same societies become democratic and vote their will (for example in Iran or Palestine), the outcome is often undesirable from an American point of view which triggers vigorous attempts to sanction and overturn the democratically elected governments. American exceptionalist discourse is thus inherently paradoxical, it sees itself as exceptional but at the same time declares itself as a norm to be emulated, a topic that will be analyzed in more detail later in this thesis (Shohat & Stam, 2007a:301).

2.3.3 Muslims/Islam and Neo-racism – Constructing Differences

Contemporary Arabophobia entails an image of Islam as ‘a conception of the world’ which is incompatible with Europeanness and an enterprise of universal ideological domination. According to Étienne Balibar (Professor of Political Philosophy and Critical Theory) this image of Islam is a systematic confusion of ‘Arabness’ and ‘Islamicism’ (Balibar, 1991:24).

Balibar argues that Muslims are regarded as people who can never successfully assimilate into Western societies, or who are culturally conditioned to be violent. Such contemporary views of cultural difference mirror past and present geo-political tensions and rivalries. Therefore it is not surprising that it is the Muslims who are regarded as barbaric and given to acts of violence, a mode of being which is seen as incommensurate with the Western world (Loomba, 2005a:217-18).

Understanding the underlying agendas of a one-sided portrayal of Islam and Moslems is central to understanding the current situation in Iraq. After the 9/11 attacks and the following war on terrorism a hegemonic image of a monolithic, homogeneous Islam has emerged that according to Mustapha Kamal Pasha (Professor of International Relations) draws from a long-term encounter between Christendom and the worlds of Islam, i.e. similar to what Said defines as Orientalism. The hegemonic image is one of incommensurable difference, and Islam is portrayed as uniform and devoid of contradictions in its vast, undifferentiated, unchanging radical Other. Islam becomes an outpost of modernity. It is the absence of secularism that is assumed to account for Islamic extremism, gender oppression, irrational politics and economic stagnation and misery. Secularism is supposed to entail moderation and a freedom from the stranglehold of religion, which in turn would lead to greater equality. With secularization, politics would reflect reasoned dialogue and deliberation instead of passionate attachments coloured by religiosity (Pasha, 2006:70-72). Cultural zones that bear the imprint of Islam are being re-designated as zones of danger which represents a menacing geopolitical presence that require barricades and surveillance. According to Pasha, seen from this context, the rise of Islamophobia becomes intelligible. ‘Polite racism’ has succumbed to unconcealed expressions of prejudice and hatred in which the figure of the “Muslim” provides ‘complete nourishment to a pervasive climate of paranoia’. Pasha argues that neither tolerance nor recognition is the preferred option of social contact and interaction between “liberal” majorities and “illiberal” Muslims today (ibid, 73-77).

3 Occupation and Resistance

In the above chapter the historical and modern/contemporary depiction of the Orient and Islam has been discussed. I have argued, with the support of theoreticians such as Said and Pasha, that an Orientalist mapping of the Arab world, Islam and Muslims deeply affect contemporary views of Arab societies and politics. This is important to understand since it will inevitably affect the understanding and depictions of events in Iraq and specifically how the resistance against the occupation and the foreign forces in Iraq is portrayed. In this chapter I will discuss how one can understand the interplay that occur between occupier and occupant when a country is invaded by a foreign power and the factors that are decisive in the decision of a population to resist. I have also chosen to refer to Iraq's colonial history and earlier imperial interventions in Iraq in order to contextualize current events within a historical framework.

3.1 The Interplay between Colonizer/Occupier and Colonized/Occupied

According to Frantz Fanon (Essayist and Psychoanalyst), one of the laws of the psychology of colonialism is that in the initial phase of colonialism, "it is the actions, the plans of the occupier, that determine the centres of resistance around which a people's will too survive becomes organized". For example, in the face of the emphasis given by colonialist to a certain aspect of the colonized traditions, the colonized reacts violently. The attention that is devoted to modifying certain cultural aspects in the colonized territories by the occupiers creates a whole universe of resistances around this particular element of the culture. To hold out against the occupier on this precise element means inflicting upon them a spectacular setback and maintaining 'coexistence' as a form of conflict and latent warfare (Fanon, 2006:108-09). During occupation thus, there is an overall attitude of rejection of the values of the occupier, even if these values objectively may be worth choosing. Even though the values that the occupiers are trying to implement in themselves might be positive and worth adhering too, the act of imposing values in the name of liberation while at the same time engaging in imperialist and neo-colonial occupation creates an inevitable hostility towards every attempt at implementing new policies etc. by the occupied. As many contemporary theoreticians within postcolonial theory claim, it is not about either rejecting or uncritically adhering to the legacy of western thought. It is not about rejecting the values that the West has claimed ownership of such as human rights and freedoms and democracy, rather it is about criticizing eurocentrism and its claim on the

right to interpretation, and selective implementation, of these values. According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Literary Critic and Post-Colonial Theorist) it is about “a persistent critique of what one cannot not want“ (Spivak, 1993:42).

The war in Iraq was allegedly aimed at bringing democracy to the Islamic people of Iraq. By giving the impression that Western ideas were being forced upon Iraq, the war turned many Iraqis not only against the U.S. but also against the United Nations, viewing both as invaders (Iriye, 2003:428). However, one should also be aware of the fact that political rhetoric that polarizes “Western” and “Non-western”, even though it is a means of protecting oneself from cultural impositions by an occupying power, can be dangerous in Third World contexts. This because progressive agendas often contest policies that are backed not only by Western powers but by local elites and nation-states. One must keep in mind that a value or practice being “Non-western” does not mean that it is anti-imperialist or anti-colonial, let alone compatible with progressive agendas (ibid, 93).

3.2 Why Do Communities Resist?

Why some communities take up arms against an occupying power while others submit without significant resistance is, according to Keith Darden (Professor of Political Science), a question of long-standing interest within the scholarly community. Many argue that the explanation lies in understanding the strategy and behaviour of the occupying power. The provision of services and restraint from excessive or indiscriminate treatment is supposed to create a stable, predictable order and win the “hearts and minds” of the subject population, factors that are the main focus of this thesis. The tendency of a population to resist foreign occupation can also be understood by looking at the relative balance of traditional military capabilities, i.e. whether potential rebels can expect to have supply, manpower, and favourable terrain (Darden, 2006:3). More recent literature also points to the presence of dense, well organized networks and prior social ties such as the patronage networks of a former ruling party or kinship and clan ties. Such networks, it is argued, give certain societies the resources and organizational structure to engage in resisting a superior occupying force. The importance of certain historical or cultural traditions such as prior cultivation of patriotism or nationalism among the population, or cultural or religious differences between the occupier and the occupied are also seen as important factors that may make some societies more likely to view an occupying force as illegitimate and/or be more willing to take up arms against it. When it comes to Iraq today, Darden argues that the relative influence of these different factors is very hard to disentangle (ibid, 3).

Nationalism tends to come up in many accounts of resistance to occupation. Apart from being a source of individual motivation, nationalism acts effectively as a favourable environmental condition. Insurgents rely on local communities for the fighters, supplies, and information that they need to survive. The political

attitudes and loyalties of the local population are thus critical. The resistance fighters must be able to rely on locals not providing the state with information of who they are, where they are hiding, from whom they gain their supplies, and how to navigate the local terrain. Thus, Darden argues that for the insurgent, community loyalties are a feature of their environment that probably has the greatest impact on their survivability (ibid, 10).

According to Ali when it comes to Iraq it is the worsened conditions in people's lives that fuels the resistance and encourages many new young men to fight. He argues that few Iraqis are prepared to betray those who are fighting and that this fact is crucially important since a sustained resistance would be virtually impossible without the tacit support of the population (Ali, 2003:227). One explanation for this support is according to Ali that the Iraqi people have a very rich struggle against empire (ibid, 60-64). It is however of great importance to avoid homogenizing both the resistance and the general opposition among the Iraqi population since the aspirations, opinions and support given to the resistance vary among the Iraqi population depending on tribal, ethnic and/or religious belonging. This aspect will be discussed in length later in this thesis.

3.3 The Colonial History of Iraq

A short introduction to the colonial history of Iraq can show both the continuity of struggle against empire and occupation in the country, as well the continuities of imperial and colonial interventions in the region which can help us understand contemporary Iraq on a deeper level.

The invasion of Iraq by the U.S.-led coalition was the fourth time in Iraqi history that Baghdad fell to foreign troops. In 1258 it was the Mongols, in 1917 the country was occupied by Britain, in 1941 the British re-invaded the country and in 2003 Iraq was invaded and occupied by the U.S.-led coalition (Jabar, 2003:337). Thus, from 1258 onwards Baghdad was ruled by foreign powers, and freedom from foreign rule came as late as seven centuries later, in 1958 – the high point of Arab nationalism.

In 1917, after the First World War, the British took Jerusalem and Baghdad and thereby ended a long period of Ottoman rule. The country was occupied and the new frontiers of the new state of Iraq were drawn: the three Ottoman provinces of Baghdad, Basrah, and Mosul were bluntly stitched together. According to Ali, total British control behind an Arab smokescreen was installed since it was regarded as a more subtle form of domination than running Iraq just like India as was first proposed (Ali, 2003: 43-47). The construction of an Arab façade was a counter-strategy of the British to halt the increasing revolt against the occupation (Barsamian in Chomsky, 2005:45).

