

Reviewing U.S- Iraq war via Defensive Realism and Marxism

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Abstract

If we analyze the current anarchic, confusing and chaotic situation in present day Iraq we can easily trace its roots in the well-known U.S- Iraq war started on 20 March 2003 also known as second Gulf war. This war or intervention not only dethroned Saddam Hussein but also created a big leadership vacuum in the country due to non-availability of leadership parallel to him. Furthermore this lack of popular leadership who could not keep the country integrated which is already divided on ethnic and sectarian lines, ignorance of foreign occupiers, their only need, greed and interest in Iraqi oil, false allegation of WMD's, economic collapse and other solid reasons also supplemented the entire country descent in to chaos. So in this regard in this research paper I will try to trace out and enquire the causes of this war by applying two theories of international

relation which are Marxism and Defensive realism. Via Marxism I will try to analyze the internal political dynamics and social constructs, behaviors and specially the role of media for propagating in favor of the war widely based on class interest and the close relation between political elites and Military Industrial Complex (MIC) in American foreign policy whereas via defensive realism I will try to analyze the international system as a determinant in the foreign policy of U.S.A which claims about anarchy, power, survival, security and national interests in international relations which determines and strains the foreign policy process. The reason behind applying two international relations theories in this research paper is the complex and interconnected events in the whole course of events at different levels with different social, political and economic dynamics which makes it very difficult to explain the whole event via one theory because one theory leave space for the explanation of many sub events of the whole process that's way both the theories supplement and fill the weak areas of each other while analyzing the event as we will see that the class interests and international system both had defining role in the U.S- Iraq war of 2003.

Key words: America, Defensive Realism, Marxism, Anarchy, Iraq, Middle East, Invasion, social constructs, International system, Bush Doctrine, Preemptive Attack.

Introduction

United states of America invaded Iraq on 20 march 2003 allegations against Iraq for possessing weapons of Mass destruction (WMD's) and harboring terrorists against western powers. This invasion led to the eight year occupation of Iraq which did not only put the Iraq down but also created instability in the entire Middle East region and costed hundreds of billions of dollars to the American economy and affected an ordinary American tax payer as well. As far as the invasion is concern it is still debated due to its unclear nature as none of the objectives was obtained from the invasion accepts Saddam Husain's overthrowing which in other terms brought more destruction to the region rather than stability, democracy, peace, and progress about which all the American Media had been doing propaganda. So in order to understand the war I have applied two theories of international relation which are Marxism and Defensive Realism in order to understand this historic event with a new dimension.

Theoretical framework of Marxism

As we know Marxism being the greatest critique of capitalism analysis events in the human society on the basis of its contradictions and class struggles or the struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed also analysis the U.S invasion on Iraq in the terms of aggressive capitalism who wants to control the oil resources for future needs and business profit. It also analysis the hegemonic control of state institutions and public consciousness, social constructs via media propaganda, relation between Military industrial complex and bush administration and the international environment and situation in the year 2003.

In order to justify the U.S invasion the control of the social constructs of the core collective played key role in the all defining moments of the event. In this regard the role of media was very important who through its jingoistic rhetoric, spreading rumors, laid grounds for public support for the war which was very less in the beginning. Media outlets in, in the time of sensation or emergency, view the emotions of the viewers or common person rather focusing on the truth says Rene Gabri (Gabri 2006). During

the first two days of invasion as Gabri spot lights how the American Media played its role regarding the social constructs specially presented by top media channels such as CNN, FOX channel, CNBC etc. This could be seen in shock and awe campaign which is a military doctrine focuses on the heavy attacks so that the war resources as well as the will power of the enemy could be destroyed. This shock and awe campaign was showed ten folds greater on civilian property than the real attacks for propaganda purposes. As it was not only claimed but also supported by the media as well as the pentagon that the primary target of the attack were those Iraqi fighters who opposed and resisted the so called liberation given by the United States. In the long run under the shock and awe campaign the attack as showed and shaped by media that this war was not only needed but was a necessity for the national security of United States. As famous Fox News anchor Brit hume's these words can easily depict the collective sentiments on the very first night of the assault that –Get ready for some fireworks ladies and gentlemenl with the destruction of Baghdad shows a strange kind of revenge of 9/11 and celebration. This positive implication analogous to the term –fireworkl is actually a kind of favoring U.S invasion on Iraq justifying it and declaring United States liberator against the tyrant and authoritative rule of Saddam Hussein under Gramscian Perspective (Stanislaus 2016). During Iraq Iran war in the 1980s it was clear that Iraq did have large quantity of WMDs which Saddam used against not only Iran but also against ethnic Kurds (Pan 2009).