Henrik Chetan Aspengren (Doctoral student of Politics and International Studies) shows the continuities of colonialism by pointing to the similarities between the British occupation of Iraq in 1917 and today's American occupation. The resistance against the British that developed after the invasion meant that

Great Britain in the 1920s faced, as the U.S. today, a military withdrawal from Iraq. The British found it hard to ideologically handle the occupation and the moral grounds for an intervention, with a military occupation as a result, were according to Aspengren as complicated and complex politically then as now. Shortly after the British had made their march into Baghdad, the British General Sir Stanley Maude stated that “our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators” (Aspengren, 2007). The ideological pattern that was used by the British has not changed much in relation to today. The statement that the British came as ‘liberators, not conquerors’ has been revived in the statements made by the US before the invasion of Iraq. However, in 2003 as in 1917 the statements were not convincing. In 1917 there was an overwhelming popular support for the *fatwas* which called for a holy war against the “infidel occupation” and, according to Ali, Sunni-Shia unity was boosted by a desire to fight the common enemy. For every single day that the British Empire existed there was a corresponding act of rebellion by its subjects against its rule, similar to the development in Iraq since the invasion in 2003 (Ali, 2003:49-50).

Shortly after the British invasion the occupation constructed its own logic through which the purposes for the presence of troops soon changed. As the resistance increased, the purpose of the occupation became more directed to keep the country stable and to avoid an implosion. The proponents of a continued occupation now claimed that it would be immoral to leave the area as it was moving towards civil war (Aspengren, 2007).

The same process took place in Iraq in 2003/2004. After it became clear that weapons of mass destruction were not to be found anywhere the justification for invading Iraq shifted to the pressing need to introduce democracy to the country – dressing up aggression as liberation. The focus now became directed towards the ‘successful’ overthrow of Hussein and the introduction of democracy in Iraq (Ali, 2003:155).

According to Aspengren, through this “reconstruction” the political and military failures of the occupation can be covered since the moral dilemma is moved: the question is no longer if the intervention was morally acceptable or something to strive for politically, but rather if it is morally correct to leave Iraq to its destiny, as its inhabitants are not even able to get along? The narrative becomes less about West’s political and military miscalculation and more about the Arab world’s latent instability and continued need of protection from the West and from itself. However, by connecting today’s questions to yesterday’s conversations we can make these reconstructions visible and thus show the underlying agenda of occupation and how the narrative that legitimizes the occupation is constructed.

3.3.1 The Baath regime and International Connections

By looking back only a few decades it also becomes clear that Saddam Hussein has not always been the terrible threat and the despised dictator in the eyes of the West as he was portrayed to be before the invasion in 2003. From 1979 closer

links were established between the U.S. and the then new Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein and during the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988) Hussein was armed and supported by the U.S. and the British and, according to Ali, Washington in particular did not want to see the Iraqi regime collapse (ibid, 126-28).

Despite the disaster which the war had meant for Iraq, Hussein stayed in power and his personality cult grew more and more atrocious. He also continued to receive political support as well as investors from the West. From 1980 until 1990, western business and political links with Baghdad were very strong, but ended when Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990 (ibid, 130, 176). With this decision, Hussein went from being an ally to an atrocious and dangerous enemy. Eventually Iraq agreed to withdraw from Kuwait but the US led expeditionary force was already in place and, in gross violation of all the conventions of war, Iraq's retreating armies were destroyed as they fled Kuwait (ibid, 134-35). However, the surrender of the Iraqi army did not lead to the fall of Saddam. The US had no replacement ready and their Arab allies, none of whom had been elected democratically, took the stand that Hussein should not be removed from office. After this agreement, Hussein crushed the Shia uprising in the south, an uprising that the West had initially encouraged, and the Kurdish region in the north became a no-fly zone for the Iraqi government and was regularly patrolled by US fighter aircrafts.

Neither Hussein's decision to invade Kuwait, nor the UN-imposed sanctions that were imposed in 1990 and lasted until the 2003 invasion led to the fall of the Baath regime. However, the UN sanctions had a devastating impact on the Iraqi population. Rather than weakening the Baath regime, the sanctions strengthened the regimes hold on the population by making the Iraqi people totally dependent on it for all basic necessities. The economic sanctions reduced a population whose levels of nutrition, schooling, and public services were once well above regional standards to fathomless misery (ibid, 139-40). Thus, due to the effect of sanctions, the Coalition forces inherited a nation with no running water, no electricity, and no power sewage system, where over 60 percent of the population survived on food rations linked to the UN oil-for-food programme (ibid).

3.4 American Exceptionalism and the New American Empire

After 9/11, the beginning of the war on terror, the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq it has, according to Loomba, become increasingly difficult to define the world as simply postcolonial. As the New American Empire develops, openly advocated by policy-makers, politicians and intellectuals in the U.S. and across the globe, Loomba argues that it has become more important than ever to address questions of domination and resistance that has been raised by anti-colonial movements and postcolonial studies (Loomba, 2005a:212-13). Loomba claim that

the advocates for the new American empire appropriate the legacy of past empires while at the same time claim a radical exceptionalism for a US empire (ibid, 222).

Examples of American exceptionalism are not hard to find. Since the nineteenth century the U.S. has been engaged in “regime change” and neo-colonialism throughout Latin America and is now implementing this imperial policy in Iraq and the Middle East (French, 2003:7). The basic premise of American Exceptionalism is that it promotes the idea of the U.S. as uniquely democratic and destined to exercise benevolent power in the world, the idea that the U.S. occupies a special position within human history is central for American exceptionalism (Shohat & Stam, 2007a:299). Shohat and Stam claim that the U.S. has always displayed a specifically American form of “universalistic nationalism” which is based on the idea that by advancing its own interests the U.S. supposedly advances the interests of humanity which also includes the idea that the U.S. has the right to intervene anywhere in the world. This is why, Shohat and Stam claim, most of the world sees the U.S. as an imperialistic nation, while most Americans do not (ibid).

One of the proponents of the New American Empire before the invasion was the historian and public intellectual Michael Ignatieff. In 2002 he argued that America’s entire war on terror was an exercise in imperialism and claimed that the word ‘empire’ best described “the awesome thing that America is becoming” (Ignatieff, 2002). For Ignatieff, being an imperial power means enforcing such order as there is in the world and doing so in the American interest. It means laying down the rules America wants while exempting itself from other rules that go against its interest (Ignatieff, 2003). In other words, what Ignatieff is arguing for is identical to what Shohat and Stam defines as American exceptionalism.

Ignatieff argues that imperialism used to be the white man's burden which gave it a bad reputation but that it doesn't stop being necessary just because it becomes politically incorrect. When nations fail, Ignatieff argues, only outside help in the form of imperial power can restore them (ibid). Afghans and Iraqis are according to Ignatieff among those peoples who owe their freedom to an exercise of American military power. The case for empire is according to Ignatieff that it has become the last hope for democracy and stability alike in a place like Iraq (ibid). However, he argues that order, let alone democracy, will take a decade to consolidate in Iraq and, he continues, like all imperial exercises in creating order, it will work only if the puppets the Americans install cease to be puppets and build independent political legitimacy of their own (ibid.).

3.4.1 Implementing Imperial Policies – Regime Change

Shohat and Stam claim, that every European power has claimed that its particular form of colonialism or imperialism was a benevolent enterprise bringing freedom and other benefits to subject populations (Shohat & Stam, 200a7:304). Said and Noam Chomsky (Professor of Linguistics and Political Commentator) argues similarly that Ignatieff repeats the rhetoric that every single empire in its official discourse has said. I.e. that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to

enlighten and bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort (Said, 2003:xvi, Chomsky, 2005:59-60).

The “new militarism” or “new imperialism” that the world has been able to observe since 9/11 2001, supported by for example Ignatieff, is according to John Bellamy Foster (Professor of Sociology) in reality nothing new. Rather it is a continuation of the imperialist history of US (Foster, 2006:13). What makes it appear as a novelty is according to Foster the “nakedness with which American militarism and imperialism are being promoted, and the unlimited, planetary extent of U.S. ambitions (ibid, 11).

According to Chomsky, the U.S. and Britain would not permit a sovereign and democratic Iraq. A democratic Iraq would probably have a Shiite majority; about 60 percent of the Iraqi population are Shiites, which would probably establish relations with Iran. A Shiite-dominated independence in Iraq could lead to a situation where the core of the world’s energy resources would be under the control or influence of an independent Shiite government. Chomsky argues that it is unimaginable that the U.S. would allow that to happen (Chomsky, 2005:148). This is in line with Ignatieff’s arguments; the U.S. would not allow an independent and sovereign Iraq with a government whose politics would counter American interests, national or international. In fact, Cockburn argues, that the reason why the US-led coalition didn’t overthrow Hussein in 1991 was the fear that he would be replaced by a Shia regime allied to Iran (Cockburn, 2006:93)

According to Cockburn, before the invasion the U.S. hoped to find a pro-American constituency of liberal and secular individuals that could rule Iraq. In 2002 it was already becoming plain that the US was uncomfortable with the likelihood that the main beneficiaries of the overthrow of Ba’athist rule would be Shia religious parties with close links to Iran (ibid, 32). Thus, politically Washington gave heavy publicity to shifts towards democracy, while in private it reluctantly ceded real power to the Iraqis (ibid, 110). A part of the exceptionalist logic is exactly that when democracy does not deliver what the West wants it to deliver; it becomes a ‘paradox’ (ibid, 210). The US wanted it both ways. It hoped to find Iraqis who carried weight in their own country to take part in running it but at the same time they wanted these same highly representative Iraqis to be entirely compliant with its wishes (Cockburn, 2006:149).

4 The Invasion and Occupation of Iraq

Leading up to the invasion in 2003 was the construction of “the Iraqi threat” which served as the legitimization of the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq. In his State of the Union address in 2002 president George Bush proclaimed that Iraq and its terrorist allies was part of an axis of evil that was arming to threaten the peace of the world (Ricks, 2006:35). At this time the U.S. administration was arguing that Saddam Hussein constituted the number one threat against American security and civilization. He was claimed to have government research labs working on weapons of mass destruction as well as a deep hatred against America and civilized free societies. Arguments and statements like these, of which many were later revealed to be untrue, were characteristic of the debate in the U.S. at that time (Ricks, 2006:35-37). The portrayal of Hussein as an imminent threat was a part of the administrations “sustained campaign of misrepresenting the intelligence on Iraq”. There were continuous mischaracterizations of intelligence and the errors and exaggerations made were not random according to Thomas E. Ricks (Washington Post’s senior Pentagon correspondent), rather they all pushed in the same direction, toward making the argument that Iraq presented a growing threat. The motive was to sell a war (ibid, 46-53). Later in 2002 in his West Point speech, Bush made pre-emption the official national strategy which meant that from that moment forward, the U.S. was prepared to attack before threats became full-fledged. Hence, in his first speech Bush made the targeting, stated the goal, and in his second speech he provided the doctrinal, or intellectual rationale, for the coming invasion. According to Ricks, military action was portrayed as inevitable and the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy. To add to the problematic, there was little discussion and/or planning in Washington regarding post-war Iraq (ibid, 38-39).

4.1 The Bush Doctrine – Introducing Preventive War

The preventive war doctrine can be argued to be a typical expression of American exceptionalism. According to Robert Jervis (Professor of International Affairs), the preventive war doctrine is based on strength and the associated desire to ensure the maintenance of American dominance. He argues that it entails a fundamental unilateralism and the establishment of American hegemony, primacy, or empire (Jervis, 2005:85-89). The underlying assumptions behind the doctrine are that America’s values are universal and their spread is seen as beneficial to the entire world. The doctrine assumes that the main source of a state’s foreign policy

is its domestic regime and according to Jervis this means that the only strategy to achieve lasting peace becomes regime change (ibid, 79-81). In relation to Iraq, regime change was portrayed as necessary since tyrannical governments are prone to disregard agreements and to coerce their neighbours just as they mistreat their own citizens (ibid, 82). However, while the US expresses the wish to replace hostile dictatorships with democracies, they rarely push for democracy when this could mean destabilizing friendly regimes (ibid, 130). The Bush administration can thus be argued to be driven more by the politics of the regimes it is dealing with than by an abstract commitment to democracy.

The creation of the new National Security Strategy, or the Bush doctrine, was thus an attempt to establish a new norm and to reinforce American exceptionalism. According to Chomsky, the easiest way to establish a new norm is to select a defenceless target which can be overwhelmed easily by massive military force. In order to carry out such military invasion and still attain credibility people have to be convinced of the rightfulness of the operation, often through fear. This was according to Chomsky, as well as Ricks and many other observers, done through a massive propaganda campaign by Washington in the US to convince Americans that Hussein was a threat to America's existence, a campaign that succeeded substantially (Chomsky, 2005:2-3). Hussein was portrayed as a modern-day dictator capable of threatening the Middle East and possibly the entire world. However, the actual situation was that the Iraqi army was in shatters and would not be able to resist the military power of the U.S. by any means (Cockburn, 2006:34-35). This was proven true as there was little resistance against the coalition forces during the initial invasion and the overthrow of Hussein and the Baath regime went relatively unproblematic. However, the resistance increased successively as it became clear that the country was being occupied by the Americans rather than liberated as was promised before the invasion.

Beside the fact that the Iraqi army was in shatters, the U.N. sanctions meant that Iraq at the time of the invasion had the weakest economy and military force in the region. Due to this well known fact, no other country regarded Iraq as a threat to its security (Chomsky, 2005:27-28). Chomsky argues that if Bush and Blair had truly believed that Saddam possessed sufficient military strength to pose a threat to the Middle East through weapons of mass destruction, they would probably not have invaded Iraq. Rather the decision to attack Iraq was based on the perception that they could win such a conflict easily and to its own great advantage (ibid, 50).

In hindsight what is clear is that the pessimism of the threat assessment and the parallel optimism of the post-war assessment helped pave the way to war. The threat that Iraq posed was exaggerated and thus made war seem more necessary than it actually was. Simultaneously, the difficulties of remaking Iraq was downplayed which made the post-war reconstruction of Iraq seem easier and less expensive than it would prove to be (Ricks, 2006:59).

The lack of planning for post-war Iraq is, according to Ricks, endemic to the current situation. If an occupying power cannot show that it can rapidly improve conditions in the country that it is occupying it risks alienating the indigenous population which is exactly what has happened in Iraq (Baram in Ricks, 2006:65).

4.1.1 The Invasion

In March 2003 the Coalition forces, with the US and Britain in the fore, invaded Iraq (without the approval of the United Nations Security Council) and the operation was paradoxically named “Operation Iraqi Freedom”. When the armed forces invaded Iraq and exercised control over its territory, the law of occupation immediately began to apply to their actions (Scheffer, 2003:842).

What awaited the coalition forces in Iraq was however deeply miscalculated. Prior to the invasion, Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz claimed that the hard part would be to overthrow Saddam Hussein’s regime and the easy part would be to spread democracy in Iraq and throughout the Middle East. Neo-conservative officials like Richard Perle reinforced the notion that the Iraqi people would rise up spontaneously in support of U.S. interventionary forces, making their job far easier than it would be if they had to fight a hostile population (Hartung & Donnelley, 2003:175-6).

However, there was a gaping discrepancy between the Bush administration’s ambitious rhetoric and its limited commitment. To state the goal of wanting to transform Iraq and the Middle East while at the same time planning to leave the region as soon as possible was not a plausible strategy. The fiasco in Iraq was according to Ricks a result of the self-deception that the Bush administration engaged in over the threat presented by Iraq and the difficulty of occupying the country as well as other major lapses in institutions from the military establishment and the intelligence community to the media (Ricks, 2006:85).

According to Anthony H. Cordesman (Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC) the US failed to establish the political conditions which would reduce Iraqi popular resentment of the Coalition forces and create a political climate which would ease the task of replacing US forces with effective Iraqi forces. Neither did it make clear that they had no economic ambitions in Iraq and would not establish permanent bases, or keep Iraqi forces weak to ensure their control. It did not react to the immediate threat that crime and looting presented throughout Iraq almost immediately after the war, which made personal security the number one concern of the Iraqi people. The US acted as if it had years to rebuild Iraq using its own plans, rather than months to shape the climate in which Iraqis could do it (Cordesman, 2004:2).

4.1.2 Post-war Iraq – What Now?

When Baghdad fell, the sentiments of the Iraqi population was divided between those who thought they had been liberated and those who thought that the country had been occupied. But, according to Cockburn, within weeks after the invasion was over Iraqis found that they were being “ruled by a classic colonial occupation” (Cockburn, 2006:69). There was a huge loss of employment as a result of the Americans decision to dissolve the Iraqi army and to remove former members of the Baath party belonging to its four upper ranks (which included doctors in hospitals and teachers in schools) within different areas of the Iraqi

society, the so-called de-Baathification. The strong reactions that the loss of employment created among those affected should be seen in light of the fact that in 2003, 70 percent of the labour force was unemployed (ibid, 70-71).

The decision to disband the Iraqi army would prove to be a huge mistake since it could have served as a unifying force in a country that could (and would) fall apart under U.S. control. The de-Baathification that Paul Bremer, head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA)¹, mandated had detrimental effects as it created a class of dis-enfranchised, threatened leaders which in practice meant giving the insurgency a manpower pool of tens of thousands angry, unemployed soldiers. When the Iraqi army was disbanded a significant part of the Iraqi insurgency was thus created (Ricks, 2006:190-191).

Looting also became a big problem because of the failures of the US forces to restore security, which according to Cockburn convinced many Iraqis that the US did not care what happened to them. Over the next four years security was never fully restored (Cockburn, 2006:75). To illustrate the rapid decline in the sense of security provided by the foreign forces the results of polls conducted between November 2003 and April 2004 by the CPA can be compared. In the November poll only 11 percent of respondents answered that they would feel safer if the U.S. forces left Iraq immediately. By January 2004, that figure had more than doubled to 28 percent. By April, 2004, it would be 55 percent. By this time Iraqis had begun to see the U.S. military as part of the problem, a “liability whose presence made things more dangerous.” (Ricks, 2006:326-27). The army thought that it could prevail through presence but after the public opinion began to turn against them and see them as occupiers the presence of troops became counterproductive (ibid, 192). The very presence of U.S. soldiers thus fuelled the uprising and a poll conducted by the British Ministry of Defence in 2004 showed that 80 percent of Iraqis opposed the presence of foreign troops in Iraq (Cockburn, 2006:4).