After the first gulf war U.N started disarming Iraq and Iraq was also cooperative infect the U.N weapons inspector Hans Blix also assured about the cooperation and progress of the Iraqi disarmament and said that it will be completed in few months under United Nations. Despite the

disapproval of U.N regarding this invasion Bush administration stressed on the urgency of nuclear weapons (FRONTLINE 2016).

However on the other hand other top officials such as vice president Dick Cheney started claiming with fake evidences that the Saddam regime has ties with the Al Qaeda terrorist group and support it which all was based on false allegations (Kessler 2014). During all this period after the invasion media seemed very determined and fully focused to detract the social construct by misinformation, control it and bring it to the support of the war as a statistic say the just after the two months of the war 79% people were supporting the war and the most importantly the military industrial complex was very active during all this time only due to its oil interests in Iraq. This war deeply contradicts the U.S claim for liberating Iraq from the Dictatorship but when the invasion began every building civilian or military was destroyed except the only building which was of ministry of oil (Douglas 2003). So it quite clearly shows that the Iraqi oil was more important than the liberation of Iraq or cleaning it from the so called weapons of mass destruction for the capitalist elite of U.S. during or after the war the only thing they were concerned about was Iraqi energy resources. At the same time the dominance, control and urge of (MIC) military industrial complex of Bush administration over the propaganda and war itself is also clear. William Darity in one of his reports — *Guns And Butter Once Again* says that between 2003 to 2005 the public sector budget was reduced whereas the defense budget saw an astonishing 7% increase a clear and close relation between the executive and MIC (Darity 2009). Actually the key fact of the William darity's report was that all the government oil contracts were given in no bid to the top, most powerful and influential company owners who already were holdin key government

position such as vice president Cheney, former director of Halliburton who had big shares in it and whose stock prices increased about 230% just after three months of war. On one side it shows the corporate elite interests and influence over the war and on the other side it also clears there hefty profits from war by heavy spending on military and oil contracts and there control on the Middle East oil resources. As Professor Michael klare says in his famous article *-More Blood Less Oil* that there was a huge excitement in the days of invasion as everybody on top was planning for profits (klare 2005).

As in a report it was showed that Iraq could double its oil production in one day so in order to privatize Iraqi oil U.S petroleum companies were given easy access to them. And just before war an Iraqi exiled political leader Ahmed Chalabi promised American government that no sooner Saddam Hussein is deposed they will be blessed with the rich oil contracts. Now via Marxist lens this is a clear indication that the oil companies did not only have interest in oil but also had great part in the invasion. As this war was conducted by the capitalist elite who wanted to quench there need for oil by their aggressive capitalist needs which was ultimately an inherent expansionist policy in order to satisfy their profits. As this expansionist policy was also due to the international structure in which U.S.A emerged as the sole super after cold war on world stage and reached on its zenith in the year 2000 in the military terms as just before the war the U.S military budget was greater than China, Russia, and U.K combined (shah 2003).

The military trained personals reached to 1.5 million with latest military technological power whose presence was felt across the world. Famous American scholar and critique wrote in one of his editorials *-hegemony or empire* that the American power has excelled to all the previous powers

in its foreign dominance and even the last British empire could not be compared to it in the terms of power, dominance and hegemony. This dominance, show of power and hegemony began when the U.S assumed the responsibility of creating its own standards, values and conditions at international level for prosperity and peace which again ultimately were needed for its own capitalist needs (Ferguson 2009). Despite U.N disapproval or disallow U.S attacked Iraq shows its exceptional influence, standing and power in the world. If it had been another country she would be sanctioned, condemned but with the regard of U.S.A all the international law seemed nothing but useless words. As, Immanuel Wallerstein in his famous work Dependency theory says that the world is divided in to two blocks which are the developed and developing countries. The developed countries control all the resources, possess the modern technology and markets of the world and they are called the core countries such as United States and on the periphery countries which are dependent on the developed countries who exploit them for their interests such as Iraq (Jackson 2013). As U.S.A being a core country felt no doubt on attacking and occupying Iraq for its oil resources which were necessary for its capitalist needs and on the other hand Iraq being a periphery country seems fragile by its national security is heavily dependent over American markets and aid. And it happened to many countries in history and Saddam's resistance and stand for its country alarmed the capitalist elite as their control and profits could dwindle in future so this war by all means seemed necessary by American capitalist elite.