As the months passed after the invasion Iraqis still didn't get the levels of electricity, water and gas as they had under Hussein's regime. This situation would prevail, three years after the invasion the performance of Iraq's oil, electricity, water and sewerage sectors were still below the pre-invasion level by almost all measurements. These failures became a symbol for the Iraqis of the general failure of the occupation (ibid, 83-85). The US also failed in understanding the extent to which Iraq was a highly religious country. Exaggerating the influence of secular Iraqi leaders and underestimating that of the religious leaders was according to Cockburn a recurrent theme of the US occupation. After the fall of Saddam Hussein religious nationalism triumphed in Iraq and Moqtada al-Sadr, a prominent leader of the Shiite resistance, was able to build a powerful movement by combining religion, Iraqi nationalism and populism. Sunni guerrilla groups similarly combined religion and nationalism. The upsurge of religious nationalism was according to Cockburn a consequence

¹ The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was established as a transitional government following the invasion of Iraq, responsible for the executive, legislative, and judicial authority over the Iraqi government.

of Hussein discrediting secular nationalism through his disastrous rule, a failure that has been possible to observe across the “postcolonial” world (ibid, 94-95).

The lack of resistance to the US invasion in March and April had demonstrated how few Iraqis, even among his closest allies, were loyal to Saddam Hussein and his regime. The capture and killing of Saddam and his senior lieutenants may even have, according to Cockburn, strengthened the insurgents, because now they could no longer be accused of seeking to restore the old regime (ibid, 104-105). Removing Saddam from the equation made it easier for some of the Iraqis who hated Saddam but also disliked the Americans to support the insurgency (Ricks, 2006:264).

In general, US officials in Washington were oblivious to the fact that Iraqis objected to foreigners running their country and American blindness to Iraqi nationalism and the hostility of the occupied to the occupier was why the US was caught by surprise when a new guerrilla war started in June and July 2003. Its onset was, Cockburn argues, however not inevitable. The successful US invasion was turning into a political catastrophe so swiftly because the occupation lacked legitimacy in the eyes of Iraqis and the world.

4.1.3 After Saddam – the Lack of a Pro-Imperial Sector

During the years that followed the overthrow of Hussein in April 2003 the violence continued unabated. The failure of guaranteeing security according to Cockburn discredited governments both elected and unelected and the profound lawlessness ensured that nobody had any trust in the Iraqi police or army (ibid, 152-54). However, the deep unpopularity of the occupation among the Iraqis was never taken on board by the US. The illegitimacy of the occupation in the eyes of Arab Iraqis was the most important political fact in Iraq after the invasion and it gave the guerrillas a popular base in the Sunni community. But the hostility was not confined to the Sunni. The Shia was more focused on obtaining governmental power but polls showed that a high proportion of Shia approved of armed attacks on occupying forces.

According to Conetta the Shiites represents a midway position between Sunni and Kurdish views in relation to many issues regarding the war and post-war conditions. In general, Sunni views can be said to be the most negative and the Kurdish views the most positive. However, questions about the war and its effect tend to show Shiite opinion, especially outside the south, to be closer to Sunni views, although still less negative. Furthermore when the cost of war is incorporated into the picture, the Iraqi opinion on post-war conditions becomes worse (Conetta, 2005:16). In relation to the presence of foreign troops and the appraisal of their behaviour, Shiite opinion tends to be close to that of the Sunni community (ibid, 17). For the Kurds the situation differs radically. The American military presence is seen as a shield and guarantee by the Kurds, rather than something that circumscribes their self-determination. In contrast, for the Shiite community the troop presence has meant that, instead of obtaining communal power and self-determination as a result of the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and

the Ba'athist regime, they were faced with an occupation which was more visible, intrusive and real than what was experienced in the Kurdish areas. Thus in these areas the tensions implicit in occupation assumed a more public and volatile public form (ibid, 19).

These tensions are, according to Conetta, a consequence of a fundamental divide between the Shiite community and the occupiers. The political culture and aspirations of the Shiite community are often expressed in Islamic or pan-Arab terms which position them in opposition to the regional vision of the US administration. Furthermore, Washington's relations and activities in the Arab and Muslim world are not looked upon positively by the Shiite community (ibid, 20). Furthermore, the resentment felt by the Sunni community is often explained as a result of their loss of privilege after the overthrow of Hussein and the Baath-regime. It is often assumed that the loss of their relatively "privileged" status is supposed to have pushed disproportionate numbers of Sunnis into opposition, rejectionism, and insurgency. However, some aspects of post-war governance and several policies enacted by occupation authorities have led to an unnecessary and unwise alienation of the Sunni community. The occupation authorities have for example favoured some Sunnis with tribal connections and this kind of selective representation of tribes has alienated as many Sunnis as it attracted, more than half of the Sunnis appointed by the occupation authorities eventually distanced themselves from the US mission (ibid, 22-23). Other events that have led to the alienation of Sunni opinion are the Abu Ghraib torture scandal (which disproportionately involved Sunnis), the de-Baathification campaign which involved the mass dismissal of civil servants, police, and military personnel; as well as the electoral system set out for Iraq in the Transitional Administrative Law. The new electoral system treats all Iraq as a single electoral district which has proved to be especially disadvantageous for Sunnis (ibid, 23-24).

According to Napoleoni the root of the Sunni tribes' opposition to the Americans lie in traditional, economic, and behavioural factors, factors that the Bush administration never took into consideration. The ignorance and disregard for tribal tradition by U.S. soldiers' fuelled resentments which easily erupted into violence and in combination with economic grievances, similar to those of the Shi'ites, the tribal leaders became convinced of the Americans' inability to bring stability to the country (Napoleoni, 2005:145). The lack of respect, cultural sensitivity and understanding shown by American forces in their encounters with Iraqis has led to a situation where the US has not begun to grasp the depth of Iraqi resentment and therefore continues to feed the anger (McGeough, 2003).

Cockburn argues that it was this lack of effective local supporters which doomed the occupation politically and militarily (Cockburn, 2006:218-19). Foster argues similarly that one of the most serious problems for U.S. imperialism in Iraq is that it views most of the Iraqi population as potential enemies of U.S. strategic interests in Iraq. They also lack a pro-imperial sector within the population to rely on for support. The U.S. disbanded the Iraqi army at the very beginning of the occupation because it did not trust its Ba'athist elements but they had no natural constituency to which it could turn to fill the political and military vacuum that was created. Without deep roots in any major sector of the population, U.S.

imperialism is finding it extremely difficult to find the basis for a new Iraqi army to back up and ultimately substitute for U.S. forces (Foster, 2006:137).

Because of the American incompetence, more and more Iraqis made the decision that their interest did not lie with the Americans and a sign of this distrust and disappointment was the steady increase in the average number of daily bomb, mortar, and grenade attacks on U.S. troops in spring 2004 (from about twenty-five a day during January to about twice that by June) (Ricks, 2006:325-29).

4.2 Iraqi Popular Opposition toward the Occupation

In 2005 Carl Conetta (Project on Defence Alternatives) claimed that the occupation of Iraq was mainly about fighting an insurgency that was driven substantially by the occupation, its practices and policies (Conetta, 2005:2). A first step toward understanding the insurgency is to place it within the broader context of popular Iraqi opposition to the occupation which he, among others, claim is widespread (Conetta, 2005:2). Since the beginning of the occupation, Iraqi public opinion has been polled repeatedly by different firms and, according to Conetta, their findings give a clear and coherent picture of the main contours of Iraqi sentiments towards the occupation. Iraqis oppose the US presence in Iraq, and those who strongly oppose it greatly outnumber those who strongly support it. The US troops are viewed foremost as an occupying force, not as peacekeepers or liberators and, on balance, Iraqis do not trust US troops, think they have behaved badly, and one way or another hold them responsible for much of the violence in the nation. There is significant popular support for attacks on US forces, and this support grew larger during the course of 2004, at least among Sunni Arabs. Conetta argues that these results provide the most reliable view of Iraqi attitudes available today (ibid).

The popular opposition towards the occupation can, according to Conetta, be understood in terms of two dynamics, of which the second is the central focus of this thesis. The first dynamic is a typical nationalist or patriotic response to foreign control which is amplified by differences of culture, religion, and language. The second dynamic, and most important for this thesis, is a reaction to the coercive practices of the occupation, including military, policing, and penal operations (ibid, 3).

The power of nationalistic feelings can be claimed to be universally recognized, especially after the nationalist struggles against occupation and colonialism in formerly colonized countries. However, occupiers often reject the fact that their behaviour results in such feelings, especially if the alleged goals of occupation are humanitarian or paternalistic. Despite the occupier's alleged intentions, foreign military occupation inherently tends to invite national opposition (ibid). The fight against foreign control can be based on the assumption that this is a self-evident corollary of having a country. According to Conetta, this kind of opposition to occupation is not contingent on the rationale for an occupation or how the occupiers behave (ibid). However, the opposition of

course will be intensified by serious breaches of for example human rights by the occupants. A poll conducted in June 2004, by the Iraq Center for Research and Strategic Studies, showed that 66 percent of the respondents opposed the occupation, and of these 43 percent answered, when asked why, that they opposed the Coalition presence simply because “it is an occupation force and must leave immediately” (ibid, 4). In addition to the mere fact that the country is occupied by a foreign power, ongoing military operations and other coercive activities makes the situation even more problematic since such acts embody the fact that power now lies in the hands of foreigners.

4.2.1 The Connection between the Behavior of the Occupation and Popular Opposition

Apart from the overwhelming number of Iraqis that have died or been wounded since the invasion there are, as mentioned above, constant routine irritants of occupation that they have to endure. For example, there are constant foreign military patrols, ubiquitous check-points, raids, and citizen round-ups. It should also be remembered that these impositions in the everyday life of Iraqis occur under the pall cast by scandals such as Abu Ghraib and the video-taped killing of a wounded and unarmed Fallujah insurgent in November 2004 (ibid, 6).

In the fall of 2003 the Abu Ghraib-prison was reopened and according to Ricks this step was a part of the move that the U.S. military was taking towards institutionalized abuse (Ricks, 2006:197). During the following months ten thousand Iraqis were detained of which many were taken away from their families in the middle of the night and were held without any notification of those families for weeks (Filkins, 2003). U.S. military intelligence officials later estimated that most of those detained were more or less innocent, and that about 90 percent had no intelligence value (Ricks, 2006:238, Shohat & Stam, 2007b:275). In some cases the scope of the raids has been intentionally broad in order to affect the wider family, friendship networks, and neighbourhoods of suspected insurgents and other wanted individuals. A general pattern during these raids was, according to a Red Cross-report from February 2004, that the arresting authorities provided no information about who they were, where their base was located or the cause of arrest. The arrestee or her/his family were rarely informed where they were being taken or for how long which meant the de facto disappearance of the arrestee for weeks or months until contact was finally made (ICRC-report, 2004).

The raids thus became very traumatic events for those affected and according to Conetta they are often mentioned as a motivating factor by those who oppose the US occupation. The desire to avenge some wrong or humiliation is according apparent in interviews with Iraqis who oppose the occupation in word and/or deed (Conetta, 2005:7).

These tactics tend to have powerful negative political effects on the population; they alienate those affected and show that the military force conducting the operations is ignorant, because supportive and neutral natives are caught up with hostile ones (Ricks, 2006:235-36). Large-scale oppression thus

only helps to unite the population against the occupiers (Ali, 2003:226). This is especially true when it comes to the emotionally sensitive matter of treatment of detainees where the effect frequently has been that of fuelling and giving legitimacy to armed opposition, for example the Abu Ghraib scandal which also entailed that the cultural and religious identity of the prisoners were consciously being targeted in humiliating and denigrating ways (Roberts, 2005:34). This signals to the population in large that the Americans lack fundamental respect for the indigenous culture and norms.

4.2.2 Inherent Friction between Occupier and Occupied

The above mentioned factors combined with national differences create a situation where tension and conflict become inherent in everyday encounters between occupied and occupier. This means that Iraqis are sensitized to negative interactions with the occupiers and irrespective of whether these negative interactions are experienced directly, seen, or heard of they are bound to unfavourably shape the interpretation of subsequent events (Conetta, 2005:12). The occupation forces and their allies cannot be blamed for every injured and dead in Iraq since the invasion, but since they are the ones in power, many Iraqis tend to blame the occupation for eliciting insurgent violence and/or for failing to prevent it (ibid, 5). A poll conducted by the CPA in June 2004 for example found that 67 percent of Iraqis thought that violent attacks had increased in the country because "people have lost faith in the Coalition forces." Eighty percent said that they themselves had no faith in the forces. While only one percent said that Coalition forces were the most important factor contributing to their safety, a majority said they would feel safer if US troops left immediately (ibid, 5).

The impact of mistakes and misbehaviours by the occupiers is multiplied by cultural alienation and the fact of foreign occupation which makes friction inherent to the relationship between occupier and occupied (ibid, 13). Letting American soldiers with no knowledge of Arabic or Arab culture to implement intrusive measures inside an Islamic society is a factor that will logically increase the above-mentioned friction substantially (ibid, 15). The wider the gap becomes between occupier and occupied, the more harmful practices are enabled which can, in turn, have the consequence of affirming nationalist tendencies in an entire neighbourhood and colour its perception of the American mission in general (ibid, 13).

The legitimacy of the occupation is affected both by the general predisposition against occupation within the population, and by how it relates to local authority and popular needs and aspirations. Three aspects that are relevant in the case of Iraq are according to Conetta the following: firstly, the humanitarian needs, post-war reconstruction, and material quality of life. Second is the maintenance of social order and security and thirdly, self determination. It is more likely that people may support, or at least, tolerate, the occupation if it is seen as effectively advancing the ends enumerated above (ibid, 15). Until this date, the US has not managed to meet any of these ends. The first and second aspect has already been

discussed and analyzed. The third, the question of self-determination will be discussed below where I question if Iraqi sovereignty or self-determination is at all possible when American military and political influence remain in the country.

In sum, what the opinion polls thus suggest is that insecurity and experiences of violence since the war began play a major role in how different communities and regions have responded to the occupation (ibid, 27). The results of the polls also shows a correlation between direct experiences of violence, poor appraisals of US troop behaviour, and support for insurgent attacks which confirms that the behaviour of the occupants have a large impact on the form of the resistance and the opposition created among Iraqis in general against the occupation (ibid, 18).

Despite this the Pentagon, the US military and American analysts have been reluctant to acknowledge popular support for the Iraqi resistance. In reality the chaos that arose in the wake of the invasion has, according to McGeough led to tribal sheiks, Baghdad businessmen and many ordinary Iraqis expressing such harsh anti-American sentiments which makes it hard not to conclude that there is a growing body of Palestinian-style empathy with the resistance. McGeough thus argues that the US intelligence was slow to understand that what was emerging in Iraq was a centrally controlled movement that had left Saddam and the Baath Party behind and was aiming to drive out the US army (McGeough, 2003).

5 Iraqi Armed Resistance and the Political Process

As concluded above there is inherent friction between occupant and occupied in Iraq as a consequence of the mere fact that power has been seized by a foreign power. Adding to this friction are the actions and policies deployed foremost by the American forces and by the occupational authorities. Actions and policies that in many ways have been humiliating (Abu Ghraib), involved violations of personal integrity and freedom (cordon and sweep operations) as well as a general disregard for the interests of the ordinary Iraqi citizen (lack of security, dysfunctioning social services such as electricity etc.). Furthermore there has been much disinformation and propaganda regarding the actual constitution of the resistance and the extent of popular support among the Iraqi population for the resistance which has served to depict the American progress in Iraq in a more positive light than what is actually the case.

While the “U.S.-Iraqi propaganda machine”, as Napoleoni defines it, claims that the insurgents are targeting civilians, killing indiscriminately, that their leaders are foreign jihadists, among whom Abu Mos’ab al Zarqawi is by far the most prominent figure, official statistics contradict this vision of events. Rather it proves that the bulk of the attacks are directed against Coalition and Iraqi regular and irregular forces. In a report published in 2004 by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC it is stated that: [The U.S.] was slow to react to the growth of the Iraqi insurgency [...] to admit it was largely domestic in character, and to admit it had significant public support (Cordesman, 2004:2).

From the start of the occupation in April 2004, there was extensive violent opposition to it, assuming mainly the forms of attacks, not only on the occupying armed forces, but also in international personnel and on Iraqi citizens cooperating with the CPA or the Iraqi Governing Council. [The] main targets of the resistance have thus not been Iraqi civilians, even though it is these kinds of attacks that have been given unproportional attention. According to Zangana 75 % of the recorded attacks are directed at occupation forces and a further 17 % at Iraqi government forces (Zangana, 2007).

5.1 The start of the insurgency

According to Napoleoni, the Iraqi insurgency was born in Sadr City in the Shi’ite slums of Baghdad among those who were happiest to see the arrival of the Americans. While the Ba’ath loyalists were regrouping inside the so called Sunni

triangle and al Zarqawi was waiting to launch his terror offensive it was the unemployed, dispossessed, persecuted Shi'ites of Sadr City who, according to Napoleoni rose against the breakdown in law and order, the shameful looting, appalling living conditions, and the political corruption that followed the overthrow of Hussein. Their spokesman became the preacher Moqtada al Sadr (Napoleoni, 2005:136).

The problems facing the population during this time were the lack of law and order, rampant unemployment, lack of basic services in Shi'ite urban areas, and Coalition disregard for the cultural and societal norms of the population (ibid, 137). Moqtada al-Sadr was according to Napoleoni the Shi'ite political leader that was best able to undertake the challenge of improving these conditions. Vigilante committees was organized by pro-al Sadr preachers to guard neighbourhoods and to prevent the looting of public institutions, others distributed food and water, as chaos spread throughout post-war Baghdad. At the same time al Sadr launched his populist sermons in which he denounced the Coalition forces as occupiers and the interim government as American puppets: he condemned the governing council as composed largely of Iraqi exiles, people who had lived outside the country during Saddam's regime and he also lashed out at the traditional Shi'ite religious authorities for remaining silent about these abuses (ibid). According to Napoleoni, al Sadr was, and is still, regarded as a political leader rather than a religious authority. He warned against the creation of a new ruling elite that would once again marginalise poor Shi'ites and encouraged the Shi'ite majority to fight for its rights (ibid). In the summer of 2003, al Sadr created his own militia, *Jeish al Mahdi* (Army of al Mahdi) and the Shi'ite insurgency soon spread across the country, an insurgency that according to Napoleoni was forceful, violent and rooted in the poverty of its supporters (ibid, 140). An opinion poll conducted by the CPA in six Iraqi cities between 14 and 23 May 2004 showed that 64 percent regarded al Sadr's actions as part of a national resistance that had served to unify the country (ibid, 1).