Theoretical framework of defensive realism

Contrary to the Marxism the defensive realism mainly focuses over international system claiming that the international system is anarchic and

there is no supreme power to prevail justice or keep the order so the states must take the responsibility of their security by their own in order to ensure their survival. This theory comes from Kenneth Waltz's theory of Neo Realism in 1979. If we analyze the Bush preemptive attack policy which is also considered as the basic theme of his foreign policy with the defensive realism lens it will help us to understand the U.S invasion which was based on the notion of being attacked as well as the primary objective was to control the Iraqi oil resources as they could go in the hands of any other power and may come in the position to damage the U.S interests in the Middle East so these both elements or concerns provoked U.S to go to war because being attacked or losing Iraqi resources could both expose American security and interests to danger (Record 2003).

Bush later on different occasions tried to summarize his policy of preemptive attack by declaring three main threats to the United States which are

-Radicalized terrorist groups with no regard for international law or human life, weapons of mass destruction like chemical or nuclear agents and politically corrupted, economically weak states that harbor and even aid these radicalized groups.

As these all three elements pose threat to the security of United States and if we include the tragic event of 9/11 by viewing it with the defensive realism lens than the 2003 invasion seem inevitable as all three threats seemed unavoidable. In order to understand the Iraq war in deep there is another theory which can help us well called the *Balance of Threat Theory* which says that when states perceive threat from other states they ally themselves with other countries or such powers who they consider will defend them against the perceived enemy. So in this regard Iraq was considered as an ally of terrorist groups after 9/11 that could damage U.S

interests In Middle East and being hit by 9/11 attacks this perception was laid grounds for the invasion. Though Saddam's sponsoring terrorist was false or true did not matter rather the thing that mattered was the perception that seemed real enough to take the United States to war. And this perception is the basic content in the defensive realism prism in which the world seems anarchic. As Professor Douglas Kellner a famous critique on U.S foreign policies says that

|| this major shift away from conflict deterrence in US foreign policy was evoked primarily by war hawks in Bush's cabinet||.(Kellner 2004)

The vice president Dick Cheney and many of neo cons or war hawks have never participated in any war ever. In order to declare Saddam as an immediate threat to the security America most of the evidences presented were false. The Bush administration mixed the fear of WMDs with the *islamophobia*, the event of 9/11 and perception of links with terrorist groups further supplemented to the fear of a common American citizen. Now if we view the preconceived perception of threat via defensive realism we come to the conclusion that imaginary threat of the terrorist attack worked more effectively than the real legitimate threat in itself which did not exist at all at that time. So the notion of preemptive attack of Bush doctrine seems quite real and worked as a propaganda tool for the invasion. This perception of threat attack combined with Bush doctrine gave an audacity to the United States to independently judge and free choice to take action against the perceived enemy to protect its national interest. After analyzing the international system it becomes understandable that this audacity came from international anarchy in 2003 as after the cold war and the collapse of U.S.S.R in 1991 U.S.A emerged as the only super power in the world and assumed the role of the only unilateral power. Iraq invasion was not the only preemptive attack in

American Foreign policy infect during cold war this had been a constant factor in U.S foreign policy that whenever she perceived threat she pursued this aggressive policy. As in the charter of U.N states are allowed to go aggressive if there national security is at stake the charter says

|| states are permitted to use force to defend against imminent threat||.

It can be understood from the Israeli invasion on Egypt in 1967. The American political scientist Robert Delhaunty says that if we go through the history of U.S wars we amazingly see that most of the attacks United States had in the past had been preemptive in nature (Delhaunty 2009) .