During this time, the Sunnis launched their own offensive which started in May 2003 with the first outbreaks of violence in Baghdad, Ramadi and Fallujah. The core of the social unrest was in the Sunni Triangle, an area predominantly populated by Sunnis with strong tribal traditions. The insurgency was not conducted exclusively by a minority of people who had enjoyed special privileges under Saddam: the Sunni commercial and middle classes also joined in (ibid, 141). Napoleoni argues that these were groups that had welcomed the arrival of American troops since they thought that they would protect them from the widespread criminality and breakdown in the economy which had plagued Iraq for over a decade (ibid, 141). However, the breakdown in law and order after the invasion convinced the Sunni middle class that the Americans were unable to keep the country under control (ibid). By early 2003, Coalition soldiers became the target of both Shi'ite and Sunni violence and the insurgencies violently expressed their disappointment with the occupying power, shared by both Shi'ites and Sunnis. Many Iraqis had expected the Americans to improve the conditions in the country but instead they got a nightmare worse than the one they had endured under Saddam's regime (ibid). In retrospect, Napoleoni argues that the failure to

address the grievances of the Sunni commercial and middle classes became a tragic mistake. The Americans could have benefited from the support of these groups but instead they relied heavily upon its advisers (the Iraqi Governing Council), a group of exiled Iraqis, who more often than not provided them with information which was incorrect regarding the logistic and economic conditions of the country (ibid, 142).

In the summer of 2003 the Sunni insurgency, as a result of the actions of its secular and nationalist elements, came to be known as a resistance movement, the fight of a proud nation against an occupying power. This won the support of Iraqi Sunnis throughout Iraq, including moderates and those far from the frontlines (ibid, 144). In the following summer, 2004, al Sadr's rhetoric became distinctively anti-imperialist and nationalist and a wave of Shi'ite and Sunni attacks against Coalition forces, according to Napoleoni, made him call for unity between the two groups. To gain Sunni support he declared that his final aim was to oust foreign powers and transform Iraq into an independent and free country and that summer was the closest the Shi'ite and Sunni insurgencies came to forming a united front. The creation of a genuine, national Iraqi resistance was however obstructed. An agreement was reached with Al Sadr for a peaceful solution of the stalemate with the US troops on August 26 2004 and a few days afterwards the Shi'ite religious authorities issued a fatwa to voice their opposition to any armed action against the forces of occupation. Al Sadr reinforced the fatwa by calling his followers to cease the armed struggle and to participate in the political process in preparation for the elections of 30 January 2005. According to Napoleoni this action marked the end of the Shi'ite insurgency (ibid, 164-66).

However, she argues that al Sadr's entry into the political arena was a pyrrhic victory for the Bush administration as well as the Iraqi interim government. The withdrawal of al Sadr's fighters from the insurgency prevented the union between Shi'ite and Sunni insurgents under the nationalist banner, which would have been a terrifying scenario for the US. However it created a situation where ethnic conflicts between Shi'ites and Sunnis became a recurring scenario and created the foundation for sectarian violence. The end of the "official" Shi'ite insurgency thus, argues Napoleoni, marked the beginning of a civil war inside Iraq, although obscured by continuing conflict with the Americans (ibid, 166).

From the beginning however there weren't any other Sunni group, active within the resistance that were interested in fighting yet another enemy (ibid, 158). The purpose of Abu Mos'ab al Zarqawi (the supposed representative of al Qaeda in Iraq) was to prevent any form of cooperation or alliance between Shiites and Sunnis that could lead to the jihadist being expelled to the margins of a strong nationalist and secular movement, such as that which had been created during the 1920s against the British.

To prevent the formation of a united national front against the occupying powers and the new political elites backed by them, al Zarqawi's attempts to drive a wedge between the Sunni and Shi'ite insurgent groups was manipulated by the U.S. and Iraq's new political elite. Thus, instead of a united national resistance, sectarian forces have been unleashed, but the war against the US forces continues on approximately the same level (Napoleoni, 2005:206, Cockburn, 2006:166-67).

5.2 Made in America - The Myth of al Zarqawi

Saddam's support for terrorism was the trump card the U.S. administration held with which to convince the world that the Iraqi dictator had to be removed. The administration had to demonstrate that Saddam and al Qaeda were connected and the link was Abu Mos'ab al Zarqawi (Napoleoni, 2005:113-114).

In reality, Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden are ideological opposites. Hussein's regime was secular and rooted in the separation between religion and state, and al Qaeda, in contrast, is an Islamist movement that believes in the political role of religion. When Saddam invaded Kuwait, bin Laden wanted to create an army of mujahedin in Saudi Arabia to fight against Iraqi troops. Thus, ignorance of the complexity of the Muslim world and its internal battles facilitated the spread of the myth of al Zarqawi (ibid, 117).

The creation of the myth of al Zarqawi started when Colin Powell, the American secretary of state, mentioned him in his speech to the United Nations on 5 February 2003. Colin Powell stated that 'Iraq today harbours a deadly terrorist network, headed by Abu Mos'ab al Zarqawi, an associate and collaborator of Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda lieutenants' (Napoleoni, 2005:21-22). The Americans could present al Zarqawi to the world as the link between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, although this connection never existed it was, according to Napoleoni, deliberately constructed to justify the invasion and the regime change in Iraq. This was an opportunity that Napoleoni claims that the US had sought for unsuccessfully for over a decade. When the war in Iraq was defined as officially over and the country started to descend into chaos and violence, the myth of al Zarqawi provided the Americans with the opportunity to "personalize the enemy" and by that providing a face behind which they could hide the true nature of the Iraqi resistance (ibid, 183).

From this most fallacious claim of Powell one of the most compelling myths of the 'war on terror' was created (Napoleoni, 2005:21). Al Zarqawi can be seen as an example of how the West creates bogeymen that are supposed to be the cause of the terrorist threat that confronts the West. The flipside of this construction is that these bogeymen eventually fulfil the role we give them, which the case of al Zarqawi clearly exemplifies (Burke in Napoleoni, 2005:8). The primacy given al Zarqawi also became self-fulfilling because many Iraqis and Arabs tend to gravitate towards anybody proclaimed as being at the heart of the anti-American resistance (Cockburn, 2006:121).

5.2.1 Obscuring the True Face of the Resistance

In the eyes of the CIA and the White House al Zarqawi is the foreigner that has hijacked, through violence, part of a country that the West is trying to bring under control. Therefore he has come to symbolize the non-Iraqi nature of the insurgency and the new face of global Islamist terror (Napoleoni, 2005:20).

The purposely inflated role of al Zarqawi in combination with the excessive importance that has been attached to the presence of foreign fighters in Iraq has, allowed the U.S. to present the resistance as an insurgency manipulated by foreign forces (Napoleoni, 2005:22, Cockburn, 2006:109). The number of foreign fighters in Iraq in reality make up a small minority of the Iraqi resistance, about 10 percent, and the fact that suicide attacks represent a fraction of the attacks in Iraq has been systematically obscured (Napoleoni, 2005:22). Another fact that has been effectively hidden is that the suicide bombers are usually non-Iraqis, mostly from Saudi Arabia and Jordan, Syria or Egypt. The suicide bombers are motivated by Islamic fundamentalism and hatred of the occupation and were radicalized by the invasion of Iraq. Prior to the invasion few of these individuals had any contact with al-Qaeda or any other radical organization (Cockburn, 2006:119).

Napoleoni argues that the narrative being constructed around al Zarqawi's life is of a Muslim world in deep turmoil and on the brink of dissolution with the purpose of manipulating Arab politics and to construct a screen behind which the real nature of the Iraqi insurgency can be hidden. It is part of a strategy to present the Muslim world as a single culture and worldview on a dangerous collision course with the West wholly in line with an Orientalist mapping. Similar constructions has, according to Napoleoni, allowed the West and its allies, as well as the Muslim ruling elites, to manipulate the threats posed by the jihadist movement and thereby justify the implementation of hegemonic and conservative policies both at home and abroad (ibid,23). The un-proportional weight given to the violent actions of al Zarqawi has contributed to the proliferation of legends about his life and thereby increasing his popularity among jihadists (ibid, 24-25).

This means that the myth of al Zarqawi actually has benefitted the main combatants in the 'war on terror', the U.S. and al Qaeda. It made it possible for the Bush administration to strengthen the false notion of America's popularity in the Muslim world and it made it possible to convince the average American that the Iraqi resistance is not represented by citizens rebelling against an occupational power, but by "an evil man, and his bunch of religious fanatics" (ibid, 183-184). For al Qaeda it was beneficial since it successfully franchised its trademark in Iraq were they had never had any support or connections. Bin Laden could make it appear as though he was a major player in the insurgency by defining al Zarqawi as the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq (Napoleoni, 2005:184).

5.3 The Iraqi Interim Government

On June 28 2004, the CPA formally handed over authority to the Iraqi Interim Government, and the occupation was declared to be at an end. The process by which the Interim Government was formed was however controversial. A large role was played by the coalition appointed Iraq Governing Council and other actors such as the Special Adviser of the UN Secretary-General was effectively sidelined. In addition, the fact that Prime Minister Ayad Allawi had a long record

of US connections raised questions as to the extent to which this government would be truly independent (Roberts, 2005:37-38).

Thus, according to Roberts, the Interim Government in Iraq was not really sovereign, if one defines sovereignty as absolute independence both internally and externally. Rather many critics compare the Interim Government with that of a “puppet government”. After the formal end of the occupation there was still a powerful foreign military, economic and political presence in Iraq and the Iraqi Interim Government depended on it as one important source of support (ibid, 41-42). Thus it can be questioned if the continuing presence of foreign forces can be compatible with Iraqi sovereignty. According to Roberts, most legal writings indicate that an occupation ends when the foreign troops leave. The withdrawal of occupying forces is not the sole criterion of the ending of an occupation, however, the essential feature of the ending of occupation is often an act of self-determination by the population of the occupied territory and this may well require, as a pre-requisite or consequence, the withdrawal of foreign forces (ibid, 27-28).

5.4 The 2005 Elections – Democracy under Occupation?

The elections that were held in Iraq in January 2005 was according to Conetta the price the Bush administration had to pay to maintain the compliance of the Shiite religious leadership. The approval of the Shia of the elections in 2005 was accompanied by wariness, a suspicion that whatever the election’s outcome the US would never allow the Shia to rule Iraq (Cockburn, 2006:185-86).

According to Conetta the elections did not mean that the Bush administration gave up the aim of retaining pivotal influence in the economy, in security affairs, and in the administration of government. Neither did it entail a halt of US attempts to advance the position of those parties and individuals who are more amenable to its vision. Conetta argues that the administration assumes that in sustaining the occupation friendly actors such as Kurds and neo-liberal secularists eventually will gain power which in turn will facilitate an enduring American military presence (Conetta, 2005:21). If Conetta’s claims are correct then one can question the possibility of truly free elections in Iraq while American forces still remain in the country as well as American exercises of control over such central democratic processes as elections remain.

In the elections the Iraqis voted almost entirely along ethnic or sectarian lines but the Sunni boycott was almost total, leaving The United Iraqi Alliance (includes all the main Shia parties) with 140 out of 275 seats, and the Kurdish block with 75 seats. The new elected Iraqi government had more legitimacy than the previous but according to Cockburn this did not hamper sectarian killings or the balance of power on the ground (ibid, 187-88).

In 2005 the Iraqis also voted on the new constitution. Cockburn argues that the US wanted a constitution to be rushed through because it would show that there was political progress in Iraq. However, the International Crisis Group warned that the Sunni Arabs saw the constitution as legitimizing the break-up of the country, so a referendum approving it would ensure that Iraq would slide towards full-scale civil war and dissolution. The Shia and Kurds voted for the constitution and the Sunni voted largely and vainly against it (ibid, 195-96).

The actions and the policies of the US since the overthrow of Hussein thus show that they have been governed by American domestic policies rather than Iraqi reality. (ibid, 185-86). The US has deployed classic divide-and-rule strategies in Iraq which has fostered the sectarian divide. It has been achieved by arming and financing the "tribal awakening" movement against al-Qaida, a movement that has drawn in some of the marginal groups in the resistance who now regard Iran rather than the US as the main enemy (Milne, 2007).

In 'liberated' and 'now democratic' Iraq, Napoleoni claims that sectarian divisions has been woven into the political tapestry by the politics provided by the US, the new Iraqi elites, and al Zarqawi (Napoleoni, 2005:198). The new democracy in Iraq has pulverized national unity which has further fuelled the growth of ethnic factions. The sectarian forces have been institutionalised in the new parliament and government as well as inside the structure of the police and armed forces (ibid, 188).

Napoleoni and Mandana Hendessi (British appointed gender advisor in Iraq) argues that the new Iraqi political elites are using fear to silence opposition and obtain people's consensus. Human rights activist Zahra al-Hamdi for example claims that Shia terror gangs played a big role in the success of the constitution in Amarah. In the Uzayr district in Amarah 100% of people voted in favour of it. Thus, behind the images of happy Iraqis at the polls stand, according to Napoleoni and Hendessi, "a country where democracy has been introduced through war, implemented by force and exercised with violence; an electorate terrorized by ethnic militia and ruthless gangs used as tools by unscrupulous religious and political leaders" (Napoleoni & Hendessi, 2005).

6 Concluding Discussion

In this thesis I have started off from the assumption that the widespread opposition, and consequently, the armed resistance towards the American occupation and the presence of foreign forces in Iraq, can be understood by analyzing the actions and policies of the occupational authorities and forces. This starting point is supported by many observers who claim that the occupation and its actions has fostered the resistance. National, religious and ideological convictions are also of importance in order to understand the resistance in Iraq against the occupation and foreign military presence; however, these factors are all deepened, and fuelled, by the failures and negligence of the occupation.

An analysis of the strategies and actions of the occupational power in Iraq since the invasion is thus of great importance for understanding why, and how, the resistance came about as well as how it has developed throughout the occupation. However, this analysis becomes incomplete if the aims and structures behind these strategies and actions are excluded from the analysis.

The planning for and execution of the invasion as well as the historical, political and ideological processes, discourses and structures implicated by the former is thus an integral part of the analysis that I have conducted in this thesis. The inclusion of these factors has been made in order to understand the underlying agenda and interests involved in the choice of Iraq as the target for regime change and occupation. An understanding of how colonial and imperial structures and discourses still affect our contemporary world and subsequently in many ways are immersed in international politics is essential for grasping the rationale behind the invasion. A logical subsequent step is the empirical analysis of the actual events “on the ground”, i.e. how the actual occupation of Iraq has been conducted.

Imperialist interventions by the US in the form of influencing the political and economical policies of other countries, as well as outright regime changes, are nothing new. However, what we have been able to observe in Iraq is similar to a re-colonization of a country where the direct control of legal, political, administrative and military responsibilities have been seized by a foreign power through military occupation. The portrayal of Iraq as a country in need of liberation from an evil dictator threatening its neighbours and the world through the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the cooperation with international terrorist networks served to legitimize the invasion of Iraq by the US-led Coalition forces. However, as the occupation proceeded the legitimacy of the American presence in Iraq started to crumble piece by piece.

6.1 The Continuities of Colonialism and Imperialism

The strategies, actions and policies that the occupation has employed become unintelligible if one does not contextualize it properly. Without placing the invasion and subsequent occupation within a framework where the continuities of colonialism and imperialism is the focus of analysis the interpretation of what has actually taken place in Iraq becomes inaccurate. The criticism that has been put forward of the invasion often fails to question the basic assumptions behind the invasion and occupation and according to my opinion this is a consequence of a faulty analysis where historical and contemporary structures of colonialism/ne-colonialism/racism/imperialism are excluded or not taken into account properly. Rather the critique or the analysis is based on the opinion that the U.S. is doing the right thing but that the Bush administration is doing it wrong. It focuses on the fact that the invasion and the occupation has been handled wrongly and would be a good thing if handled better. I.e. it is directed towards the occupations failure, not the reasons for the occupation itself. This “critique” leaves fundamental issues decidedly off-limits. The notion that the U.S. is a uniquely benevolent force in the world, the central assumption within American exceptionalism, will be undisputed. As well as the premise that the U.S. alone has a right to invade any country it wants at any time it wishes will remain undebateable and the racist and imperialist assumption that underlie this premise remains veiled under the guise of the universality of freedom and democracy and the US responsibility of spreading these values across the globe – i.e. a modernized and updated version of the white man’s burden. This kind of critique thus disregards the inherent friction that exists between occupier and occupied as a consequence of the power-structures and colonial implications that an occupation inevitably entails. This is especially true when the occupying power displays such total disregard for the interests of the indigenous population as the Americans have. The imperial arrogance involved in occupation, and the continuities of an Orientalist interpretation of Arab/Muslim countries and peoples by the Bush administration, which is reflected in the policies and actions employed by the occupation, shows the importance of placing the events in Iraq within a post-colonial/anti-imperialist theoretical framework.