Analyzing American history one can easily understand that preemptive attack doctrine by Bush is not a new and revolutionary approach towards external challenges infects throughout 1900s its interventions in Latin and Central America, the Korean and Vietnam War can also be considered as preemptive attack though in loose sense. The only thing which distinguishes the Bush doctrine regarding Iraq war from former attacks is the lack of evidence, perception of threat contrary to the reality and U.S audacity by ignoring or bypassing international law. So in the 2000s the power of U.S.A was at peak and this perception, American interests, anarchy at international system and national security in all terms make the war inevitable via defensive realism. The American interest by its political and corporate was paramount and any external threat must have been dealt with iron hands economic threat was considered no less than national security. Potential future events, possible intentions and preconceived threats combined with national and economic interests, immense influence in world affairs, controlling world markets and increasing military power from a decade, no possible immediate and strong threat made left little room to ignore this war as it was considered necessary to maintain U.S hegemony in world affairs.

On the other hand the weak, fragile, corrupt and almost failed state of Iraq also contributed to the war as G.Bush in his doctrine says that

-One of the greatest threats is the presence of politically corrupt, economically fragile states that allow terrorist groups to freely operate inside their borders.

As in a report presented by council of foreign relations in 2005 proving number of evidences that Iraqi government provided support, finance and logistics to the terrorists organizations in 1990s (Masters 2005). The Iran Iraq war, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, genocide of ethnic Kurds is some other aspects which also contributed to some extent in strengthening the perception of threat very real in the early days of 2003 invasion.

The First Hand Empirical Analysis

Both the theories have a remarkable depth, explanation and very sound interpretations for the second gulf war but at the same time due to their fixed world view and general theoretical frame works we see some weak areas in them. But when we apply them in combine they can very smartly analyze the situation categorically. The Marxist explanation of the internal social and political dynamics in the terms of class interests, social constructs, core collective control, role of media, mind of an ordinary person and influence of propaganda over it, their alienation from the day to day politics and easy manipulation by state institutions, and most importantly the close relation of political and corporates in the shape of *Military Industrial complex* seems very comprehensive. And on the other hand via defensive realism we can better understand the doctrine of preemptive attack, anarchy at international system, national security, American political, and strategic interests in the Middle East. Weak, authoritative and politically corrupt state of Iraq which almost seemed

failed state and harbored terrorist organizations in 1990s and its immense energy resources that could greed and lure any power to attack her and could damage American interests could also be better explained in the terms of U.S invasion attack on Iraq via defensive realism.

Despite its strong theoretical explanation there are some areas Marxism fails to explain the perceived threat of terrorism which played a very defining role in the 2003 invasion. In this regard the event of 9/11 cannot be ignored which was fresh in the minds of security institutions. Secondly Marxism also fails to explain that the real cause of the attack was not only money driven policy makers though they did have a role in false evidences and profit motives but the other aspect which is widely ignored is the weak and reckless policies of Saddam Hussein as well through which he was intentionally or unintentionally damaging the stability of Middle East and interests of United States so these areas are well defined and covered by Defensive realism. Whereas the explanation of the control of core collective and social constructs can be well explained by Marxist approach. As Rene Gabri says that

||the media is a reflection of one's own thought processes. Slowly, it replaces people's own thinking and becomes a construct that does a person's thinking for them||.

Marxism very correctly explains the role of media as it can be viewed from the given statically explanation that no sooner war started due to media biasness the war supporters increased to 33% and 69% had this believe that Saddam was involve in 9/11 attacks and 51% were of the view that Iraq had close connections with Al- Qaeda (Kull 2012).

On the other hand the defensive realism ignores the class interests in its analysis and takes the whole issue on purely state level where as this invasion has many angles to judge and understand as Dick Cheney and

other war monger corporate elites also had their personal deep profit interests in it. And defensive realism also fails to frame the American history of Militarism and its interests in the Middles East which range from clandestine interference to open invasion. These are well defined by Marxism.

Conclusion

Anyhow when we combine both the theories at different levels of analysis they very smartly explain the whole event and coherently work out the whole issue further supplement and cover the weaknesses of each other and explain all the events comprehensively one by one on scale from an individual to unit level and from there to international level categorically. This is the reason that both the theories in order to explain the Invasion we equally important due to their specific framework and levels analysis of the U.S Iraq war. Beside this all the main thing is that Iraq war is a very important and defining event in the course of history and did have deep role in shaping of today's Middle East.

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