6.2 Occupation as a Benevolent Enterprise?

The argument that often arises in relation to Iraq in today’s debate is that the US forces need to stay in the country as a stabilizing force in order to avoid the outbreak of civil war. The first faulty premise of this argument is the view of the US troops in Iraq as a possible stabilizing force. Large segments of the Iraqi population, excluding the Kurds, want the US troops to leave Iraq which means that there is no legitimacy for the claim that the Americans should stay. Iraqis have increasingly, since the invasion, begun to regard the Americans as a liability,

a force that adds to the insecurity in the country, rather than providing stability and security. The empirical material which I have used in this thesis also shows that the fact that the Americans policies in Iraq has led to the institutionalizing and deepening of sectarian and ethnic conflict also delegitimizes the argument that the Americans need to stay in Iraq to avert civil war. The second faulty premise in the argument is that it assumes that the Iraqis are not capable of governing themselves. The thought that the Americans need to stay in Iraq implies that the Iraqis are not yet ready for self-determination. Iraqis are assumed to deserve freedom and liberty but an immediate withdrawal would lend support for fundamentalist that threaten to take over in the power vacuum left by the US. The conclusion thus becomes that the armed forces duty is to occupy Iraq to ensure the safety of the Iraqi people. An implication of this kind of argument, in relation to the role of the occupying power, is that the analysis of the situation in Iraq is placed within a framework where the focus of discussion becomes how an occupation is conducted in a proper way. I.e. the underlying assumption becomes that there is a right and a wrong way of occupying another country. However, I argue that this entails a disregard of West's history of colonial conquest and the inherent racism and paternalism involved in occupation. By restricting the analysis to the actions of the occupation rather than the aims behind it, we conform to an Orientalist interpretation of the world were some people are legitimate to occupy and conquer and the discourse that has been construed around every imperial invasion, that the circumstances are special, that it is part of a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort becomes reinforced. Thus failing to identify and make the continuities and reinventions of Orientalism and imperialism visible reinforces a neo-imperialist interpretation of what has happened in Iraq.

A way to deconstruct these neo-colonial/imperialist discourses and constructions of reality is to analyze the historical continuities of colonialism and imperialism. In this thesis I have tried to make these connections by including Iraq's colonial history in the analysis as well as an analysis of American exceptionalism as a continuation of US imperial politics. The similarities between the occupation in 2003 and in 1917 are obvious. After it became clear that the initial rational for the invasion was impossible to substantiate after the invasion in 2003 the justification for invading Iraq shifted to the pressing need to introduce democracy to the country. A similar attempt to re-legitimize the presence and control of the occupying power was made by the British as has been discussed previously in this thesis. Through this reconstruction the political and military failures of the occupation are covered since the moral dilemma is moved. The question of the moral and political problematic of the invasion is replaced by the question if it is morally correct to leave Iraq to its destiny as it is so clear that its population do not know how to co-exist. As Aspengren argues, the narrative thus becomes focused on the Arab world's latent instability and continued need of protection from the West and from itself and less about West's political and military miscalculations. The importance of drawing historical parallels and to acknowledge the continuity of imperialist and colonial structures hereby becomes evident. The similarities between the occupation of Iraq in 1917s and today shows

that today's invasion and occupation of Iraq has to be analyzed and understood within a theoretical framework that takes these historical connections and realities into account in order to understand the current situation without obscuring its imperial and neo/post-colonial implications.

6.3 Obscuring the True Face of the Resistance – Divide and Rule

Another construction used in Iraq by the US to obscure actual events and to legitimize its continued presence was the myth of al Zarqawi. The US could not substantiate the pre-war claim that Saddam Hussein had connections with international terrorist networks such as al Qaeda. Rather it became more and more clear that it was the invasion in itself that had radicalized many young Muslims, both Iraqi and non-Iraqi, and created a common enemy and the networks needed for international terrorist to cooperate and conduct attacks against the US. However, even if these pre-war claims could not be substantiated by actual evidence, the true face of the resistance as well as its public support could be obscured in order to legitimize the continued occupation and military presence in Iraq. The construction of the myth of al Zarqawi as the orchestrator and front figure of the Iraqi resistance gave the world, and most importantly the American public, the impression that the resistance in Iraq had been hijacked by, or consisted mainly of, foreign jihadists and fundamentalists using suicide bombs against civilians in their crusade against the West and the US. It was simultaneously used to justify humiliating and denigrating operations in Iraq, such as the cordon-and sweep operations discussed in this thesis, and to justify a war that even the United Nations had declared illegal. However, al Zarqawi's role in the resistance was exploited and distorted in a manner that, in the end, became self-fulfilling, undermining the creation of a united front between Shiite and Sunni resistance groups and as a consequence gave rise to sectarian and ethnic violence.

The withdrawal of al Sadr's fighters from the insurgency prevented a union between Shi'ite and Sunni insurgents under the nationalist banner. The US has gained by applying a divide and rule strategy in relation to different groups in the Iraqi society and thus, directly or indirectly in relation to the resistance. A united resistance would probably entail the end of the American presence in Iraq, both in terms of political legitimacy as well as military capabilities of resisting the force that a united resistance would be able to display. By creating divisions and tensions between different groups in the resistance, either by selective alliances or by constructing myths obscuring the actual constitution, actors etc. within the resistance the US can step forward as a stabilizing force that is needed in order to prevent civil war between those fractions that in many respects is the result of American policies from the beginning.

6.3.1 Discourse and Materiality

What becomes clear is that the brutality and negligence of the occupying power is justified by the negative depiction of the resistance by obscuring its actual aims as well as the exaggeration of the importance and frequency of foreign involvement within the resistance. The legitimation of the occupation by the distorted constructions and portrayals of the resistance shows the symbiotic relationship between the discursive and material practices of imperialism. Iraq represents, in a very apparent way, an example of how representations, images and stereotypes are integrated parts of the neo-colonial and imperialist violence. This shows the importance of open paradigms within the analysis as well as the effectiveness whereby the combination of discursive constructions and material violence can serve to effectively legitimize aggression and occupation.

6.4 A Failing Occupation

Before the invasion the picture that was given by the Bush administration and supporters of the coming war, was that the Iraqi people would greet the Coalition forces as liberators and that the major obstacle would be the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the Baath party. However, the initial resistance posed by the Iraqi military was marginal which showed how few Iraqis that actually supported the previous regime. The resistance that followed however, as Iraqis began to realize that the invasion had resulted in an outright occupation, an occupation that was failing enormously, was something that the Bush administration had not taken into account. After the overthrow of Saddam Hussein the occupation failed to provide security, economic stability, prevent looting and killings, as well as failing to provide for the basic need of the population in terms of electricity etc. The legitimacy of the occupation, what little there had been from the beginning, was thus starting to diminish. Popular opposition and armed resistance took its place. Opinion polls conducted in Iraq since the invasion show, even if one can question the statistical significance of the results, a correlation between the direct experiences of violence, poor appraisals of US troop behaviour, and support for insurgent attacks. This supports and reinforces my claim that the actions of the occupants have a large impact on the form the resistance, as well as the opposition among the Iraqi population, takes towards the occupation and foreign military presence in the country. Thus, an understanding of the rise of popular Iraqi resentment and armed resistance towards the foreign presence in Iraq can be reached by analyzing the actions of the occupying power since the invasion.

The resistance was born out of ideological, religious and patriotic convictions, but also as a response to the reality of the brutal actions of the occupation and its administration. If the occupation is seen as effectively advancing the needs and aspirations of the occupied population the opposition against it is reduced or at least mitigated. Insecurity and experiences of violence play a major role in how different communities and regions respond to the occupation. The determination

and intensity of the Iraqi resistance has been fuelled by the mistakes and abuses committed by the US forces in Iraq. The lack of a clear post-war plan for the political and social reconstruction of Iraq, intrusive and humiliating ground operations such as house-to-house searches often based on inaccurate information, culturally inappropriate behaviour and collective punishments have led to the alienation of the population and thereby helped create popular support for the resistance. The impact of mistakes and misbehaviours by the occupiers is further multiplied by cultural alienation and the fact of foreign occupation which makes friction inherent to the relationship between occupier and occupied.

By disregarding Iraqi popular opposition and resentment, the American occupation in many respects fuelled the anger felt by ordinary Iraqis, turned them against the Americans and their policies, as well as facilitated the recruitment of manpower for the resistance. Most importantly, it created a popular support for the resistance which made the intensity of the resistance possible. Without the support and help of the Iraqi population, the resistance would not have been able to pose such a threat to the occupation and Coalition forces as it has.

Furthermore the initial cultural differences between occupier and occupant were intensified by the lack of cultural sensitivity. For example letting American soldiers with no knowledge of Arabic or Arab culture to implement intrusive measures inside an Islamic society made the friction all the more acute. The line of action chosen by the Americans, involving those actions enumerated above, also express a high level of ignorance and paternalism. A lack of respect has been endemic to the American policies towards Iraq from the planning of the invasion until today. It shows that the actions and the policies of the US in Iraq, since the beginning, have been governed by American domestic policies rather than Iraqi reality. The lack of understanding, as well as the lack of a willingness to understand, of the history, culture and current state of Iraq becomes understandable if one contextualizes the role of the U.S. within an Orientalist framework. The conquest of Iraq was not a conquest in the eyes of the Bush administration; rather it was regarded as liberation. The Iraqi people were the Orientals that needed to be liberated and taught how to become a civilized and secular democracy where rationality, rather than religious fundamentalism, became the organizing principle of society. As Said argues, the war could not have been carried out without an underlying sense that these people over there are not like “us” and do not appreciate “our” values. The occupation in itself as well as the disinclination of returning sovereignty to the Iraqi people, as a result of the insecurity by the Americans of what this would entail in relation to political majorities, also shows the continuity of the paternalism by which the US regards the Iraqi people, in particular its Arab population. If the Iraqis are given too much power it is assumed that they will misrule themselves. It is an expression of the democratic paradox mentioned earlier in this thesis. If the regime change does not result in the anticipated outcome from an American political perspective then it is unsuccessful and must be amended to fit the limitations and boundaries which make democratically elected constituencies acceptable in the eyes of the US and the West. Acceptable in this context often becomes equated with conformity with the political and economic interests of the US.

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